

John Willmott School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103522
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	376920
Inspection dates	14–15 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Davinder Dosanjh 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	1158
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	194
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Murray
Headteacher	Mandy McCrohon
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2009
School address	Reddicap Heath Road Sutton Coldfield B75 7DY
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 40 teachers, visiting 40 lessons. Ten of the lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, groups of students, representatives of the governing body and staff. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation including improvement plans, the analysis and tracking of students' progress, records of lesson observations, students' work, and a wide range of other policies and school documents. The inspection team received 99 completed questionnaires from parents and carers, and scrutinised questionnaires completed by students and staff.

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

- The rigour with which the sixth form is monitored and evaluated to bring about sustained improvements in outcomes for students.
- The quality of provision and achievement in mathematics.
- The effectiveness of teaching in meeting the needs of different students.
- The effectiveness of leadership and management in tackling underperformance and sustaining a faster rate of improvement over time.

Information about the school

John Willmott is larger than the average comprehensive school. It has been a specialist technology college since September 2001. The great majority of students are from White British backgrounds with others from a wide range of minority ethnic groups. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average but increasing. The school has achieved the following awards: Healthy Schools status, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Sport England Sportsmark and the Newly Qualified Teacher Award for quality education.

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

2

Main findings

John Willmott is a satisfactory school which is ambitious with high expectations and aspirations. It has started to make some significant improvements in a short time under the leadership of the new headteacher. It has some notable strengths in its provision for students' personal development. Students learn in a supportive and inclusive environment where behaviour is good. Students feel safe and are largely positive about school. They enjoy good relationships with staff and are well supported through good arrangements for care and guidance. Students whose circumstances make them vulnerable are served well by the close attention the school gives to their needs. The school ensures that helpful and personalised support is available to students at key times in their school career. There are many strong partnerships with local schools, colleges and other agencies, all of which enhance the provision available for students. An improving range of curriculum options is increasingly meeting students' needs and aspirations.

There has been a gradual improvement over the last three years in the percentage of students obtaining five GCSE grades at A* to C including English and mathematics, which is now broadly average and reflects satisfactory progress by the end of Key Stage 4. GCSE results in 2011 show significant improvements in mathematics and in some subjects, for example science and art, they were above average. However, there is not enough consistency in learning across subjects to secure good achievement for all students. The specialist subjects are contributing to raising standards and have brought many benefits to students, such as through the exciting Year 8 technology project bringing links with local business and industry. A sharp focus on driving improvement in the core subjects through rigorous tracking and monitoring of students' progress and a range of intervention strategies is starting to have a clear impact. The school leadership team recognises that these strategies have not yet secured good progress for all students. It is continuing to drive forward intervention plans to tackle underachievement, but the development and reinforcement of literacy and numeracy skills are not widely evident across the curriculum.

Teaching is satisfactory overall but remains variable in quality. An increasing proportion of lessons are good or outstanding, but not all teaching meets the varying needs of students sufficiently well because lessons sometimes do not contain the level of challenge needed, and questioning techniques do not always encourage students to think and develop their understanding. Students demonstrate the ability to be independent in their learning but at times rely too much on the teacher.

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The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory with a renewed focus on improving student outcomes and provision. Standards have fluctuated and while students make satisfactory progress overall there are pockets of underachievement.

Accurate self-evaluation by the school's leaders and the success of actions to improve students' outcomes indicate that the school has a good capacity to continue to improve. It has a good track record in improving attendance, and the proportion of students achieving five A* to C grades at GCSE. The tracking and monitoring of students' performance are rigorous. The headteacher and senior leadership team provide strong and purposeful leadership with ambitious and well-focused plans for the future.

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?

- Continue to raise attainment and progress in English and mathematics through:
 - monitoring and evaluating the intervention strategies used to support students who are underachieving to ensure that they are consistently effective
 - ensuring that all teachers support this by reinforcing literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum whenever appropriate.

