

Wellsway School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109311
Local Authority	Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number	356523
Inspection dates	7–8 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Robert Pyner HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
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	1350
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	284
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christopher Trout
Headteacher	Andrea Arlidge
Date of previous school inspection	5 December 2007
School address	Chandag Road Keynsham Bristol BS31 1PH
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 44 lessons and observed 43 teachers. They held meetings with senior leaders, the chair and vice chair of the governing body, staff and groups of students. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at progress tracking and performance data, the school development plan, minutes from the governing body, students' work and numerous policies, guidelines, plans and reviews. The questionnaire responses from 246 parents, 154 pupils and 49 staff were also analysed.

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

- How well different groups make progress in their learning, particularly in English and lower-ability students overall.
- The extent to which teaching and learning offer sufficient support and challenge for all groups of students.
- The accuracy and demonstrable impact of self-evaluation by leaders and managers at all levels in driving up outcomes for all groups of learners and the extent to which this demonstrates capacity for sustained improvement.
- The quality of provision and leadership and management and their impact on student outcomes in the sixth form.

Information about the school

Wellsway is larger than the average comprehensive school and serves the town of Keynsham and surrounding area. Since 2007 the school has been a specialist sports and science college. Most students are from a White British heritage and the proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is considerably lower than average. The proportion with special needs and/or disabilities is below average; students' needs include language and communication difficulties. The percentage with a statement of special educational needs is also below the national figure. The school is an Investor in People organisation and has achieved the Sportsmark, Fairtrade and Healthy School awards together with financial management and inclusion quality marks.

There is childcare provision on site managed by an independent provider.

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

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Wellsway is an outstanding school. Since its last inspection the school has been successful in implementing an ambitious plan for improvement focused on its vision of becoming an outstanding school at the heart of its community. The outcomes over the last three years demonstrate how effective this journey has been but the commitment to improvement at all levels ensures the school continues to innovate and build on its success. The drive for this has been from the headteacher who has developed a powerful culture of team work and continuous improvement. As a result, students thrive in this inclusive, well-ordered and harmonious school that cares exceptionally well for vulnerable groups. The school has strengths right across the curriculum but the impact of its sports and science specialist status is excellent.

Students' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is significantly above average. The proportion of students obtaining five high GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, shows an improving trend over the last three years. Most subjects display improvement over this time, including the specialist subjects of science and particularly physical education. Taking their starting points into account, all groups of students make good progress and current data from the school and lesson observations confirm this, following a dip in measures for 2010. The outcomes for students in the sixth form are outstanding.

Students say they feel very safe and appreciate the efforts of the school to support them in their academic life and personal development. The school promotes healthy lifestyles particularly through opportunities for sport and students report that they are actively involved in the life of the school. The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Of these aspects, cultural development is particularly strong, both through the main school curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities such as the production of *Les Misérables*, which was in rehearsal at the time of the inspection. The behaviour and attitudes displayed by students are excellent. Overall, they are prepared for the next stage of their education or for employment very well.

Teaching is good, with a significant proportion that is outstanding. Teachers successfully use a wide range of strategies to engage and develop students' learning and the school has worked effectively to develop cohesive strategies which improve assessment to support learning. However, this is not employed completely consistently across the school. The excellent curriculum ensures that individual needs are met exceptionally well. The care, guidance and support given to all students are outstanding.

The school has highly effective procedures for self-evaluation. Biennial reviews systematically monitor performance of subject areas, and prompt and effective action is taken by senior leaders where performance falls below the challenging, but realistic, targets set. The school is very effective in embedding ambition and driving improvement

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at all levels. Members of the governing body have an excellent understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and challenge senior leaders very effectively. Leaders develop innovative practice and encourage staff at all levels to play a substantial part in developing provision. As a result of such inclusive development strategies, staff morale is very high. The success of this approach can be seen in the improvement across most aspects of the school since the last inspection and the overriding commitment to further development. As a result of this the school has outstanding capacity to sustain further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and use of assessment to support learning in order to improve the progress made by students even further.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Overall, students' attainment is significantly above average and the school has successfully improved its overall performance over the last three years. Attainment at the highest GCSE grades in mathematics shows an impressive trend, with results significantly above average over a number of years. Current school data show that in English, following a slight drop in 2010, Year 11 students are on course to meet the challenging targets set. The 2010 GCSE outcomes show strong results in subjects across the curriculum, and particularly so in the specialist subjects. In science overall, biology, chemistry, physics and physical education, there is a strong trend of significantly higher-than-average outcomes, with an impressive improvement in the latter subject over the last three years.

