

Weobley High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116952
Local Authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	358061
Inspection dates	9–10 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Michael Smith HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	465
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Stiles
Headteacher	Dean Williams
Date of previous school inspection	20 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. They visited 33 lessons and saw 33 teachers, which was all teachers who taught during the time of the inspection. They held meetings with staff, pupils, and governors. They observed the school's work, interrogated the school's assessment records and looked at the minutes of the meetings of the governing body, aspects of community work, the minutes of meetings with the School Improvement Partner, subject evaluations and school action plans and evaluations. They also scrutinised 226 parent and carer questionnaires, 30 staff questionnaires and 101 pupil questionnaires.

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

- the extent to which strong leadership, at all levels, has brought about sustained improvement
- the extent to which the quality of the provision ensures good or better learning
- the extent to which the school meets the individual needs of its pupils, given its small size.

Information about the school

The school is much smaller than the average secondary and serves a widespread rural community. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The vast majority of pupils are of White British background and very few pupils speak English as an additional language. There are a number of pupils from Traveller backgrounds and a number from service families. The proportion of pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities is above average. The school is a specialist languages and communication school. A very large majority of pupils travel to school by bus or car, some from some considerable distance away. A new headteacher started at the school in September 2008. The school has been awarded its second green flag for its pioneering work as an eco-school.

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

Weobley High is an outstanding school that provides excellent opportunities for pupils to thrive and develop very good skills and aptitudes. A major reason why the school has made excellent improvements is the drive and ambition of the highly effective and influential headteacher, who is supported by extremely committed and enthusiastic staff. Staff know the pupils extremely well as individuals and ensure that they achieve to their maximum. Attainment has been improving year on year and, as the changes to the curriculum impact fully upon results at the end of Year 11, records show that pupils are on track to reach above-average attainment in 2011 and even higher in 2012. All Year 9 pupils are interviewed by the headteacher to identify which courses best meet their needs. The excellent curriculum is then formulated to ensure pupils can all achieve well. Behaviour is outstanding because lessons engage and enthral pupils. In many lessons observed, there was a great excitement as pupils learned, often by teachers devising activities that involved working in groups or on practical tasks. Lessons, including revision sessions, are made fun and consequently learning is excellent. Attendance is above average because pupils want to attend and there has been a large drop in the proportion of pupils who have a considerable amount of time off school. Self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate. Senior managers know their school very well and are constantly looking to identify areas that need further improvement. They are not complacent and a major reason for the school's excellent capacity to carry on improving is that managers are fully committed to improving the provision further and hence the achievement of the pupils.

The quality of pupils' learning is excellent because of a combination of extremely good guidance and support, a highly motivating curriculum and engaging teaching. Teaching is outstanding, with many excellent practitioners. Teachers use assessment very well in many lessons. Questioning is used very well to identify how well pupils have learned, marking is often highly informative and detailed and identifies how pupils can improve. Time is then given for individuals to respond to comments and improve their work. However, this is not consistent and sometimes marking is not as detailed or effective.

Students say they feel very safe. This judgement is also supported by the returns from the parent and carer questionnaires. Risk assessments for educational visits and other activities are comprehensive. The specialist areas of language and communication are key to the schools' highly effective work within the community, as well as integral in improving the provision. The school is a hub of activity out of school times, with dance being a very important activity that many local children enjoy. A large proportion of pupils study a modern foreign language and the school is extending its work to offer translation services to local businesses.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build upon the very good practice on assessment within the school to ensure all marking, consistently, informs pupils how well they are doing, offers advice on how to improve and then gives pupils time to consolidate their work by following the advice.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils start at the school with below-average levels of attainment. Examination results for 2010 show that pupils, subsequently, make excellent progress; levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 are presently average and improving strongly. The school's accurate tracking shows that pupils make excellent progress and this is confirmed through observations of lessons; learning was outstanding in almost half of all lessons seen on the inspection. The school has been praised by the local authority for the excellent results of pupils who come from a Traveller background. Pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities make excellent progress also because of the very good support and additional help they receive. Pupils from service families do not always spend the full five years in the school, but like their peers their learning is outstanding.

In lessons during the inspection, pupils were very engaged. Behaviour was excellent because they were enjoying their work and the challenges posed for them by their teachers. Pupils responded well and worked effectively in groups or individually. They were always keen to answer and were not reticent at giving their opinions or answers as they knew they would not be mocked by others if they were wrong. Learning was also very good because staff delivered lessons in a manner which best met the needs of the pupils. As a result, lessons were often very different to each other.

Pupils have very good social and interpersonal skills and a highly developed understanding of moral issues, including those for supporting the eco-school awards. They demonstrate a strong spiritual awareness in their consideration of emotions and beliefs; many said they enjoy religious education as it makes them think and reflect. A group of Year 10 pupils said they had found the assembly on bereavement given by local sixth-form students very moving. Displays are used very well to give pupils a sense of pride in their work and also to celebrate cultural diversity. Pupils enjoy extending their horizons by taking part in cultural activities. The school production was received very well with almost a quarter of pupils taking part and pupils enjoy visiting the theatre in Birmingham and also in London. They relished the visit of a group demonstrating African drumming and at the time of the inspection were celebrating the Chinese New Year. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the local community; they are well respected and keen to support different groups within the town. They are actively involved in identifying areas for improvement within school and at present are on a working group to see how the school can provide homework better. Almost 20% identified in their responses to the questionnaire that the school could do more to help them live healthy lives. Above-average attendance, along with excellent key skills and attitudes, such as working well in teams and taking on leadership roles, ensures that pupils are extremely well prepared for the future. The proportion of pupils who are not in education, employment or training after they have left is very low.

