

Woodkirk High Specialist Science School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108082
Local Authority	Leeds
Inspection number	356300
Inspection dates	19–20 January 2011
Reporting inspector	John Young 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1850
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	285
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Dennis Fisher
Headteacher	Mr J White
Date of previous school inspection	14 April 2008
School address	Rein Road Tingley, Wakefield West Yorkshire WF3 1JQ
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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 40 lessons involving 40 different teachers and covering 20 subjects. They held discussions with school staff, a local authority representative, three members of the governing body and four groups of students. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of other evidence including safeguarding, action plans, case studies and self-evaluation documents. Inspectors also analysed the 227 responses to parental questionnaires, 40 staff questionnaires and 150 students' questionnaires.

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

- The attainment and rates of achievement made by different groups of students during their time in the school in all subjects.
- Whether curriculum provision is sufficiently well matched to the needs, interests and aspirations of students.
- The efficiency and effectiveness of the sixth form.
- The accuracy of school self-evaluation and the extent to which leaders and managers have eradicated identified weaknesses and improved outcomes and the quality of provision throughout the school.

Information about the school

At this much larger than average-sized secondary school the very large majority of students are White British and live locally. The remaining tiny numbers of students originate from a variety of minority ethnic heritages, of which Indian and Pakistani heritage students are the two largest groups. Few students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average. The proportions of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are very much lower than national averages.

The school has Specialist Science College status and holds a number of awards including The Inclusion Charter Mark, Healthy School status, Investors in People and the Sportsmark. The school also provides some extended services such as study support and community access to their facilities. A modern foreign language course in the sixth form is jointly delivered with a neighbouring school. Since the previous inspection, although staffing has remained fairly stable generally, there has been substantial reorganisation at senior leader level. The school received an interim monitoring inspection in February 2010 which judged it was making good progress in tackling its main issues. The same inspection judged that the school had demonstrated good capacity for sustained improvement.

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

The educational experience students receive is good with some aspects that are truly outstanding. This performance is testament to the vision of senior leaders, the hard work and commitment of staff, and students' positive attitudes to learning. The highly-committed headteacher, ably supported by a strong senior leadership team, have facilitated a resurgence in the fortunes of the underperforming sixth form and secured significant improvements in outcomes and provision in the main school, as well as tackling key issues from the previous inspection. The success of strategies including: the creation of an inclusive and aspirational ethos which the large majority of staff and students subscribe to; transforming the curriculum to increase choice and better match students' needs, interests and ambitions; refining approaches to teaching and assessment to promote better learning; more rigorous monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the school's work; together with sharply-targeted intervention and support for students and accurate self-evaluation signifies the school's good capacity for sustained improvement.

Overall, attainment is high and achievement is good. In 2010, 70% of students gained five or more grades A*-C at GCSE, including English and mathematics which is significantly above the national average. The attainment of minority ethnic heritage students is also high. There is room for improvement, however, in the proportion of students gaining the highest grades and students' success in certain humanities and vocational GCSE subjects. Students develop some excellent personal, social and work-based skills that will aid them in the future. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Good teaching, an effective curriculum and good care, guidance and support facilitate most students' good learning and progress. However, students known to be school action special educational needs, and those known to be eligible for free school meals made satisfactory rather than good progress. Provision inconsistencies account for the disparity in some students' learning and success in some subjects. The school misses opportunities to share the good practice that already exists to help remove these inconsistencies.

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory. Over the past couple of years, leaders and managers have taken decisive action to tackle underperformance, enhance the effectiveness of teaching on learning, strengthen student support services and extend the range of curriculum opportunities available. While these measures are showing signs of impact, work remains to be done if all students are to realise their potential fully.

