

West Hill School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106274
Local Authority	Tameside
Inspection number	355920
Inspection dates	8–9 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Brian Sharples 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	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	866
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr S Fildes
Headteacher	Mr R Hewitt
Date of previous school inspection	14 May 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 38 lessons and saw 38 different teachers. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff and groups of students. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including: 379 questionnaires completed by parents and carers and a wide range of policies and records for safeguarding.

- How well students progress and attain with a particular focus on mathematics and English.
- The overall quality of teaching across a range of subjects, with a focus on the use of assessment to: determine how well learners are attaining, learning and making progress with a particular focus on middle and lower ability students, and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The quality of leadership and management across the school, including the role of middle leaders, in striving for improvement.

Information about the school

West Hill School is an average-sized comprehensive and takes students from at least 10 wards across the town. A very large majority of students are from a White British heritage. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups and the proportion who speak English as an additional language are both well below average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is below average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The school has specialist status in science. The school has recently received a gold award for the Cultural Diversity Quality Standard.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

West Hill School provides a good standard of education. It is a fully inclusive school where every student matters and where the academic and personal development of all individuals is seen as equally important. This ethos of the school is summed up in comments made to inspectors by parents and carers. One parent commented typically that, 'West Hill makes sure the children in their care are safe, happy and interested in life'. Another commented that the school 'encourages boys to achieve good results not only in exams but in extended studies and personal development'. This ethos creates an atmosphere where students feel safe and happy. They enjoy coming to school and attendance is high.

Students enter the school with levels of attainment that are slightly above average. Over the last three years, attainment has generally been average in mathematics and in the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C. In 2009, the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C GCSE passes, including English and mathematics was significantly above national average. Last year this statistic fell to national average because the standards in English fell below the national average. In 2010, students made satisfactory progress overall by the time they left school. However, since that time the rates of progress have improved and all students, including the lower ability and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are making good progress. Consequently, standards of attainment are rising. An analysis of the school's tracking of students' performance, results from modular tests and the scrutiny of students' work all confirm that current standards are above average. Based on this improvement, the school is justifiably confident that the challenging targets in English and mathematics for 2011 are on track to be met and provide results which are above national averages.

This improvement is due in part to the overall good quality of teaching and learning and the students' attitudes to learning. These qualities are good or better in the majority of lessons. Typical characteristics in these lessons include: a good range of teaching styles, good challenge and high expectations from teachers, involvement of students in their own learning and a positive attitude on the part of students towards learning. In the good lessons, teachers use assessments well to: track students' progress, set targets and inform future planning. Some teachers annotate and mark work well and allow students to reflect on their own work or assess the work of other students against set criteria. However, not all teaching is good. There is an inconsistency across subjects in the use of assessments and the marking of students work. This has an impact on the consistency of teachers' planning and the quality of students' learning and outcomes.

The quality of care, guidance and support provided for students is outstanding. A very large majority of students referred to the way they feel cared for and safe in school. The school provides a rich and varied curriculum which offers a wide choice for students and

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helps to ensure that their individual needs are met. The good curriculum provision contributes to the improving outcomes for students.

There are well-established systems in place for regularly monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the school's work by senior leaders, middle leaders and the governing body. The inspection team agreed with almost all of the self-evaluation judgements made by the school. Senior leaders and managers know the school well. Their assessments of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and their evaluation of teaching, are accurate. Middle managers are developing in their monitoring and evaluation roles. However, the quality of monitoring their subjects and of subject development planning varies across subject departments and is not yet of a consistently high standard. The senior leaders are united in the vision and aspirations for the school and are persistent in their drive for improvement. The school works exceptionally well with a range of partners and maintains good links with parents and carers. It provides good value for money and has good capacity to make further improvements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the quality of leadership and management by:
 - developing and embedding the pockets of good practice in monitoring, evaluation and subject development planning across all subject areas.
- Strengthen the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that the pockets of good practice in assessment and marking of students' work are embedded across all subjects to improve teachers' planning, inform learning and improve students' outcomes.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Taken over the last three years attainment is average in GCSE examinations. As a result of robust action by the school, the attainment of students currently in the school is above average and they are achieving well. In lessons, the majority of students are keen to learn. They are attentive and eager to answer questions and take an active part in the lesson. As a result, they make good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of topics being covered. Vulnerable students and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress in their learning. This is a result of the good pastoral support and care they receive, which is enhanced greatly by the work of the learning support unit. One young boy said, 'In this school everyone is settled and the environment is good, the teachers need congratulating for working so hard with us'.

Students clearly enjoy coming to school which is reflected in their high attendance. Behaviour in lessons and around school is good overall and the students show respect and concern for the well-being of others. Exclusions in school are very low which reflects the positive behaviour. Students work together collaboratively and are active members of a cohesive school community which they support very well through roles such as: prefects, council members, sports leaders and peer mentors. Similarly they make a strong contribution to local, regional and international communities. A particularly impressive project is the work being pursued by a group of students taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award. This involves them travelling to Kenya in 2011 and helping with the building of a new school.

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Students have access to a wide range of sporting activities and have a good understanding of how these activities improve their health. The vast majority of students, parents and carers say that the students feel safe and are safe in and around school. The school council has a strong voice, including participation in staff recruitment and suggesting practical improvements to the school's environment.

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	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
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	1
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	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?

