

Wootton Bassett School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126455
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	360087
Inspection dates	10–11 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Ian Hodgkinson HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1415
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	284
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Malcolm Wilford
Headteacher	George Croxford
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2007
School address	Lime Kiln Wootton Bassett Swindon SN4 7HG
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 36 teachers and 39 lessons, and dropped in briefly on other activities. Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, staff, governors, and students. Inspectors looked at documentation, including students' books, the school development and action plans, records of assessment and tracking of students' progress, plans and monitoring information for the support of vulnerable students, records of the school's arrangements for the safeguarding and protection of students, and policies and procedures for promoting equality and countering discrimination. In addition, inspectors considered 178 questionnaire responses from parents and carers, together with those from staff and students.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas:

- The extent of variation in attainment and progress between different subjects and different groups of students, particularly girls and boys.
- The effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels in ensuring consistently high quality teaching and learning in the classroom.
- The success of the sixth form in sustaining high attainment and strong progress for its students, and in developing new curricular opportunities.

Information about the school

This very large school serves the town of Wootton Bassett and surrounding area, and also draws students from western parts of Swindon. Mobility into and out of the school is broadly in line with the average for most schools, although one in seven students are children of service families based nearby at RAF Lyneham. Numbers on roll have fallen in the last year because of local demographic changes. Most students are White British. A small number of students speak English as an additional language, with very few at the early stages of learning the language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, and, while the range of needs is wide, the main groups are those with specific or moderate learning difficulties. The school has been designated as a specialist technology school since 2004. It has received many awards for its work, including the Healthy Schools award, the International Award, Investors in People and the Investors in People Leadership and Management award. The headteacher was appointed in January 2010, and other members of the senior leadership team have also been appointed within the last two academic years.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**1****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****1**

Main findings

This outstanding school prepares its students exceptionally well for their future lives. Their attainment is high, and their academic progress and personal development are excellent. Students relish the many opportunities they are offered to work together in teams, and they develop outstanding leadership qualities. They discharge the many responsibilities they are given with exceptional maturity. Sixth formers, for example, have highly developed roles in representing the school, engaging with the school's leadership, and supporting younger students.

The headteacher and relatively new senior leadership team have given the school extremely clear direction in its journey from 'good' to 'outstanding' provision. They have ensured that leaders and staff at every level are relentlessly focused on making sure that each student makes strong progress. Teachers typically plan lessons in detail so that work is well matched to each student's capabilities and successfully moves all students towards their challenging individual targets. Students themselves are adept at assessing their own work and that of others, and identifying how to improve their performance. Students who struggle to make progress are quickly identified and offered additional support, including through a comprehensive mentoring scheme. The school's highly developed quality assurance system enables leaders and managers at all levels to have a sharp insight into all aspects of school performance, and to communicate openly with staff and students on how to improve. A strong thread of self-evaluation permeates every part of the school and, as a result, its capacity to improve is outstanding at every level.

Attainment has risen consistently since the last inspection, and the school has been successful in narrowing gaps in performance between boys and girls. Boys' GCSE results, for example, rose particularly strongly in 2010. The school's strong drive to raise the quality of teaching and learning overall has been successful in ensuring greater consistency in the quality of provision between subjects. Much of the teaching is outstanding. In a very few instances, teachers' planning does not allow all students to make quick progress or to engage them creatively in tasks, and so the pace of learning slows and students become restless and frustrated. Such instances are rare though, and generally students greatly enjoy their lessons which typically move forward at a very brisk pace. Students' excellent behaviour makes a very constructive contribution to their learning in class.

The school's curriculum is of a very high quality, ensuring that students develop a strong set of basic skills and become very well acquainted with the world beyond the school gates. Students engage fully with their local community, and have the opportunity to work with others around the world through a burgeoning international programme. Wide-ranging opportunities through the school's extensive range of enrichment activities further add to students' enjoyment of school, and this helps to secure students' high attendance.