Members of the governing body are committed, high-profile and robustly hold the school to account as well as offering it firm support to provide good value for money. Most parents and carers are happy with the school's work. Of the small minority that are not, inspectors investigated, and found the school was taking action to improve the quality of communications to ensure that all parents and carers feel their concerns and suggestions are taken account of.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' academic achievement during their time in the sixth form so that their attainment rises and better reflects their capabilities by:
 - ensuring the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good and provides all students, but particularly higher-attaining students, with a suitable level of challenge
 - increasing the consistency in subject performance so that all courses provide better value for money and enable more-able students to fully realise their potential by gaining a higher number of A and A* grades.
- Improve further the achievement of all students in the main school, but particularly students known to be school action special educational needs and those known to be eligible for free school meals, so that their attainment rises and a higher proportion of all groups of students gain the highest grades in examinations by:
 - – giving students greater opportunities to develop, apply and reinforce their learning across subjects
 - – ensuring learning and progress is at least good for these students in all subjects relative to their starting points and capabilities
 - – increasing the effectiveness of early identification and intervention strategies for students at risk of falling behind and enhancing the impact of support for those underperforming.
- Building on the good practice that already exists in areas of the school to consolidate the impact of teaching on students' learning by:
 - ensuring all staff consistently plan and deliver high-quality lessons which engage and challenge all students, informed by the wealth of assessment data the school collects
 - sharing and embedding the most effective practice in the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The large majority of students enjoy the educational experience the school provides them with. They demonstrate this through their good and sometimes excellent personal development; good attendance; high attainment and good achievement. Students are resilient, evaluative, confident and conscientious. They take responsibility for their own learning which enables them to increase their knowledge, skills and understanding effectively. Consequently, students' attainment by the end of Year 11 is well above national averages. This represents good achievement given that their prior attainment on entry to school is above average. Outcomes in the specialist and in English, mathematics and science subjects are very strong. Students known to be school action special needs do not always receive the in-class support or specialist attention they need to enable them to progress more rapidly. Whilst there remains room for improvement in the attainment and achievement of distinct groups and within subjects the school met its challenging targets in 2010. Inspection evidence and the school's own data show that currently, most students are making good progress.

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Students feel extremely safe and their behaviour in and out of lessons is usually good and at times it is outstanding. Incidents are rare and students relate very well to each other and to staff. Whilst students' adoption of healthy lifestyles is good overall and promoted well by the curriculum, some students, parents and carers feel more could be done to encourage the take-up of healthy eating options. Students make a good contribution to the school and wider community. They fund raise, take on leadership roles, organise events for local residents, work with children from local primary schools, and have established a community radio station. Students develop an excellent range of key enterprise, work experience, social and basic skills which will help them in the future. Attendance is above average. Students are punctual and few are persistently absent. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good and well promoted through the religious education, and the personal development studies curriculum and assemblies in particular.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	1
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
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	
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
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	1
Taking into account:	2
Pupils' attendance 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 is good with elements that are outstanding. Staff are enthusiastic, diligent and use their very good subject knowledge and a range of suitable resources and learning approaches to deliver interesting and demanding lessons. This allows the large majority of students to learn and progress successfully. Less effective aspects observed included the missed opportunities to allow students to develop, apply and reinforce their

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learning across the curriculum; and inconsistency in meeting the needs of students with special educational needs, either through specific in-class support or planned activities. The use of assessment to support students' learning is mostly effective although there is some inconsistency in the extent to which staff apply agreed protocols for marking and feedback.

The quality and range of curriculum and enrichment opportunities available to students are good and improving, with the specialism influential in increasing choice, and developing information and communication technology throughout the school. Provision has been remodelled to better accommodate students' varying needs, interests and aspirations. Examination courses now start in Year 9 and the available routes include: GCSEs, BTECs and diplomas. There are also work placements, and fast-track courses for the most-able. Business and enterprise, sports, music, and drama activities are complemented well by residential experiences, overseas exchange programmes, and whole-school curriculum days which enable students to immerse themselves in particular themes or subjects such as 'space week', inspired by the school's specialism.

The good care, guidance and support students receive are major factors in their strong personal and social development, and their largely effective learning and progress. This is underpinned by the proactive academic and pastoral support offered by the personal tutor, and student tracking systems which assure all students, including those deemed more vulnerable feel secure, well provided for, and do not slip through the net of care the school offers in conjunction with a number of external agencies. Students benefit from good-quality advice and guidance as they join, move through, and leave the school. This enables them to make informed choices about their futures. Consequently, the number who are not in education, employment or training after they leave school is very low.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers embed ambition and drive improvement effectively with some outstanding aspects. This is reflected in the success of the strategies implemented which have enabled the school to improve its overall effectiveness since the previous inspection. The management of teaching and learning is also effective with regular scrutiny of students' work and progress, staff planning, delivery and assessment. The teaching and learning forum has been at the forefront of the training, mentoring and coaching that is helping to improve the consistency and effectiveness of teaching and increasing the proportion of good and outstanding teaching evident. Focused support and intervention, regular assessment and target-setting, greater accountability and challenge for all staff at

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all levels are the school mantra which is helping to drive up standards and enhance the quality of provision. Governance is good and members of the governing body use their vast experience and wide range of expertise to influence the strategic direction of the school effectively. The school's engagement with parents and carers is good, evidenced by the various ways it keeps them informed about their children's progress, and encourages them to take an active role in school life. For example, by taking advantage of the extended school services to help them better support their children's learning. However, a small minority remains unhappy with some aspects of the school's work.