Students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress from their starting points on entry to the school. The latest monitoring data from the school show that all students, including those with lower ability and all groups in English, are on track to meet targets. The overwhelming majority of students are keen to work hard, respond well to the challenges set for them and demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning in lessons.

Six of the other outcomes are outstanding and a number of features are worth noting. The extent to which students feel safe is very high and this is supported by the views of parents and carers. Behaviour is outstanding both in lessons and around the school. Students' involvement in many aspects of the school contributes significantly to its inclusive nature and very pleasant working environment. Students recognise and respect the needs of others and many actively support their peers and younger students, for example in the vertical tutor groups. Attendance is high, monitored and supported very well, and current data show significant further improvement this school year. Students are prepared for their future economic well-being excellently through the emphasis on the development of key skills through highly appropriate personalised and developing curriculum opportunities. The school works hard to provide an extensive range of sporting activities, but although students have a good understanding of the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse, they are not given enough opportunities to make healthy choices of school meals and snacks.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good overall. During the inspection teaching was judged to be outstanding in about one third of the lessons observed. The school has worked hard to develop assessment strategies in lessons and this has been particularly effective in improving the quality of questioning by teachers to support learning. In most lessons observed, expectations of objectives to be achieved were clear and understood by students. A key difference between the good and outstanding teaching is in the way teachers use their on-going assessments of students' work as a basis for planning the next steps, setting new challenges and helping students understand what they have to do to achieve them. In outstanding lessons, teachers used pace and varied activities to reinforce these points and as a result students made exceptional progress. There are some very good examples of marking and assessment books which give specific guidance on the next steps needed for students to improve their work, but this is not totally consistent across all curriculum areas.

The school has been highly proactive in designing a curriculum that is imaginative, forward looking and matched very well to students' ambitions and personal goals. The range of academic and vocational courses is coherent, personalised and developing. These developments include the provision of a 'pathways curriculum' which includes applied courses as part of the personalised approach and a range of appropriate qualifications for lower-ability groups. More-able students can work on AS courses in Year 11. Some of this

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provision involves high quality partnership work with local colleges, schools and businesses. Citizenship is a strength of the school and makes an excellent contribution to students' personal development. The very rich and broad range of opportunities is highly effective in developing students' achievement and enjoyment, as well as their positive attitudes to learning and attendance. A particular strength is the impact of the sports specialist status on the school. For example, the seven Olympic and Paralympic values have been adopted as whole-school values and these are promoted very successfully.

The pastoral care and well-being of all students is at the heart of the school's work. Vulnerable students and those with specific difficulties are given outstanding support and thrive in both their academic and personal development. With this very high quality of care, students respond with trust, confidence and enthusiasm. All aspects of students' development are carefully monitored to ensure that any required interventions are swift and effective, making excellent use of other agencies when required. Transition arrangements are very effective in ensuring that Year 7 students settle very quickly, and vertical grouping ensures that high quality peer support continues.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. Since her appointment, she has worked with determination to move the school forward. In this drive for improvement she has nurtured a culture of consultation and involvement by staff, students, governors and parents. Examples of this approach are the various policies including those on teaching and learning and behaviour. The headteacher is supported by highly effective senior leaders who share her desire for continuing improvement. The school's self-evaluation is outstanding. This informs high quality strategic planning based on challenging targets, and the success of this can be seen in the consistent improvement in outcomes for students over the last three years. Middle leaders are fully involved in improvement planning, through for example, the biennial reviews for teaching and learning in each curriculum area leading to an action plan which is monitored by a member of the senior leadership team.

Members of the governing body make an exceptional contribution to the work and direction of the school. The body is very well led and extremely well organised and thorough in approach. There is an excellent balance of support and challenge, with a focus on raising the achievement of students in all facets of school life.