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

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	2
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	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?

Provision is outstanding within the school as it is a coherent combination of high-class lessons, a very engaging curriculum and excellent care guidance and support. Because staff know the pupils so well, they are able to offer individual support within lessons. There are excellent relationships between staff and pupils, lessons are challenging and teaching activities are varied and targeted well for the needs of the pupils within the class. Subject choices ensure very good motivation also; for example, before groups are determined in science, all pupils are interviewed and the best route is identified for them. A large proportion takes triple science and others follow a BTEC science course which meets better their preferred way of learning. This attention to meeting the needs of individuals is typical within the school.

There is very good support for pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities and also for those pupils whose circumstances make them more vulnerable, including the highly effective inclusion centre. Close working with other agencies ensures pupils achieve well. Any absence is followed up and checked immediately, hence the big improvement in attendance and reduction in the proportion of pupils who take significant time off school. The school is highly effective in supporting new entrants to the school, through a very coherent induction. This includes those who start in Year 7 and those who arrive at other times, including some from service families. Pupils who have been excluded from other schools or advised to change schools have settled in and are achieving well.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
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?

Since the last inspection, the headteacher, supported very well by leaders at all levels, has made significant changes. Their drive and ambition has enthused and empowered staff to raise pupils' aspirations and raise levels of attainment. Targets are challenging and used to motivate pupils to achieve their best. Staff share the ambition and are highly motivated to carry on the improvements. All staff who submitted their questionnaires said they were proud to work at the school and the vast majority said their contribution was valued and they knew what the school was trying to achieve. These responses are testament to how effective leaders have been in motivating and supporting staff. The school works very well with other external agencies and is very influential in working with both other secondary schools in the Herefordshire Leading Edge Partnership.

Governance is outstanding. The governing body is very supportive of the school and has well-defined and effective committees. Members of the governing body analyse data meticulously to challenge the school; this includes the attainment of different groups as well as the take up of extra-curricular activities. The support for service families and the good relationships with the local Traveller community show excellent attention to ensure equality of opportunity. The school gives very good support to the local community and works well with its partner primary schools, including supporting them in teaching languages. Safeguarding procedures in school are of a good standard. Safeguarding is a very high priority and the school has well-defined and effective systems, including training for governors and for parents and carers. Community cohesion is promoted extremely well. Pupils have a very good understanding of local and global issues and in response to the school's evaluation, enjoy visits to city areas to gain a better understanding of life in an urban environment with a greater mix of cultures and ethnicities. The school provides outstanding value for money, given the outstanding outcomes.

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

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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	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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

The return of almost half of the questionnaires from families is far higher than usually seen and shows the strong support between parents, carers and school. The proportions of returns which agreed or strongly agreed were higher than those usually seen for all questions. The vast majority of responses said their children enjoyed school and felt safe. A number of parents and carers identified specific issues which were investigated as part of the inspection. Where concerns were raised by some parents and carers, other comments said how well these aspects were dealt with in school. For example one parent or carer wrote 'You can approach any member of staff for help and nothing is too much trouble for them', whereas another commented 'on some occasions my communications with the school have not been acted upon.' A common feature from individual comments was the impact of the headteacher. One parent said 'The headteacher is an inspiration to staff' and another, 'Excellent school and headteacher'. The overall response was very supportive of the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Weobley High 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 226 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 465 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	83	37	128	57	15	7	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	96	42	121	54	8	4	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	80	35	130	58	10	4	3	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	80	35	131	58	8	4	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	68	30	146	65	4	2	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	56	25	143	63	23	10	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	44	19	157	69	17	8	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)	71	31	135	60	8	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	72	32	137	61	7	3	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	67	30	129	57	15	7	3	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	49	22	148	65	13	6	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	90	40	123	54	5	2	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	97	43	119	53	8	4	0	0

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



11 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Weobley High School, Hereford, HR4 8ST

When I visited your school recently with my colleagues, we met some of you at lunchtime and talked to others during lessons and at break. Thank you very much for the way in which you helped us gain an overview of how very good your school is. We judged it outstanding and this is in no small part because of your excellent work and behaviour and how well you learn in lessons. We were impressed with your excellent manners and your very good contribution to the life of the school and the local community.

You make excellent progress. Results in your GCSE examinations have improved a lot and your current standards are even better. We saw some very interesting lessons, in which you were enjoying learning and judged that teaching is outstanding. In order for the school to get even better, we have recommended that marking needs to be more consistent and that it, always, informs you how to improve. Teachers, then, need to give you time to follow their advice; doing this carefully is a way you can help take the school forward. You have very good relationships with staff, who know you all as individuals. The excellent curriculum enables all of you to achieve well and almost all of you said in the questionnaire that the school prepares you well for the future and that you feel safe.

Staff support and care for you very well. They help you settle extremely well at the start of Year 7, or if you start at other times, and make sure you are absolutely ready to go forward to the next stage of your education when you leave.

Your headteacher and other staff have made a very concerted effort to ensure all of you get the best possible education. We judge that they are getting more and more successful at this and that they have shown that Weobley should get even better in the future. We wish you well at this outstanding school of which you are justifiably proud.

Yours sincerely

Michael Smith

Her Majesty's Inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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