

William Ellis School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100056
Local Authority	Camden
Inspection number	354797
Inspection dates	4–5 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Nasim Butt

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	899
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	280
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Fiona Millar
Headteacher	Jill Hislop
Date of previous school inspection	26 March 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 42 part lessons, each taught by a different teacher, undertaking three joint observations with school staff. They held meetings with staff, students and governors. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation form, its monitoring records of students' progress towards their targets, governing body minutes, and the school improvement plan. They also considered responses to questionnaires completed by 21 parents and carers, 155 students and 34 staff.

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

- The effectiveness of school leaders at all levels in raising attainment and accelerating the progress of students eligible for free school meals and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- How well teachers use assessment information to support the learning of students of different abilities, set personal targets and track their progress.
- The impact of the school's language specialism in promoting the future economic well-being of students.
- Sixth form achievement and how effectively the consistency of provision has been improved.

Information about the school

This is a slightly smaller than average non-denominational school drawing boys from North London. About one third of the student population is made up of a mixed sixth form which is part of a consortium comprising four local schools. The school works in close partnership with the neighbouring Parliament Hill Girls School. It has been a specialist language college since 1997 and was last re-designated in March 2008. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals and those who speak English as an additional language is above average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, and the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is well above average. At the time of the inspection, the school was led by an interim headteacher who assumed post in September 2010.

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

William Ellis provides a satisfactory education and shows early signs of sustained improvement. Outcomes in the sixth form are good because of good teaching and a strong curriculum. The school is a caring and inclusive community in which students and staff from diverse backgrounds get on well with each other.

Students enter the school with attainment that is broadly average and make satisfactory progress. Students' attainment in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11 has been close to the national average for several years and the latest data show that it is steadily rising. Although teaching has improved, too much is still consistently satisfactory rather than good with the result that many students do not make the maximum progress. Teaching is satisfactory overall, but there is much that is good and occasionally outstanding. However, there are missed opportunities for teachers to share good practice more widely across departments and subjects. In the best lessons, which comprise almost half of all lessons seen, teachers planned work well to meet students' individual needs, and skilfully asked questions that engage and challenge the learners. However, assessment information is not used consistently to plan work that meets the needs of individual students. In addition, teachers do not always share with students what they need to do to make good improvements in the lesson. As a result, students' progress is often no more than satisfactory.

Partnerships are strong. For example, the language college status of the school is used effectively to train and update local primary school teachers in teaching modern foreign languages. Adult language provision is also good and those who partake, and this includes some parents and carers, benefit from gaining accredited qualifications. Although the curriculum has clear strengths, the school agrees with inspectors that key skills such as literacy and numeracy are not yet fully embedded.

The school is showing signs of emerging well from a period of turbulence. The new headteacher's energy and vision are apparent and she is providing clear strategic direction. She is supported well by a competent and energetic group of senior leaders. As a result, the drive for improvement is gaining momentum, with both governors and staff sharing this vision. Increasingly, middle leaders are taking responsibility for performance in their curriculum area, though the systems used to hold them to account are insufficiently robust. The accuracy of the school's self-evaluation is shown by its clear analysis of performance data and identification of underachieving groups. The outcome of this process has been targeted interventions for specific groups, for example those eligible for free school meals and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, the previously inadequate achievement of these groups is now satisfactory. The positive impact of the work of school leaders in a relatively short span of time indicates the school's satisfactory, and rapidly improving, capacity for sustained improvement. ♦♦

