

Wallingford School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123261
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	363963
Inspection dates	11–12 May 2011
Reporting inspector	James McNeillie 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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1134
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Domville
Headteacher	Nigel Willis
Date of previous school inspection	21 May 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. They observed teaching and learning in 41 lessons, or parts of lessons, taught by 41 teachers. Meetings were held with staff, students and governors. The inspection team observed the school's work and looked at documentation including the school improvement plan, safeguarding policies and protocols and analyses of students' progress. Responses from 198 parents and carers and those from a sample of students and staff were scrutinised.

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

- To what extent the progress of all groups of students is improving sufficiently across all key stages.
- Whether the quality of teaching, including the use of assessment, is securing better than expected progress for all groups of students.
- How well leaders at all levels contribute to improving students' achievement and tackling variation across subjects.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average secondary school with a sixth form and specialist sports status. The number of students on roll is increasing. The vast majority of students come from White British backgrounds and a much lower than average proportion of students are known to be eligible for free school meals. The number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities broadly matches the national average.

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

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**3****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****3**

Main findings

'I am impressed with its ethos and its care.' This response from one parent encapsulates the strengths of this school. Students agree that they receive a good level of care and their positive responses to teachers' high expectations of attitudes and behaviour contribute well to the welcoming and safe environment.

Students' achievement is satisfactory at age 16 and in the sixth form. Many key indicators of attainment, such as the proportion of those achieving five GCSEs including English and mathematics, are continuing to rise. However, although progress in lessons has improved, there has been previous underperformance in some subjects. This means that over time, students do not make better than expected progress.

The school cares well for all its students. They appreciate this, are proud of their school and make good contributions to supporting its development. The support given to those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable is particularly effective and has resulted in their good or better personal development, wider life skills and preparation for the world of work. The school's sports specialism has had a good impact in many aspects of school life, for example through encouraging and enabling students to have a healthy lifestyle, and opportunities to take on leadership roles.

Good and better teaching takes place. The majority of teachers have secure subject knowledge and good relationships with their students. Teaching is satisfactory overall throughout the school because most lessons do not have a sufficient focus on what students should be learning. Linked to this, there is inconsistency in how well assessment information is used when planning and during lessons. When this is the case, the needs of all students are not met sufficiently well. On the occasions when teachers talk for too long, opportunities for students to be involved in their own learning or the assessment of their work are limited. Many students are given good points for development when their work is completed but are not then expected to respond and act on these.

School leaders' honest self-evaluation, their understanding of the impact of previous complacency and recent decisive action means that the decline in students' progress in 2010 is being addressed. As a result of new appointments to, and restructuring of, the school leadership teams, there is a much more specific focus on tracking and evaluating the progress of students in Key Stage 4. This approach is not applied to students of all abilities or across the key stages, which means that the impact of the work, although bearing fruit, is not yet widespread. The school's development planning has, however, factored in the expansion and adaptation of this forensic approach as part of a three-year plan. Middle leaders have been given increased ownership for improving standards in their areas. Rigorous self-evaluation is not yet fully embedded in the work of leaders at this level. Consequently, despite some recent improvements, capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

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Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the achievement of all groups of students throughout the school to at least good by ensuring that:
 - all middle leaders and classroom teachers utilise fully the data available, therefore increasing progress for students of all abilities in every key stage.
- Strengthen the capacity for improvement by:
 - embedding the existing rigorous self-evaluation by senior leaders into the work of all middle leaders.
- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by ensuring that:
 - there is more focus on what students are learning in lessons
 - teachers' planning and practice more effectively takes into account the needs of all students to make progress
 - lessons are less teacher-led, allowing students to become more involved in their own learning
 - students are given regular opportunities to engage in the assessment of their work and reflect on the points for development. students are given regular opportunities to engage in the assessment of their work and reflect on the points for development.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Students enter and leave the school with broadly average attainment, which represents expected progress. Attainment and progress are improving, particularly in Key Stage 4 English and mathematics, as was confirmed during lesson observations and by the school's robust tracking information. The proportion of students attaining the highest grades in these two subjects is also similar to the national average but this is not consistently the case in all subjects. The achievement of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities matches that of their peers. The progress of some individuals with very specific needs has been a cause for concern in previous years. The school is tackling this with some degree of success but acknowledges that there is more to do. The few students from minority ethnic backgrounds also achieve as well as their peers.

The quality of learning in lessons is satisfactory. Students have good attitudes to learning and positive relationships exist between students and with their teachers. Students can explain what they are doing but are less well equipped to explain the skills, knowledge or understanding that are being developed in lessons. When given the opportunities to work in pairs or groups, they respond confidently, showing a better development of their wider skills. An outstanding example of this was observed in a Key Stage 4 physical education lesson where students also took ownership of their own learning.

Students' attendance is above average. The low and decreasing numbers of students who are not in education, training or employment when they leave school and their acquisition of at least average basic skills indicate they are well placed for life beyond school.

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Students' social and moral development is strong, as demonstrated in their good behaviour and strong contribution to the school and local community. There has, however, primarily been a focus on White British and Christian cultural and spiritual development, therefore somewhat limiting students' wider awareness. The school is well placed with its faith room and prayer week to extend these aspects of students' development.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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 not consistently good enough to ensure that students make rapid progress. In the best lessons, for example in a GCSE English lesson, students made good progress because they were involved in identifying their own points for improvement and expected to take responsibility for applying this knowledge. However, too often this is not the case and teachers do not consistently use the information available to them to plan for a range of learning tasks that support and extend the most and least able students. Progress is also slowed when the pace of learning does not challenge or enthuse students, and teachers' secure subject knowledge is not put to best use.