The school has brokered a number of good partnerships which enhance students' learning and well-being effectively. These include: curriculum; post-16; student support services; extended and partner-school links. The school effectively promotes equality and challenges discrimination through the curriculum, assemblies, the school's inclusive ethos and personalised support programmes. Safeguarding procedures are good with outstanding features such as record keeping and the collaborative working with external agencies to reduce the risk of harm to students. The safer recruitment of staff and risk assessment arrangements are rigorous. The school's good promotion of community cohesion is reflected in: the harmony evident among different groups of students; and the developing links with faith groups, cultures and communities that are distinctly different from their own. This is helping students at this largely mono-culture school to understand that they are part of a more global community beyond Woodkirk. Value for money is good because the provision is effective in securing good and outstanding outcomes for the large majority of individuals and groups of students. Financial management is sound.

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	2
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

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Sixth form

Students enjoy their time in the sixth form. Completion and pass rates are high. Attendance is above average and students' behaviour is good. Students have positive attitudes to learning and play a full part in school life, for example by serving on the student council, organising fundraising events and supporting younger students. Analysis of the 2010 examination data shows that students in Year 12 made good progress while those in Year 13 made broadly satisfactory progress. Despite these improvements there are still too few of the most-able students gaining the highest grades and still too much variation in the success rates between and within courses. Nevertheless, the very large majority of them to move on to higher education or gain employment. Teaching is having a satisfactory impact on students' learning and progress overall, although inconsistencies remain, particularly with regard to ensuring a suitable level of challenge for students of all abilities and ensuring students' active engagement in their learning. Learning is most effective when staff use their strong subject knowledge, high expectations and effective planning to deliver thought-provoking, exciting and challenging lessons which stretch and captivate students. Staff have benefitted from training and coaching which is improving the consistency and quality of their delivery. Inspection evidence confirms that currently most students are making at least satisfactory progress.

The curriculum is satisfactory and its influence is increasing as it evolves to better meet students' needs, interests and aspirations. Currently, it comprises a range of traditionally academic courses which have been supplemented by an increasing variety of more vocational options. This provision is enhanced by enrichment activities for which there is a good take-up. Guidance and support for students are much improved with more proactive intervention systems now in place. The impact of the new leaders and managers is satisfactory and growing. This is reflected in the effectiveness of the steps taken to secure improvements to date and the quality of the strategies now being applied. Other important strategies introduced include more rigorous monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the sixth form's work, and holding staff more firmly to account for students' performance.

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

The large majority of the parents and carers who gave their views were very positive about the school and the work it does on behalf of their children. They are happy with their children's experience at school; believe the school is well led and that their children are making enough progress. A small minority raised a number of issues around the extent to which the school listens to and acts on their concerns and suggestions.

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Inspectors investigated, and found that, despite the school's good overall engagement with most parents and carers, the quality and consistency of communications could be improved and some school procedures refined. The school has taken some decisive action to make necessary changes and are introducing strategies to ensure all parents feel that their voice is heard.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Woodkirk High Specialist Science 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 227 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1850 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	65	29	143	63	14	6	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	75	33	144	63	7	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	75	33	134	59	14	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	95	42	112	49	13	6	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	72	32	143	63	7	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	39	17	143	63	33	15	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	39	17	157	69	23	10	3	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)	75	33	123	54	16	7	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	62	27	138	61	15	7	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	79	35	122	54	13	6	6	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	36	16	131	58	22	10	10	4
The school is led and managed effectively	71	31	137	60	13	6	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	87	38	125	55	11	5	3	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

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.



21 January 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Woodkirk High Specialist Science School, Wakefield, WF3 1JQ

Thank you for the courtesy you showed inspectors when we visited recently. We learned a lot from observing your lessons and talking with some of you. We also read with interest the views you, your parents and carers expressed in the questionnaires.

Well done! We judged that your school provides you with a good education. This means that your school has improved in many ways since we last inspected it. You told us that you enjoy coming to school, feel exceptionally safe and learn a lot in lessons. We found that good or better teaching helps the large majority of you to make good progress and reach standards that are well above national averages. But, the performance of some groups of students and some subjects is not as strong as it could be. Your personal and social development is very good and you relish the leadership, enterprise, and enrichment opportunities afforded you. We found that you are articulate, well-motivated, and ambitious. You also behave well, and your attendance exceeds the national average. The curriculum is good and improving and you clearly enjoy the personalised nature of the various pathways and opportunities available to you. Staff take good care of you and most of you receive the support and guidance you need to do well. Senior leaders and governors work tirelessly on your behalf to ensure the school runs efficiently. When we fed back our findings they were overcome with emotion and pride in your accomplishments but resolved to work harder to improve the quality of educational experience they offer you.

In order for the school to improve further we have asked staff to:

- improve all students' achievement, particularly those performing less well
- improve the impact of teaching on learning in subjects performing less well
- improve achievement and the quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form.

You can all play your part by continuing to work hard and attending school regularly.

Yours sincerely

John Young

Her Majesty's Inspector

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