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that the large majority is regularly good or better by:
 - ? ensuring all teachers consistently use assessment information to ensure high expectations in lessons and good challenge for all students in their learning
 - ? providing students with good quality written and oral feedback, linked to learning targets, to support them in making further improvements
 - ? systematically sharing with students what they need to do to make good progress in the lesson.
- ? Build on the improved curriculum provision already present at Key Stage 4, ensuring that better opportunities are provided for all students to develop the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication
- Improve the leadership and management of middle leaders by sharpening the systems used to hold them to account.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students' learning and progress are satisfactory and improving as a result of improvements in teaching. The school's own assessment information shows that students eligible for free school meals and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are, in the main, meeting their challenging targets and achieving in line with expectations. In about half the lessons seen during the inspection, students were making good progress. Year 7 students enjoyed working in groups to investigate whether the height of drop affected the size of the blood splatter, using red ink in a science lesson. Students who speak English as an additional language developed their experimental skills well and took full part in evaluating their findings. Year 11 modern foreign language students used assessment criteria and mark schemes effectively to assess their own work in a German lesson and made good progress as a result. In many cases, however, students are not given sufficient opportunity to extend their learning in lessons and develop further their speaking, listening and thinking skills. In these lessons, students' learning is no more than satisfactory.

The attendance of the vast majority is good and students say they enjoy coming to school. New behaviour systems have clarified expectations and most students are responding well to this. During the inspection, the school was mostly calm and orderly, though there was lack of focus and attention in some lessons as a result of lack of pace and challenge. Students say they feel safe and measures are taken consistently to ensure that any bullying, if it were to occur, is reported and dealt with swiftly. Students have a good understanding of personal safety. The school council has been recently reinstated but, although there are some early signs of success, this has not had sufficient time to make a significant impact. Students have a clear understanding of what good health involves and what they need to do to maintain a healthy lifestyle. However, due to constraints imposed by the school building, opportunities to put this into practice at lunchtime are too limited. The school actively and successfully promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, the annual international evening celebrates the diversity of cultures represented through national costumes, food, poetry and music. ◆

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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	3
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	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
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 and learning have improved steadily since the last inspection. In most lessons seen, students show a desire to learn. Teachers who use the school's assessment data effectively show good knowledge and understanding of students' needs. This was the case in over half of the lessons seen. These lessons provide all groups of students with appropriately challenging and stimulating work and result in equally good progress. In other lessons, teachers' planning lacks sufficient detail and focuses more on what the teacher will do, rather than what the students will learn. In these lessons, teachers do not use the assessment data available effectively to plan for the needs of different groups, resulting in lessons that lack sufficient challenge or pace. As a consequence, students are less motivated to learn. The quality of teachers' marking of students' work is varied and does not always provide students with clear advice on how to improve.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and has recently been extended to meet the wider range of needs and interests of Key Stage 4 students. Language college status has enabled the school to both enhance and extend its curriculum so that most Key Stage 3 students study two modern foreign languages and many across the school study Mandarin during extra-curricular time. This aspect of provision has a good impact on students' future economic well-being. However, basic skills of literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology are not well embedded through the curriculum and school

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leaders have begun work to address this. Students who speak English as an additional language are well supported by the coordinator, who liaises with parents and carers effectively to induct the students into the new systems and the school's high expectations. Care systems are well organised and staff carry out their roles diligently and effectively. Students receive good quality information, advice and guidance about future courses and career opportunities. The needs of the most vulnerable students are effectively met which ensures that these students participate well in a wide range of activities.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The impact of leadership and management is satisfactory and improving. After a period of turbulence, the new headteacher has been successful in galvanising the school community so that leaders and managers at all levels have a shared vision and a good understanding of the key priorities for the school. The senior team is providing the capacity to focus more effectively on improving teaching and learning across the school. The impact of the work of the teaching and learning communities, coupled with the productive partnership work with the neighbouring girls' school, is beginning to pay dividends. The school's systems for monitoring and evaluating its work are not always sufficiently robust to ensure accountability at all levels for the outcomes achieved by students. There is more work to be done at middle leadership level to ensure that improvements in achievement and teaching extend to all subjects.

The governing body has been instrumental in setting the right strategic direction and taking tough decisions to secure the future of the school. The good work of the school improvement committee has ensured that there is a relentless focus on raising students' achievement. Safeguarding procedures meet all statutory requirements and the school site is secure. New technology is now being used to undertake risk assessments for educational visits that were previously not sufficiently robust.

