

Wilmington Grammar School for Boys

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118875
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	358462
Inspection dates	13–14 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Stephen Long HMI

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	911
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	255
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr R Carlo
Headteacher	Mr A Williamson
Date of previous school inspection	19 September 2007
School address	Common Lane Dartford DA2 7DA
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. A total of 42 lessons or part-lessons were observed, taught by 39 members of staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and met with groups of staff, students, governors and parents. They looked at students' work and assessment records, a range of documents, including the school's strategic plans and evaluations, assessment information and school policies. The team analysed 316 questionnaires from parents and carers, 107 from students and 44 from staff.

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

- The impact of efforts to improve students' overall progress toward challenging GCSE targets and ensure more consistently effective teaching in all subjects.
- The effectiveness of steps taken to improve the quality of sixth form provision.
- The capacity of leaders and managers at all levels to monitor the quality of provision in their areas of responsibility and bring about improvements.

Information about the school

Wilmington Grammar School for Boys is smaller than most secondary schools. It has specialist status for engineering. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below that in most schools. Fewer students than in most schools have first languages other than English, and the proportion from minority ethnic groups is just below the national average. The school collaborates with four other local schools and a college of further education in the provision of courses from Year 10 onwards. A small number of female students are on roll in the sixth form. Most students live in favourable socio-economic circumstances. The headteacher joined in January this year. During the term before, the school was led by the deputy headteacher, after the departure of the last headteacher at the end of the previous academic year. Since the last inspection, the school has gained Sportsmark and Sports Partnership awards, National Healthy School Status, and has become an Extended School, offering out-of-hours provision. A building project is nearing completion to provide additional classroom space.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Wilmington Grammar School for Boys is a satisfactory school with strengths in the quality of care and the curriculum it provides. Students' academic progress is satisfactory but improving. Performance in examinations declined for two years after the last inspection. Overall targets were missed and progress in some subjects, including mathematics, was too slow. The new headteacher recognised the need for change and, working with the staff, has set about raising the school's aspirations. Students' progress is accelerating and the declining trend in attainment has been stopped and attainment is rising. Unvalidated results of this summer's GCSE examinations show better progress than the year before. Variations in performance between GCSE subjects are reducing and progress on vocational courses is good. The school has a satisfactory but growing capacity to improve. There is further to go to secure good progress in all subjects, and some weaker areas identified in the last inspection, such as improving the sixth form provision, remain.

The good quality care provided means that students feel really safe and much enjoy school. Their attendance is high and they are keen to contribute to the school community. The good curriculum adds much to their enjoyment. It has been revised this year to better meet students' needs. Changes such as a wider range of vocational opportunities are popular with students. Specialist status is making a good impact on the numbers studying engineering and on partnership work, especially with other schools. There are some good initiatives to promote community cohesion but these are not systematic in preparing students for life in a diverse community.

Effective strategies to improve teaching mean more lessons are good or better. Nevertheless, some do not cater properly for students of differing ability, particularly the more able, and the more effective teaching practices are not always shared between staff. Assessment and tracking systems have been overhauled and are good. This helps to identify underachieving students for whom intervention is provided, and contributed to the gains made in summer examination results.

Leaders and managers are working increasingly well as a team to move the school forward. The right priorities for improvement underpin overall development plans. These are filtering down to layers of planning beneath, notably for subjects, but at this level are not always focused on outcomes for students or how improvements will be checked. The monitoring of teaching has brought benefits, although lesson observations are not always focused sharply enough on less effective aspects of teaching or on learning, so as to secure further improvement. Sixth-form leadership is satisfactory. However, the monitoring of teaching quality and students' progress is not systematic enough to improve provision. The governing body have honed their approach to checking academic progress so as to avoid the problems of the past. Nevertheless, their wider monitoring of the impact

