

William Edwards School and Sports College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115354
Local Authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	338573
Inspection dates	8–9 December 2010
Reporting inspector	David Jones HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1199
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Baker
Headteacher	John King
Date of previous school inspection	21 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspection team observed 50 lessons, each taught by a different teacher. Meetings were held with the headteacher, nominated staff, students, a representative of the local authority, and members of the governing body. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation. The inspection team reviewed 421 questionnaires returned by parents and carers. A total of 192 student and staff questionnaires were evaluated.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- How accurate are the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning?
- How have the significant improvements in standards and achievement been secured?
- What improvements in languages and science have been secured?
- How effective is provision for those with special educational needs and/or learning difficulties.

Information about the school

The school is larger than average and the number of students known to be eligible for free school meals is almost half the national average. The number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion of those whose first language is not English are well below the national figures. There have been 18% more boys than girls on roll for the last three years.

The proportion of students registered by the school as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is average, although the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is above the national figure. There are a small number of children in the school who are looked after by the local authority.

The school is a specialist sports college. It has received the following national accreditations: Investors in People (IiP status), the Charter Mark, the Basic Skills Mark, the Arts Mark Silver Award, the Healthy Schools Award, Training School status, Quality Award for individual Student Support (QAiSS), Sport England and Badminton England accreditation, and the Queen Mother's Award for the Environment.

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 is an outstanding school. Outcomes for individuals and groups are outstanding and have improved steadily for the third consecutive year. Standards of attainment have been significantly above average during that time and variations in the performance of groups of students have been eliminated. The proportion of students securing five higher grade GCSEs, including English and mathematics, in 2010 was significantly above the national average for the third year in a row. The impact of the improvement in teaching and effective intervention strategies can be seen across the school. However, three years of consistently above average results in English and mathematics have been the bedrock of the improvements secured. The students' progress has been significantly above the national figure for the last two years. Students who represent a variety of ethnic backgrounds make good and often outstanding progress, as do vulnerable students and those who find learning difficult. Equality of opportunity is outstanding.

Teaching is good; there are no significant inadequacies across year groups or subjects. Evidence from this inspection confirms that the monitoring and evaluation of teaching are outstanding. This work is a strength of the senior staff and has been effectively devolved to heads of department. Where teaching is outstanding, the use of assessment and academic guidance to enhance learning is a positive factor. However, where teaching is satisfactory the use of assessment to enhance learning or, in some cases, the manner in which marking provided effective guidance, remains variable.

The range of curriculum opportunities provided is outstanding and the courses introduced in 2008 and 2009 have clearly had a positive impact on standards. The proportion of the 2010 cohort of Year 11 students who remained within education, employment and training was well above the local and national average.

Inspectors found behaviour to be good. A small number of parent, carers and student questionnaire responses expressed some reservations on this matter; those students who spoke to the inspection team were much more positive. Inspectors found the school to be a safe, secure and calm learning environment. Attendance is above average and has improved steadily in recent years. This is because of the popular and relevant curriculum offered and the school's effective engagement with parents and carers.

The care, welfare and guidance provided are outstanding and parents, carers and students spoke very positively about the committed pastoral support available. Students were full of praise for the work of the pastoral team. Academic guidance is a notable feature of the strongest teaching. All of the 'Every Child Matters' agenda areas of the school's work, such as supporting students to lead healthy, safe lives and make a positive contribution to the community, were judged to be good or better.

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Governance is outstanding. The governing body has a particularly clear view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Careful financial management over a number of years has helped to accrue a significant surplus towards the new sports hall to be built in 2011. Members of the governing body are particularly well-informed on the school's academic performance. During this inspection the governing body interviewed and appointed a new headteacher from a competitive field; the current deputy headteacher emerged as the successful applicant.

The school's self-evaluation is accurate, if a little modest. The leadership team has done well to secure: the impressive rise in standards and achievement that are based on the improvements in teaching and learning; equality of provision; behaviour; and attendance. The school's capacity to improve further is outstanding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Where teaching was judged to be only satisfactory:
 - focus on the quality of learning expected in the lesson
 - enhance the use of assessment to inform teaching and improve the consistency of marking.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Attainment on entry is below average. Standards at the end of Year 11 have improved consistently for the last three years. The proportion of higher grade GCSE passes, excluding English and mathematics, at 87%, is significantly above the national average. Similarly, the average points scored by students in all examinations were significantly above the national figure. The proportion of students obtaining five higher grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, is also significantly above the national average and has been so for the last three years. The results secured in the school's specialist physical education area are above the national average.

The progress made by those eligible for free school meals was above average. However, the progress made by low attaining students in mathematics and English was outstanding. Similarly, the progress made by those who find learning difficult is outstanding because of the range and quality of the help provided. Those students from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds progress as well as their peers; the performance of those students from a Black or Black British cultural heritage were well above the national average. Students make outstanding progress overall.