All forms of discrimination and barriers to learning are effectively tackled. However, the school's promotion of equality of opportunity is no more than satisfactory because its work with students of differing ability levels has not yet led them to achieving the best they can. Community cohesion is effectively encouraged within the school and internationally through the link with two schools in China. Sixth form students in their gap year, learning to speak Mandarin, have worked as teaching assistants in these schools. The school acknowledges there is work yet to be done in completing an analysis of needs and fully evaluating the effectiveness with which it promotes community cohesion.

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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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
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	3
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

The provision for sixth form education at William Ellis is provided within the La Swap consortium of schools. The consortium is effectively managed and there are good procedures for monitoring the quality of the provision across all the schools. Students enter the sixth form with average to below average levels of attainment and most make good progress by the time they leave. Attendance and punctuality have improved as a result of better systems and closer monitoring, and are satisfactory. Pass rates and retention rates are close to the national average. Students say they enjoy their lessons in the sixth form and the wider opportunities available to them. Teaching is mostly good, supported by good tracking systems to monitor students' progress. This enables effective intervention to take place where there is any underachievement. The curriculum is broad and offers both academic and vocational opportunities, and is well matched at different levels to the needs of the students. Students benefit from the wider curriculum provision offered within the consortium of schools. The guidance programme raises students' aspirations and ensures that they are well informed about opportunities at university and in the world of work. Leaders and managers of the sixth form are focused on raising levels of students' achievement. A key priority now is to raise attainment in the weaker subjects to the level of the best by working closely with individual departments, and this is already recognised by staff.

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

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

The few parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire expressed a range of views about their children's experience at the school. Most say that their children enjoys school and this is reflected in good attendance. A small minority do not agree that the school promotes healthy lifestyles or deals effectively with poor behaviour. These aspects are covered in the report. A few respondents raised concerns about the frequent change in leadership and their children not making enough progress at the school. Inspectors found that the progress of some groups was previously inadequate. However, as a result of the strategies put in place by current school leaders, most students are now making satisfactory progress. ◆

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at William Ellis 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 21 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 931 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	6	29	12	57	1	5	2	10
The school keeps my child safe	4	19	16	76	1	5	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	8	38	10	48	2	10	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	9	43	7	33	4	19	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	4	19	14	67	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	5	24	12	57	3	14	1	5
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	4	19	8	38	7	33	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)	3	15	9	43	1	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	5	24	12	57	2	10	2	10
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	4	19	9	43	6	29	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	8	38	12	57	1	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	5	24	11	52	2	10	1	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	6	26	12	57	3	14	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	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.



6 November 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of William Ellis School, London NW5 1RN

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to thank you all for your help during our visit to your school. We found what you had to say very helpful in informing our judgements about your school. We were pleased to see so many of you willingly take part in the wide range of extra-curricular activities, especially those linked with your school's language college specialism, in particular the study of Mandarin.

We judged that your school provides you with a satisfactory education. It has some good features. For example, you have a good understanding of personal safety, and the care, guidance and support you receive is a strength of the school. Your governors have also worked hard and successfully in keeping the school community focused on matters of strategic importance. You told us that you found teaching to be of variable quality, although it was apparent that many lessons were interesting because they involved you actively in learning. We judged the quality of teaching to be satisfactory with some improvements since the last inspection. Although there are strengths to your curriculum, we considered that the school could help you more in developing your literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology skills. We also noted that your behaviour has improved because of clearer expectations and better systems in place to monitor it. However, there is still a lack of focus and attention in some lessons.

Your headteacher and her senior team have done well in a short span of time. We worked closely with her and she agrees with our conclusions on what the school should do to make it better. We have asked the school to:

- improve the quality of teaching so that most is consistently good or better, resulting in students making consistently good progress.
- provide more opportunities in the curriculum for you to develop your literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology skills
- develop sharper systems to hold middle leaders to account.

All of you can help by behaving consistently well and working hard to achieve your targets, and perhaps even exceeding them.

Yours sincerely

Nasim Butt Lead inspector

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