

# Wilmslow High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111443
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cheshire East
<b>Inspection number</b>	356914
<b>Inspection dates</b>	5–6 April 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Marguerite Murphy HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1986
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	486
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr David Bennett
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Gill Bremner
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 December 2007
<b>School address</b>	Holly Road Wilmslow Cheshire SK9 1LZ
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. They observed 45 lessons taught by 45 teachers. They paid short visits to other activities and looked at students' books. Meetings were held with senior leaders, governors, members of staff and groups of students. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including its self-evaluation and improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings, and the school's analysis and tracking of information on students' attainment and progress. They analysed and considered the content of 660 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, 97 by staff and a representative sample of the large number of completed student questionnaires.

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

- Do most students across the school make good or better progress to reach high standards overall, and is the school working successfully to narrow any gaps between the performance of different groups of students?
- Have several aspects of the school's work improved sufficiently since the last inspection to meet the criteria for outstanding provision and leadership, including the promotion of equal opportunities?
- Has the overall effectiveness of the sixth form been sufficiently maintained and developed since the last inspection to have secured outstanding overall outcomes for students?

## Information about the school

Wilmslow High School is a much larger than average secondary school. It has specialist sports college status and a second specialism in applied learning. The school is popular with families in the area and is consistently oversubscribed. The very large majority of students are White British, with small groups from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below average. However, an above average percentage of students have a statement of special educational needs because the school has specialist provision for students with hearing impairment or autistic spectrum disorders.

The school holds Healthy Schools and Sportsmark Gold awards.

**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

This is an outstanding school with an outstanding sixth form. With exceptional leadership at the helm, the school strives for and achieves excellence. There is no room for complacency as all members of the whole-school team are committed to further development and continuous improvement. This ensures that students' needs are fully met, both academically and personally. Students have excellent attitudes to their learning, enjoy their studies very much and are proud to be members of this thriving school community. They have many opportunities for success and to develop their special talents through an outstanding curriculum to which the school's sports specialism makes an exceptional contribution.

Students are extremely well taught by teachers who have excellent subject knowledge and understanding of what makes good learners. Teachers and students are well supported by skilled learning support assistants. Adults articulate high expectations and ambitions for their students, who respond with confidence and demonstrate excellent teamwork and independent learning skills. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding overall. The school makes a strong contribution to community cohesion, with outstanding aspects in its work within the school and local community and on a wider, global level. There are relatively fewer examples of the school reaching out to extend students' cultural experiences and understanding of other settings within the United Kingdom.

Students' attainment is high and achievement is outstanding. Results in GCSE examinations are significantly above average, and have continued on an upward trend since the previous inspection. Attendance has also improved and is now above average. The school's rigorous and accurate self-evaluation is used effectively to identify potential underachievement in particular groups of students or individuals. Successful action is taken to narrow any gaps in their performance and remove barriers to learning. As a result, the school's promotion of equal opportunities is outstanding and no form of discrimination is tolerated. The outstanding quality of care, guidance and support is encapsulated in the school's motto of 'behaviour, pride, success', or 'The Wilmslow Way'. This level of care is appreciated by students, particularly at times when they may be feeling vulnerable or in need of additional emotional or academic support. The school has made excellent progress in tackling the issues from the last inspection and has consequently crossed the grade boundary from good to outstanding. This clearly demonstrates the school's outstanding capacity for sustained improvement in the future.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend the school's work to enhance students' cultural experiences and understanding of a wider range of other settings within the United Kingdom.

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## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**1**

Students enter the school having attained at least average standards and sometimes above this. Most students acquire knowledge and develop understanding exceptionally well, so that attainment overall is high by the time they leave Year 11. Students demonstrate high levels of concentration, independence and maturity that stand them in good stead to make the most of the excellent learning opportunities provided. Inspectors observed many notable examples of outstanding learning by students of all ability groups, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Year 9 students were totally focused and made excellent progress throughout a highly inclusive physical education session in which a range of sporting skills were developed. Students in a GCSE drama lesson showed high levels of self-motivation and organisational skills when improving their group pieces in response to peer assessment and feedback. Hearing-impaired students were equally successful when rehearsing some of their work away from the noise level of the main studio. Higher-ability Year 10 students wasted no time in responding with enthusiasm to the high levels of challenge in a mathematics lesson on fractions. Students with autistic spectrum disorders are fully integrated into lessons with the support of qualified specialist teachers and learning support assistants. This enables them to make the same excellent levels of progress as their peers, often by addressing particular needs around active listening and following social cues such as taking turns.