The school's traditional curriculum meets students' needs satisfactorily. Increasing the available range of qualifications recently has led to a wider set of pathways to cater for the needs and interests of more students. This is beginning to have an impact on some groups of students' wider outcomes, such as their engagement in education. Extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities, particularly those provided as a result of the

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school's specialism, are varied and popular. For example, there is a host of clubs and sporting activities, all Year 9 students have the opportunity to attend a residential trip and there are field trips, including those organised by the geography and science departments.

'The whole school is supportive they don't give up on you. This school has changed me big time.' This comment made by one student during the inspection indicates the inclusive nature of the school, often supporting with much success students who have previously been at risk of disengaging with education. On many occasions, this is as a result of effective coordination with a range of external agencies and the school's good flexible learning unit. All the students spoken to said there was a member of staff to whom they could speak if there was a problem. They also felt that the small numbers of incidents of bullying were dealt with swiftly and with success.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

A significant strength of the school leadership is its honest self-evaluation, resulting in a drive for improvement and high expectations. This has been communicated well and staff morale is high, even though there have been some difficult messages delivered this academic year in relation to the quality of teaching and leadership. Responsibilities of middle leaders have shifted in emphasis with a more precise focus on monitoring and evaluation. This has been as a result of strong leadership from the senior team, particularly those leading on teaching and learning. These changes have not had time to impact substantially on the achievement of all groups of students. The governing body offers a good level of challenge and support to the school and has the capacity to meet the school's needs. The committee structure, aligned to the school's development planning, enables systematic evaluation of the work that has been done this year.

Procedures to safeguard students are good. The school keeps students safe and has been proactive in making the site even more secure. Student and staff responses to a fire alarm during the inspection were calm and indicate effective procedures are in place. Leaders understand the context of the school well, with good links to support community cohesion at a local level. Links with national and international communities are more limited and do not have a significant impact on students' understanding. The school is addressing this by exploring opportunities to extend engagement with schools in different contexts. Leaders ensure satisfactory equality of opportunity. The performance of all groups of students is monitored and actions as a result are having an impact on some, but not all, of them. Any students who need financial support to take part in enrichment activities receive it. The school's involvement in the 'go for it' project makes opportunities available to those who

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may otherwise miss out. The school is a welcoming place for parents and carers and the regular newsletters help to keep them informed of school developments and reasons to celebrate. However, not all groups of parents and carers are actively involved in the school's decision-making process.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

Students in the sixth form make overall expected progress, although there is variation in the outcomes and quality of provision across subjects. As in lower years, the curriculum has been traditional in nature and has only recently extended the suite of qualifications available to students. The impact of this is not yet measurable to any great extent. In Year 12 revision lessons observed, students were being prepared well for their imminent examinations, although these lessons did not always encourage their independent learning skills. The Year 13 trip to the Lake District does, however, support approaches to independent study. Students make a good contribution to the school and wider community through charity fundraising, managing the school prefects and offering peer mentoring; for example sixth form students giving support to younger students to support them in behaviour management. Leaders of the sixth form have a clear understanding of what needs to improve and how to achieve these improvements.

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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

Of those who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire, the very large majority of parents and carers agreed that their children enjoy school and that the school keeps them informed of their children's progress. Almost all respondents felt that the school is a safe environment. One parent contacted Ofsted by telephone to express his pleasure with the school. The lowest level of satisfaction was with the extent to which the school takes account of parents and carers' suggestions and concerns. The inspection confirmed that this is an area in which the school is developing its approach. Although the very large majority of respondents agreed that the school helps their children to have a healthy lifestyle, this is one of the lower levels of satisfaction. Inspectors explored this issue and decided that the school was doing well in this area, but that it may not be communicating this as clearly as it could be to parents, carers and students.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Wallingford 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 206 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1134 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	79	38	109	53	17	8	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	77	37	125	61	1	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	90	44	108	52	5	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	79	38	109	53	14	7	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	70	34	124	60	3	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	41	20	134	65	26	13	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	15	135	66	34	17	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)	66	32	114	55	11	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	61	30	122	59	14	7	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	70	34	120	58	6	3	3	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	55	27	116	56	18	9	1	0
The school is led and managed effectively	117	57	82	40	3	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	99	48	91	44	5	2	2	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



13 May 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Wallingford School, Wallingford OX10 8HH

Thank you for being so helpful and welcoming when we visited your school. Your positive attitudes, good behaviour and contribution to the school and local community are features of which to be proud.

You told us that Mr Wyllis and his team keep you safe, care for you well and help you to prepare for your future. We agree with you and judged these to be strengths of the school. You make expected progress, including in the sixth form, and this means that your school is overall satisfactory.

We have asked all school leaders to be as good as the senior leaders at evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of their areas of responsibility, and then taking action to improve. Another recommendation is that all teaching needs to be good or better and focusing on what you need to learn. Teachers also need to use assessment information more regularly to help plan lessons that will mean all of you, irrespective of your ability in a subject, make good progress. In addition, for teachers to make sure that you are involved more in what you are learning.

To help, you can make sure that you maintain positive attitudes when you are asked to be more involved in lessons. You could also more frequently respond to and act on the often very good written advice given by your teachers.

We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

James McNeillie

Her Majesty's Inspector

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