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Where good teaching takes place students have opportunities to be involved in their own learning which in turn motivates and engages them effectively. Teachers use a range of teaching and learning styles to ensure that students are interested and keen to be involved in the lesson. During the inspection several lessons were seen where teachers made very good use of the technologies available. For example, in one lesson good use was made of video sequences from the internet to teach about international disasters. In another lesson, a teacher used a video camera to give a live practical demonstration on bread making. Teachers make good use of questioning skills to extend the students' thinking and understanding.

The school provides a good curriculum provision which meets the students' needs well. The introduction of more vocational subjects has had a very positive impact on improving the levels of enjoyment, motivation and achievement for some groups of students. Collaboration with external providers, such as a local college, has enhanced curriculum

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choice and progression opportunities. Participation rates in a wide range of extra-curricular activities are high. Students participate well in projects and activities outside lessons that help to develop excellent confidence and wider work-related skills, such as team-working and problem-solving. They highlight this as a particular strength of the school. The specialist science status is leading the way in raising achievement with targeted support for students at risk of underachieving. It has also funded the purchase of specialist information and communication technology equipment to improve learning across the school. Students' learning is further enhanced by themed weeks, enrichment days and work across departments.

The school places great value on the provision of high quality care, guidance and support for all students. The school has excellent arrangements in place for students moving in and out of school at key transition points. There is a very good supply of information and individual guidance for students choosing Key Stage 4 options and for those progressing post-16. Students who may be vulnerable or lack confidence receive excellent support and guidance from an experienced pastoral team. This excellent support has contributed greatly to developing these students' self- confidence, self-esteem and in raising their attainment and rates of progress.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leaders are working effectively to raise standards across the school. They, along with staff and the governing body, have a shared vision for the continual improvement in achievement and teaching and learning. This focus and drive for improvement has contributed to the recent rise in students' attainment and rates of progress. Systems and procedures for monitoring and evaluating whole-school performance are established well and embedded into the work of senior leaders and governors. There is an effective whole-school improvement plan in which actions are targeted at the right priorities for improvement over the forthcoming year. Findings from the school's self-evaluation are used well to inform whole-school and departmental improvement plans. At the time of the inspection, the school met all safeguarding requirements well. The governing body carries out its statutory duties effectively. It is effective in its work and makes a good contribution to the school by ensuring that standards are monitored and staff are provided with sufficient challenge to improve. Middle leaders are developing in their roles and several subject leaders have received training to support and develop their skills further. The leaders of the school work hard to ensure that all students are treated equally and that any form of discrimination is not tolerated. Similarly, there are good strategies in place for developing the school as a focal

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point in the local community. Students have many opportunities to gain a sense of belonging to the local community but also to give to the local and wider communities. The school is promoting aspects of community cohesion at local and international levels well.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
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	2

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents and carers who returned the questionnaire are very positive about the school. They either strongly agreed or agreed with all of the statements. Some of the strongest positive responses and comments related to the aspects of children being safe, being happy with the children's experiences in school and being informed about their children's progress. These sentiments match the overall findings of the inspectors. A very small minority of responses expressed concerns relating to marking of homework, some aspects of behaviour and being informed about their children's progress. The inspection team has identified aspects of assessment and marking as an area for improvement. The inspectors noted the very small number of concerns and shared these with the school's senior leaders.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at West Hill 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 379 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 866 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	156	41	205	54	11	3	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	197	52	178	47	2	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	202	53	166	44	5	1	3	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	179	47	182	48	13	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	199	53	173	46	4	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	148	39	198	52	24	6	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	117	31	234	62	21	6	2	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)	162	43	192	51	9	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	166	44	196	52	9	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	204	54	155	41	15	4	3	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	130	34	222	59	14	4	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	196	52	172	45	5	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	228	60	139	37	6	2	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.



10 December 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of West Hill School, Stalybridge, SK15 1LX

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to talk with you about your work and to listen to your views about the school. We have decided that West Hill is a good school which has some outstanding features. We recognise that you, along with the teachers, parents, carers and other helpers, all help to make it the way it is.

What we liked most about your school

- The outstanding care, guidance and support available for you.
- The excellent way in which the school uses partners and partnerships with a wide range of people.
- The way in which the school develops the social, moral, spiritual and cultural aspects of your lives.
- The good range of curriculum opportunities available to you.
- The way in which you adopt healthy lifestyles.
- The excellent way in which you contribute to the school and wider community.
- The way in which you and your parents and carers say you feel safe at school.
- The high rates of attendance that you achieve throughout the year.

We received 379 responses to the parents'/carers' questionnaire which you took home. The responses were very positive in every question.

What we have asked your school to do now

- Strengthen the quality of leadership and management by:
 - developing and embedding the pockets of good practice in monitoring, evaluation and subject development planning across all subject areas.
- Strengthen the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that the pockets of good practice in assessment and marking of students' work are embedded across all subjects to improve teachers' planning, inform learning and improve student outcomes.

The inspection team hope you are pleased with the things we have said about your school and that you are proud of what you, the staff, the governing body and your parents and carers have achieved. We found our two days in the school to be a most welcoming and enjoyable experience. You will see that there are still some important things to do in order

to make your school even better. If you all continue to work together this should be achievable.

Best wishes for the future

Yours sincerely

Mr Brian Sharples

Her Majesty's Inspector

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