Students feel very safe and demonstrate a mature understanding of health and safety, including emotional and mental health issues, internet safety and the dangers of making unhealthy choices. Students talked with inspectors about making healthy choices in their lifestyles as a result of their learning, for example regarding food and exercise options. The school's sports specialism makes an excellent contribution to this. Students' behaviour is outstanding overall. They were observed helping each other and younger students, moving sensibly and courteously around the school between lessons and at break-times, and maintaining high levels of engagement and motivation during lessons. Whenever there are minor exceptions to this rule, students are quickly identified and supported to modify their behaviour. Students make an excellent contribution to their school and wider community. The work of the school council is particularly strong in ensuring that students can voice their views and look to help in the development of the school. There are many opportunities for students to take on responsibilities and use their initiative. For example, the significant involvement in fund-raising activities for many worthy and charitable causes, often at students' own suggestions. The school is a leader in the local and national community in an extensive range of sports. Students celebrate each other's strengths and talents when awards are presented in assemblies. Positive feedback from the local community shows how most students are well regarded for their behaviour and attitudes and are good ambassadors for the school.

Students gain outstanding skills to stand them in good stead for their future lives in the workplace. Literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology skills are applied across the curriculum. Most students demonstrate excellent listening, communication and problem-solving skills, and are punctual to lessons. Exclusions are very rare and virtually all students enter further education, employment or training when leaving Year 11.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

<sup>1</sup> 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 at least good and much is outstanding, contributing to students' excellent achievement. Most teachers are highly effective in commanding the trust and respect of students, promoting their reflective learning and critical thinking. Lessons are characterised by teachers' high expectations and challenge, to which students readily respond. Teachers provide very good opportunities for students to work collaboratively and solve investigations, capitalising on their enjoyment of teamwork and competition and the sense of reward they get from meeting challenges. Many teachers make excellent use of assessment information to set the correct level of challenge to make high, but manageable, demands on students of all abilities. This assessment is ongoing through well-focused questioning, marking and oral feedback along with clear targets related to 'the next grade' that make explicit use of examination criteria. However, this is not fully consistent across the school. On occasions, teachers' planning and use of assessment are less successful in fully meeting the needs of all students, for example in the planning of different tasks. Where this is the case, planning concentrates more on what activity, and how much work is to be completed rather than on the specific intended learning outcomes for each group of students. Nevertheless, this is a minor element of weakness within an overall outstanding picture, and one which the school is already working on to improve consistency.

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Inspection evidence, including discussions with students and staff, confirm that the school provides an extensive range of memorable experiences for students. This was encapsulated in an overheard comment made by a Year 7 student coming out of a music lesson, 'This lesson makes me happy for the rest of the day!' The curriculum is enhanced by the school's numerous sporting achievements, high quality music and drama productions, residential trips and visits. Excellent provision for students who are gifted and talented is reflected in the school's recognition as a lead school in this area. An extremely impressive range and number of enrichment and extra-curricular activities take place every day, before and after school and at lunchtimes. These are well supported by staff and students. The work of the learning support team at break and lunchtimes is invaluable in providing a service for those students whose circumstances may make them potentially vulnerable or less confident at those times. The curriculum is regularly reviewed and tailored to meet students' changing needs, for example in widening the courses offered to include functional skills and BTEC Work Skills at different levels. The applied learning specialism is relatively new to the school but already demonstrating a positive impact. Students have a good understanding of the inter-connectivity between subject knowledge and effective skills for learning, and can apply these in lessons across the curriculum.

Students are exceptionally well cared for by the pastoral structure that is based on a house system and allows them to retain a strong sense of identity within the large school. Comprehensive and rigorous tracking of students' learning and personal development ensures that staff are quickly alerted to any problems so that swift and effective action can be taken to remedy them. The school's highly effective use of partnerships makes a strong contribution to its well-tailored curriculum and support for the small minority of students who may find it difficult to engage in education. Arrangements for transition, advice and careers guidance are excellent and much appreciated by students and their families. Students are well known and valued as individuals, gaining much trust and confidence in the school and education in general as a result. This contributes to the school's excellent ability to support and guide students who are facing challenging circumstances at any point in their school life.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## **How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher is instrumental in inspiring other leaders, managers and staff to share in a passionate belief and determination that all students deserve the best possible opportunities to fulfil their potential. The school's effective leadership structure ensures that all leaders and managers are held accountable for performance in their area of responsibility and this feeds seamlessly into whole-school evaluation and development

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planning. Sophisticated and rigorous monitoring gives the school an accurate picture of its performance so that priorities for development are appropriate and well supported at all levels. Evaluations of teaching are accurate and show a clear understanding of strengths and areas for improvement, leading to well-focused targets for professional development. Good practice is demonstrated and shared between subjects and curriculum teams. Staff morale is high and their enthusiasm is infectious. Staff questionnaires showed almost unanimous agreement that they are proud to be a member of staff here, that they know and are involved in what the school is trying to achieve, and that it is very well led.