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of their policies promoting equality of opportunity lacks rigour in identifying areas needing attention.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring all lessons are planned to challenge students of differing abilities
 - sharing more effectively the good and outstanding practices in teaching which exist in the school so that they become the norm
 - concentrating on specific aspects of teaching and paying more attention to learning when observing lessons and providing feedback to staff.
- Improve the impact of school leaders by:
 - ensuring improvement plans at all levels focus on better outcomes for students and that progress towards these is checked rigorously
 - ensuring that the monitoring of sixth-form provision is more effective in bringing about improvement
 - checking more systematically the impact of policies to promote equality of opportunity, so as to define areas requiring action.
- Improve the promotion of community cohesion and the way it is evaluated so that students are better prepared for life in a diverse society.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students much enjoy school and have positive attitudes to learning. Their achievement is satisfactory and improving. Although their overall attainment by the end of Year 11 exceeds that seen nationally, since they begin with high starting points on entry their progress is only satisfactory and some do not gain the top GCSE grades they should. In lessons, students behave well. They make rapid progress when tasks engage them and encourage them to think. However, some lessons do not exploit students' potential, and the pace of learning is more pedestrian. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress overall. They too perform better in lessons where teachers plan to meet their specific needs and involve them actively in learning. Students say they feel well cared for and are confident to turn to adults if they need help. They make a good contribution to school life, for example by taking on responsibilities that include membership of the new 'student leadership team' and the 'eco team', which helps maintain and improve the school and local environment, and by taking a lead in raising money for charity. Most students understand well how to lead healthy lives, as reflected in attaining National Healthy School Status. They are keen to participate in sport-related activities and most know what constitutes a good diet, although some find difficulty in sticking to it. Students develop good social and teamwork skills which, together with their high attainment in literacy and numeracy, prepare them well for the future. Their moral development is good and they learn to make the right decisions as young adults. Spiritual and cultural development are satisfactory but more limited because some opportunities are missed by the school to broaden and consolidate their experience of a range of cultures and faiths.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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 have confident subject knowledge. They enjoy good relationships with students and manage behaviour well. Most lessons start with a clear explanation of the tasks to be completed, although sometimes with too little discussion of their purpose to capture students' attention fully. In a growing number of lessons, especially at Key Stage 4, the better assessment information now available enables activities to be planned which ensure students work towards their targets. This includes questioning and tasks set at different levels so as to challenge students of differing ability. However, this is inconsistent, with work in some lessons too easy or too hard for students, and some teachers do not use discussion to assess progress or share ideas. The improved assessment system means students are now clearer about their attainment levels and targets. This is especially true among older students, for whom there is more regular reference to targets in lessons and in marking. However, the overall quality of marking is variable in guiding improvement, notably at Key Stage 3. Curriculum developments this year mean students have good progression routes, depending on their abilities and interests. There are growing opportunities for fostering independent learning skills, for example through Personal Learning and Thinking Skills lessons in Year 7. There is an increasing range of options for gifted and talented students such as the 'F1 Challenge'. Specialist status underpins much collaborative work with other schools; for example, the school takes a leading role in providing the Diploma in engineering and is active in sport-related partnerships. Good

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advice and guidance mean students make appropriate option choices for Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. A wide range of extra-curricular activities, some linked with Extended School status, add to students' enjoyment. Students are well known and cared for as individuals. Their transition into the school is good. Vulnerable or at-risk students are identified properly and receive good support in their time at school, which includes work with external agencies and encouragement to sustain high attendance. Exclusions are rare and those finding difficulty in managing their behaviour are skilfully helped to do so.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher is committed to improving the school. He is supported increasingly well by a restructured senior team with clear areas of responsibility. They have a broadly accurate view of provision and use assessment information with growing precision to set targets and check the school's progress. Middle leaders, such as heads of subjects, have also been restructured and are gaining effectiveness, although their impact on their areas of responsibility is variable. Whole-school improvement plans provide challenging high-level targets and logical timelines for actions, for example prioritising the need for a reliable assessment system. Most subject development plans reflect whole-school initiatives but do not always include explicit targets relating to outcomes for students, or groups of students. This reduces the focus on making an impact where it really matters. Expectations of all staff have been tightened so that accountability is clear. Staff development is increasingly well linked to key areas such as leadership and teaching, albeit with some opportunities missed to share effective approaches to teaching. Safeguarding students is a high priority. Procedures are reviewed and updated regularly. The inclusion of all students is reflected in policies promoting equality of opportunity. However, checking that all groups of students benefit equally across the full range of outcomes is underdeveloped. The governing body are keen to support the school and enjoy a good flow of information from the senior leadership team. They understand the school's strengths and weaknesses and are taking sensible steps to improve their use of assessment data as a monitoring tool. Communication with parents is good and has improved with a new reporting system and the imminent launch of on-line reporting. The promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. There are strengths in the harmonious nature of the school's internal community and links with the local area, for example with youth and senior citizens groups. However, evaluating the impact of the work done on students' understanding of diverse communities, both nationally and globally, lacks the precision needed in planning further developments.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
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	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