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The comprehensive programmes for pastoral care, guidance and support, backed by well-developed links with parents, carers and external agencies, enable students to feel very safe and secure. They develop much confidence to take up the many opportunities to play a full and active role in the life of the school and wider community.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all lessons feature the same high standards of planning, creativity and classroom management that prevail in the great majority.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Students join the school in Year 7 with broadly average attainment and make excellent progress to achieve high results in GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11. Girls have performed better than boys over time, but the gap between them has closed year-on-year, and in 2010, a higher proportion of boys than girls achieved five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics. Students' attainment is consistently high and their progress strong in the core subjects of English and mathematics and the school's specialist subjects of science and design and technology. Progress has been less consistently effective on vocational and applied courses, but school leaders have taken decisive action to either raise the quality of, or discontinue, those courses where performance has been weaker. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make excellent progress because work is adapted well to meet their needs in lessons, and because of the high quality guidance and support they receive outside the classroom. This is also true for those who speak English as an additional language, who are able to get access to specialist language support. Learning proceeds at a fast pace for all groups of students in lessons, and students, with very clear guidance from their teachers, take a good deal of responsibility for improving their own work. They clearly understand their targets and what they need to do to meet these. They concentrate hard and persevere well. Their excellent collaborative skills enable work and ideas to be refined through discussion and peer-evaluation. For example, in an outstanding citizenship lesson, Year 8 students worked in groups with a maturity beyond their years to discuss thoroughly the different aspects of discrimination and the legal framework to challenge it.

Students have a very well-developed understanding of how to live healthily, drawing on the strong programme of personal, social and health education that is a feature of the termly 'Every Child Matters' days. They participate with great enthusiasm in a wide-ranging programme of physical education and extra-curricular sport. Students' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development gives them an acute sense of the way their behaviour can affect others and they are quick to take responsibility for supporting the school, community events and each other. They are widely involved as mentors for their peers and in activities to review and develop the work of the school.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teachers know their students very well. Lesson plans pay close attention to the individual capabilities and learning needs of students, so that lessons consolidate and extend the learning for all. A wide range of teaching and learning activities and resources are employed by teachers to motivate and engage students by taking account of their preferred styles of learning. School leaders feel that such approaches have been chiefly responsible for promoting better learning for boys. Inspectors found that in the rare instances where lessons were not so effectively or creatively planned and managed, boys in particular, especially at Key Stage 3, sometimes disengaged from learning. Across the school, teachers have excellent subject knowledge and inspire students with their own passion for the subject. They have high expectations of students, and direct probing questions to them to draw out extended responses. Highly constructive relationships prevail between staff and students, and staff give their time readily to support students outside lessons. Teaching assistants offer very well-judged support to students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, helping them to understand without stifling their independence. The outstanding use of assessment to inform teachers' planning, to initiate intervention for students falling behind, and to show students how to improve is a key factor in securing high quality learning for all.

The curriculum is very broad and well balanced. It offers a wide range of courses to suit students' interests and aspirations, although its central emphasis is on securing strong

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outcomes for all students in the core subjects of English and mathematics and specialist subjects of design and technology and science. Targets for attainment and participation in the specialist subjects are met or exceeded. Students use information and communication technology frequently to support their learning in many subjects, and well-developed links with local businesses and other organisations ensure that students have an excellent understanding of the skills needed for the world of work. Gifted and talented students are quickly identified and nurtured through a variety of programmes, such as mentoring sessions before school, summer schools, early entry for examinations and additional courses such as GCSE astronomy, to ensure that they achieve their potential. The school operates successfully in partnership with other schools and colleges to broaden the access of its students to specialist vocational provision. Very clear pathways are established for students to pursue specialist interests, and highly effective careers guidance ensures that the proportion of students not in education, employment or training when they finish Year 11 is very low.

Arrangements to welcome students into the school in Year 7, and transition arrangements from one year to the next within the school, are highly effective and welcomed by the students. Procedures to support those who are vulnerable, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those with weak attendance are outstanding. With strong and well-managed involvement of external agencies, the school promotes excellent outcomes for these students. Looked after children, for example, are successful in achieving strong academic outcomes and going to university. The school adopts a supportive stance with students, parents and carers to overcome poor attendance, and seeks to overcome barriers to engagement so that levels of persistent absence are low. The school's exceptionally well-developed mentoring system runs alongside the purposeful tutorial programme, to offer comprehensive individual support and guidance to students.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior leaders have developed a highly cohesive school community which is strongly focused on self-evaluation and improvement. Information to measure the performance of each student, class and subject is comprehensive and readily understood. This ensures that dialogue between school leaders and staff, and between staff and students, about where and how to improve performance, is transparent and constructive. Staff, governors and students are fully involved in developing the school's vision for improvement, and parents' views are sought extensively on aspects of the quality of provision. The school's improvement plan sets out a concise framework of nine key areas of focus. Leaders for each subject and aspect of the school plan their contribution to a

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common format, so that throughout the school all can be held to account for their success in achieving the common goals. The governing body is highly committed to the school's success. It has rigorous systems in place to ensure that the school fully meets statutory requirements, and governors are increasingly innovative in finding out about the quality of provision in the school, for example by tracking individual students.