The school's highly effective partnership activities provide a range of benefits for students both in Wilmslow High and other local schools, for example through the sports and applied learning specialisms. In addition, the school makes good use of external consultants in areas where it may have less expertise or wish to gather fresh ideas on its priorities for development. The outstanding work of the governing body is exemplified in the way in which it checks and challenges decisions made to ensure value for money and positive impact on student outcomes. Since the last inspection the governing body has ensured that the equalities plan is in place and regularly reviewed to evaluate its impact across the school in promoting equal opportunities for all students. Excellent relationships with parents and carers are promoted in regular communication through newsletters, meetings, events, consultations and the school's website. The school can demonstrate the positive impact of its work to promote community cohesion, particularly in the context of the school community and the way in which students get on well together.

The school's outstanding safeguarding procedures are routinely informed by its regular surveys of the views of students and their parents and carers. Leaders, governors and staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in keeping students safe. A realistic and proportionate approach to safety permeates all aspects of the school's life. Taking into account the school's effective management of resources and students' outstanding outcomes, it provides outstanding value for money.



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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## Sixth form

The very large sixth form is highly popular and oversubscribed. It has continued to build upon the outstanding performance identified at the last inspection. It has maintained an emphasis on offering level 3 courses to meet the needs of its students, specialising in AS and A-level qualifications. Progression rates from Year 11 and retention rates within courses are high.

Excellent teaching and learning result in attainment that is well above the national average overall by the end of Year 13. Examination results in 2010 showed a variation in the performance of a minority of subjects, resulting in an apparent dip in overall attainment compared to previous years. Leaders have identified reasons for these variations and are taking effective action to remedy this. Projected A-level examination grades for 2011 indicate a further rise in students' attainment, including at higher grades, and reviews of their progress show that they are on target to achieve these.

Students have very positive attitudes to their studies. They are articulate and confident in their ability to succeed. Students benefit from a similarly extensive range of extra-curricular activities as in the main school, including a number of educational visits abroad. They receive outstanding academic and pastoral guidance. Those who are applying for university places are given effective support and guidance to complete personal statements and make informed choices. Students who do not wish to progress to further education are offered guidance tailored to their individual needs, including mock interviews.

Students' personal and leadership skills are promoted well, for example through opportunities provided by the sports specialism, serving on the student management committee and organising fund-raising and social events. Students willingly take on extra

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responsibilities, including as subject mentors, supporting younger students or assisting with 'pair reading' or primary transition programmes.

Leadership and management are outstanding. Challenging targets are set and rigorous systems are in place to track students' progress. Ambition and expectation are high for both students and staff. All respond well to the challenges and morale is high.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>1</b>
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 and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire expressed wholly positive views about the school and the education it provides for their children. A very small minority did not agree that the school helps them support their child's learning or helps them to have a healthy lifestyle. Inspectors found that the school does everything it reasonably can to guide parents who wish to support their child's learning, and to promote students' excellent understanding of a range of issues related to their health and well-being. Inspection evidence shows that the school consults parents and carers, and communication is regular and of good quality.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Wilmslow High 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 660 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1986 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	291	44	333	50	30	5	5	1
The school keeps my child safe	304	46	341	52	8	1	1	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	280	42	341	52	36	5	2	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	289	44	322	49	39	6	2	0
The teaching is good at this school	274	42	357	54	16	2	2	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	170	26	386	58	78	12	5	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	158	24	403	61	77	12	6	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)	226	34	363	55	28	4	2	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	250	38	362	55	36	5	2	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	244	37	368	56	19	3	4	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	150	23	393	60	55	8	10	2
The school is led and managed effectively	337	51	299	45	11	2	2	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	354	54	284	43	9	1	3	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](http://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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



7 April 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of Wilmslow High School, Wilmslow, SK9 1LZ**

Thank you for your help during the school's recent inspection. Inspectors enjoyed talking with you in meetings and around the school and hearing your views. It is clear that you are proud to be members of the school community and we could understand why: you go to a school and sixth form that are both outstanding.

Virtually every aspect of the school's work has been judged to be of a very high quality, including teaching, the curriculum, the school's care, guidance and support and its leadership and management. This is a significant achievement and one which should rightly be shared and celebrated by all staff and students. You make an excellent contribution to this because of your outstanding attitudes to learning and thirst for knowledge and challenge. As a result, you achieve exceptionally well to meet high standards of attainment. Inspectors were impressed with the way in which the 'Wilmslow Way' is embedded across the school and subsequently contributes to the ethos of hard work, courtesy and success. You make the most of the many excellent quality learning experiences provided across the school. Those sixth form students who spoke with me added to the very convincing evidence that the sixth form has maintained and further developed its excellent provision and that you make outstanding progress there, too!

Of course, 'outstanding' means just that – the school's excellent performance means that it stands out compared to the majority of other schools. All of the staff and students understand that it does not mean perfection, because you are committed to striving to be even better. That is a key feature in the school's outstanding capacity for further improvement. Your attendance is above average and the school would like it to be high, for example. The promotion of community cohesion is very good but the school knows that there are ways in which your direct experiences of a wider range of different cultures and settings across the United Kingdom could be developed further.

Congratulations on your success and best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Marguerite Murphy

Her Majesty's Inspector

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