The students' current learning and performance in the classroom mirror the improvements shown by the most recent examination results. In the large majority of lessons, students make good progress and enjoy their work. Lesson outcomes are strongest where there is a clear focus on what the students are expected to learn and students respond well to this challenge. In an outstanding Year 11 physics lesson, tasks were very well planned to match the learning needs of the full range of students; the resources provided were imaginative and challenging; and students responded very positively as they investigated velocity. Enjoyment and achievement are outstanding, with strengths evident in attainment, achievement, the acquisition of work place and other skills, attendance and good behaviour.

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Students and their parents and carers are positive that students feel safe in school and inspectors observed good staff/student relationships to support this view. The school provides outstanding support for a healthy lifestyle because of the quality and range of sporting opportunities the students are engaged in, together with the range of guidance on personal health and internet safety. The students' contribution to the school and wider community is outstanding; they appreciate the range of responsibilities available through the student council and student executive; for example, the executive has been able to prioritise ?100,000 of the school's spending on new resources and the refurbishment of facilities in the last two years. Overall, the range of workplace and other skills the students develop towards their future economic well-being is outstanding. Significant improvement has been secured in the students' key skills and staff have worked hard to improve attendance. The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good with strengths in the promotion of spiritual and moral maturity.

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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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?

Teaching is good and is clearly having a positive impact on standards and students' progress. Outstanding teaching was observed in science, physical education and English. The strengths of teaching included: very good relationships between teachers and students; skilful questioning which probed students' understanding; enthusiastic and committed delivery; good use of information and communication technology; and strong

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subject knowledge. In some other lessons, the match of task to students' learning need lacked precision or opportunities were missed to secure higher level learning. In these lessons, the use of assessment to enhance learning was underdeveloped.

The curriculum is outstanding and the match of the learning pathways to the students' interest and learning needs has been important to the rise in standards and attendance. The school's specialist physical education status has been important to the outstanding support to healthy lifestyles provided. Care, guidance and support are outstanding with significant strengths in pastoral care and academic guidance.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
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?

Five years ago the governing body established a partnership with a local high-performing school that led to the part-time appointment of the current headteacher. Since then he has developed a strong senior team that has secured leadership and management capacity at every level, embedded ambition and driven improvement. Of the staff questionnaires returned to the inspectors, 100% felt proud to be a member of staff at William Edwards.

The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning by senior leaders is outstanding. Senior staff were invited to accompany inspectors in the joint observation of teaching; the views they expressed concurred with the judgements given by inspectors. Equality of opportunity is outstanding and students noted that racism is rare.

Governance is outstanding, with a sharp focus on enhancing provision and a very strong grasp of the standards and achievement agenda. Partnership working is good overall, with well established links with feeder schools and other local partner establishments. Community cohesion is good with local strengths and emerging global connections. The school's safeguarding procedures are good. Engagement with parents and carers is good and is being enhanced by the work of student managers. Senior staff and the governing body deploy resources very effectively and the school provides outstanding value for money.

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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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

Although 85% of parents and carers felt that the school manages behaviour well, small numbers expressed some reservations regarding behaviour. However, the inspection team found behaviour to be good and confirmed this view when they spoke to a wide range of students. Over 90% of parents and carers felt their children enjoyed school, that it was well led, kept their children safe and that they were happy with their children's experience. The results of the student questionnaire supported these positive parental views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at William Edwards School and Sports College 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 421 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1199 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	124	29	265	63	21	5	11	3
The school keeps my child safe	158	38	245	58	15	4	3	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	143	34	223	53	45	11	5	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	130	31	240	57	31	7	7	2
The teaching is good at this school	102	24	270	64	32	8	2	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	98	23	239	57	64	15	8	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	109	26	253	60	49	12	5	1
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)	106	25	248	59	35	8	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	109	26	258	61	34	8	8	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	116	28	236	56	38	9	18	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	70	17	248	59	60	14	12	3
The school is led and managed effectively	125	30	249	59	26	6	11	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	151	36	231	55	26	6	6	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.



10 December 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of William Edwards School and Sports College, Grays, RM16 3NJ

You will probably remember that an inspection team visited your school recently. We were very impressed by what we found. Overall, William Edwards is an outstanding school where students achieve well and secure very good examination results. Teaching is good and the range of choices provided for you in the curriculum is outstanding. We were pleased to see that your attendance is above average and that behaviour is good. Well done!

Many of you commented positively on the support you receive from the staff and inspectors were impressed with the positive relationships we saw around the school.

The large majority of your lessons are good but I have asked the headteacher to ensure that in the remainder, teachers focus more on what you are expected to learn and to use assessment and marking to guide the quality of learning.

I look forward to hearing of your future successes.

Yours sincerely

David Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector

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