Procedures to safeguard the well-being of students are thorough and rigorous. For example, arrangements to ensure that all visitors to the school are aware of its child protection procedures and their responsibilities therein are exemplary and carried out with courtesy and precision. Information on students' attitudes and progress has been used with great effectiveness to ensure that all groups have equal opportunities to succeed. The school gives its promotion of community cohesion a very high priority. Its students have extensive involvement in international projects as well as a prominent role in local community activities, reflecting the school's newly-stated mission to be 'a global school in a local community'.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

Sixth form students involve themselves fully in the life of the school, as leaders who are consulted on school decisions, as ambassadors who represent the school in high profile local or national events, and as mentors, prefects and role models who regularly support and guide younger students. Through such activities, they develop great confidence, maturity and independence of thought, qualities which equip them well for later life and regularly help many secure places on the most demanding of university courses. The sixth form attracts a significant minority of students from other schools and attainment when students join is broadly average. Students make strong progress to attain generally high results. These results have been falling from particularly high levels in recent years as the

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sixth form has grown and the school has offered a wider range of academic, vocational and applied courses to suit the interests of the greater number of students. The International Baccalaureate programme was introduced for sixth formers in the last academic year and is presently taken by small groups of students in Years 12 and 13; the programme is well suited to a school with particular strengths in developing well-rounded, high achieving individuals with a strong awareness of global issues.

Sixth form teaching is frequently outstanding in its pace and challenge. Small class sizes for some subjects limit the quality of interaction between students, but lessons are typically very well planned to ensure that students are actively involved in their learning. Students receive excellent guidance and support in making choices of sixth form courses and in decisions about careers or higher education when they leave. Students' progress and personal development are very closely monitored and support quickly deployed when required, so that retention rates are very high. Outstanding leadership and management of the sixth form have ensured that quality remains high as it continues to develop and grow.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents' and carers' views of the school are highly positive. A few parents and carers wrote to express individual concerns, largely about instances where communication had not been smooth or their views had not been acted upon, but none of these matters constituted a general pattern of concern about shortcomings, although a very small number noted inconsistency in the quality of teaching, especially where classes were covered by a supply teacher. Inspectors found that in a very small number of instances teaching quality does not match the high standards found through most of the school. Some parents wrote with strong praise for the 'impressive' and 'excellent' quality and speed of communication. Parents who wrote comments were particularly pleased with the quality of the transition programme from primary to secondary school, and with the very large range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities available to students. Inspectors also found the quality of transition and of the curriculum to be excellent.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Wootton Bassett School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 178 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,415 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	63	35	108	61	6	3	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	72	40	101	57	2	1	2	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	89	50	85	48	4	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	71	40	95	53	10	6	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	62	35	107	60	4	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	41	23	118	66	10	6	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	17	130	73	11	6	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	69	39	93	52	5	3	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	61	34	104	58	7	4	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	51	29	102	57	16	9	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	31	17	121	68	12	7	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	63	35	106	60	2	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	80	45	94	53	2	1	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



12 November 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Wootton Bassett School, Wootton Bassett SN4 7HG

Many thanks for the welcome you gave to me and my colleagues when we visited the school for its recent inspection. We enjoyed talking with you, and it quickly became clear to us how well your personal qualities of confidence, independence of thought, team working and leadership developed through the very wide range of activities in which you get involved at the school.

Wootton Bassett is an outstanding school which provides you with an excellent quality of education. You make excellent progress to achieve high standards in GCSE and A-level examinations. Staff are keenly aware of your rates of progress and your individual needs. Teachers assess your work regularly and use that assessment information to plan lessons which ensure that you all make rapid progress. They ensure that you are aware about how you need to improve your work to meet your challenging targets. They monitor your attitudes and progress carefully, and ensure that extra support is deployed swiftly to those who need it.

Leaders and managers have very effective systems for checking that the quality of education you receive is consistently high. They take very effective action to improve the school, and consult widely with staff, students, parents and carers. As a consequence, the whole school is very strongly focused on getting the best possible outcomes for its students. The curriculum and extra-curricular programmes offer a very wide range of opportunities and choices, and continue to develop. The particularly exciting international links are helping to broaden your awareness of matters of global concern.

To improve further, the school needs to focus on ensuring that all lessons feature the same high standards of planning, creativity and classroom management that exist in the great majority.

I am sure that you will continue to play a very full and constructive part in the school's success.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hodgkinson

Her Majesty's Inspector

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