From broadly average starting points at age 16, sixth-form students' progress is satisfactory so that overall attainment is in line with the national average by the end of AS- and A-level courses. However, the quality of teaching, while satisfactory, is variable and leads to inconsistent progress in different subject areas. Students enjoy their time in the sixth form and their attendance is high. They make a good contribution to school life, for example taking a lead role in organising events in school and setting a good example to younger students through their behaviour. The curriculum benefits from collaborative arrangements with the neighbouring girls' school so as to offer a good range of courses. Care for students' personal development is good. Academic monitoring and guidance is satisfactory but is not always sharp enough to identify underachievement so it can be addressed or to engage students fully in moving their own learning forward. Information and guidance about the next stages in their education are good and the majority of students go on to higher education in institutions of their choice. Leadership of the sixth form has been effective in sustaining good care for students and has maintained satisfactory academic progress. An improvement plan has been drawn up this year, suitably focused on boosting students' progress and developing the curriculum further. This, alongside clearer expectations of the role of sixth-form leadership, has the potential to improve provision. However, monitoring the quality of sixth-form provision by observing lessons and/or reference to assessment information is not consistently prosecuted with the determination required to secure good progress in all subjects.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

Responses to the questionnaire were supportive of the overall effectiveness of the school. A very large majority of parents and carers who responded felt their children were making enough progress in their learning. They took a more positive view of this aspect of the school's work than inspectors did after the team had spent time in lessons. Parents and carers were appreciative of the quality of care provided, and felt that their children enjoyed attending school and felt safe while there.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Wilmington Grammar School for Boys 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 316 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 911 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	142	45	165	52	4	1	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	132	42	178	56	1	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	115	36	171	54	14	4	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	131	41	161	51	6	2	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	117	37	179	57	3	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	85	27	190	60	22	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	85	27	195	62	9	3	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)	117	37	157	50	7	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	134	42	161	51	6	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	134	42	161	51	6	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	112	35	166	53	14	4	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	76	24	185	59	10	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	174	55	133	42	1	0	1	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	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.



15 October 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Wilmington Grammar School for Boys, Dartford DA2 7DA

This letter is to thank you for your help during the school's recent inspection and to give you our judgements, although you might like to read the full report. The school provides a satisfactory standard of education overall but has some strong features.

- You reach high standards by the end of Year 11; however, the overall progress made is only satisfactory because you join with standards which are above those in most schools. The school is working on this and progress is accelerating.
- Many of you said you enjoy school. Your attendance is very high and you told us that the staff take good care of you and can be relied on if you need help.
- The school does a good job in helping you lead healthy lives and enabling you to get involved in school life, through things like serving on the school council.
- Teaching is satisfactory overall, although there are increasing numbers of good and outstanding lessons.
- The curriculum is good and you told us that you enjoy the range of subjects on offer, including the widening range of vocational opportunities.
- Provision in the sixth form is satisfactory. Students make the expected amount of progress, enjoy their time there and set a good example.
- The headteacher and the staff are working hard to improve the school. Leaders and managers are becoming more effective in moving the school forward and the governors are checking the impact made on you with increasing accuracy.

I have asked the headteacher to add the following to his plans for the future.

- Improve teaching, particularly to ensure that in all lessons there are activities which challenge all students, taking into account your varying degrees of ability.
- Check that leaders and governors focus development planning closely on improving outcomes for students, improve further the monitoring of teaching throughout the school and check more systematically that all of you are benefiting equally from the school's provision.
- Improve the way the school prepares you for life in a culturally and religiously diverse national and global community.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Long

Her Majesty's Inspector

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