There have been excellent partnerships developed with other schools, colleges, social care agencies and the wider community, particularly through its sports specialism, some at

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regional and national levels. The procedures to ensure the safeguarding of students are good. Policies, procedures and training are subject to regular review to ensure effective compliance with regulations. The school's excellent care and support for students means that it meets its duties to promote equality and tackle discrimination highly effectively. Engagement with parents is good and they are kept informed through newsletters, the high quality website and formal reporting procedures. There are imaginative opportunities for students to contribute to the school and wider community and link this to life in very different societies, particularly through its specialist subjects. For example, in 2010 the school ran a whole-school diversity project linked to the FIFA World Cup.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	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	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

Students make excellent progress overall when their starting points are taken into consideration, although girls' achievement is slightly higher than boys'. Outcomes for most subjects are high measured against national comparators and the latest school data indicate further improvement. Aspects of students' personal development are outstanding, including their involvement in the life of the sixth form and the whole school, through, for example, working as associate tutors and leadership in sports. They thoroughly enjoy lessons and work very collaboratively, valuing the more mature relationships and ethos of the sixth form. Attendance is high and improving.

Provision in the sixth form is outstanding overall. There is evidence of strong teaching with effective and productive relationships between staff and students. Students benefit from an extensive range of appropriate courses supported by developing partnerships with local schools and colleges to improve opportunities further. Students feel well cared for by their tutors and staff provide high quality advice and support. They particularly appreciate the information emails sent to them each week.

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The director of the sixth form has developed ambitious plans which have resulted in robust systems for academic tracking and support. Analysis of outcomes is of a high quality and regularly informs interventions to raise achievement and meet needs. The success of this approach can be seen in the improvement in outcomes and narrowing of the gaps between the performance of different groups of students.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

Most parents are happy with their children's experience at the school. Responses show that parents feel strongly that their children enjoy school and are safe and cared for, they are well informed about the progress made by their children, and happy with the standard of teaching. Most parents also feel that their children are making enough progress and that the leadership and management of the school are effective. A small minority felt that the school was less effective in helping children to have a healthy lifestyle. Furthermore, a few felt that the school should take more account of parental suggestions and concerns and that the school could help them more to support their children's learning. The inspection team found that the school was highly effective in providing opportunities for sporting activities but that options for healthy eating were more limited. There are effective routes of communication with parents which are being further developed by the school and there is good provision to support learning at home.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Wellsway 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 246 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1350 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	66	27	155	63	23	9	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	86	35	150	61	3	1	1	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	86	35	148	60	10	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	87	35	134	54	18	7	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	65	26	157	64	14	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	40	16	156	63	40	16	4	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	12	148	60	50	20	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)	71	29	144	59	15	6	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	63	26	152	62	19	8	4	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	52	21	146	59	33	13	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	14	143	58	34	14	9	4
The school is led and managed effectively	70	28	144	59	19	8	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	87	35	136	55	17	7	0	0

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

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

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

Overall effectiveness of schools

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

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



9 March 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Wellsway School, Keynsham BS31 1PH

Thank you for making the inspection team so welcome when we inspected your school recently. Special thanks go to the student guides who helped the inspectors find their way around and to those of you who completed the questionnaire; we found this very useful. We were particularly impressed with the rehearsal of *Les Misérables* we saw. We enjoyed talking with all the students we met and found what you had to say very informative and relevant.

This letter is to tell you about our findings. Wellsway School provides an outstanding standard of education. Particularly impressive were your excellent behaviour and the quality of your relationships with adults and other students. This was clearly seen in a wide range of lessons and the vertical tutor group sessions. Your attainment at the end of Year 11 and 13 is high; the progress you make is good overall. The opportunities you have through the specialist subjects of science and sports are a considerable strength of the school. You are cared for and supported very well and you told inspectors that you appreciate this. Teaching is good overall, with a significant proportion being outstanding. Your teachers provide you with an excellent curriculum continually improving to meet your interests and ambitions.

The headteacher, senior staff and governors provide outstanding leadership and management. They recognise that there are always aspects of any school that can be improved, and this is the challenge that the inspection team has set for the school.

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and use of assessment to support learning in order to improve the progress made by students even further.

You too have an important part to play by continuing to work hard, making the most of the excellent range of opportunities you have at school and attending regularly. I am sure that you will and wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Robert Pyner

Her Majesty's Inspector

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