- Reduce the variability of teaching and learning so more is consistently good or better by ensuring that:
 - the level of challenge provided by learning activities is appropriate for the range of abilities in the class
 - questioning techniques encourage students to think and develop their understanding
 - activities in class enable students to take more responsibility for their learning by developing independent learning skills.

- Improve achievement in the sixth form by:
 - implementing robust systems to track and monitoring students' progress
 - monitoring actions required for further improvement closely so they happen within specified timescales
 - developing the curriculum so it better meets the needs and interests of the students.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students enter the school with attainment which is broadly average. Since the previous inspection, there has been a steady improvement in the standards reached

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by students by the end of Key Stage 4. The pattern of attainment between subjects varies from year to year and this has led to a mixed set of results at GCSE. There has been significant improvement in science over the last three years, and in mathematics, drama, music and history in 2011. Achievement in mathematics is now satisfactory. The current performance of Year 11 students shows that achievement is improving. This is reflected in the success of early entry GCSE passes in mathematics. Improved use of performance data and the detailed individualised tracking of students show that the large majority of students are now making the expected levels of progress. The progress of different groups is carefully tracked, with an increasing range of effective intervention strategies to remedy underachievement. As a result, students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress in line with their classmates. Those with a statement of special educational needs make good progress, as do looked after children, because of the good individualised support. The small number of students from a wide range of minority ethnic groups make the progress expected of them.

In the majority of lessons observed, progress and the quality of learning were satisfactory. However, an increasing number are good, particularly in Key Stage 4. Learning is strongest in lessons where there is an element of independence and students have opportunities to undertake self- and peer-assessment. In satisfactory lessons, learning tasks did not always meet the needs of students sufficiently well because all groups were learning at the same pace, thus some were not provided with enough challenge.

Students behave well when moving around the school. They are polite and show respect for all members of the school community. Good behaviour is a feature of most lessons, and often makes a strong contribution to their success; disruption is rare, and the systems for dealing with it are clear and well understood. Persistent absence has decreased in each of the past three years due to a range of new measures, including governors' panels. Attendance has also improved over the same period and is now broadly average. The school provides a suitable range of opportunities for students to take on roles of responsibility, largely through the house system. Arts and sports activities provide a wide range of opportunities to make a contribution to the life of the school. Many students participate in charity fund-raising activities. The school recognises that the 'student voice' is not sufficiently influential to allow students to take more of the lead in planning and organising activities.

Students understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and there is a high take-up of a wide range of extra-curricular sporting activities. Artistic and musical opportunities make a good contribution to students' emotional development and well-being, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school is a harmonious and cohesive community. Students demonstrate a range of skills, attitudes and competencies that prepare them appropriately for their future working lives.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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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	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is improving although it remains variable. Where teaching is good, lessons are well planned and tasks are well matched to students’ abilities. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subject, and transmit this to their students. The good relationships between teachers and students ensure that there is an environment in which students can enjoy their lessons. Students work extremely well together when given the opportunity and, in some lessons, this gives rise to excellent collaborative learning. Progress being made in the lesson is reviewed at the end and middle of lessons. Although expectations of teaching and learning have been raised, good practice is still not seen in all lessons. Opportunities are sometimes missed to promote students’ development and use of independent learning and some lessons lack challenge because teachers’ expectations for what the students can achieve are too low.

Changes made to the curriculum in the last few years mean that it is now better matched to the individual needs of students. The addition of more vocational courses is promoting greater opportunities for students. All Year 9 students undertake vocational courses, and this is leading to improved outcomes. Early entry GCSEs and module examinations for English and mathematics in Year 10 are proving successful in raising standards and students are motivated by these results. Option pathways help prepare students for future choices post-16. Extra-curricular opportunities are wide ranging and include many sports, band, internet café and homework clubs and the take-up is high.

The staff have a very high level of commitment to students. Students whose

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

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circumstances make them vulnerable but have succeeded against the odds praise the staff for their part in this success. Additional lessons and one-to-one support for students who experience long-term absence and those who join mid-year are effective. Case studies show that the school has high standards of care and exemplary standards of record keeping. The school works very well with external agencies and is persistent in its efforts to obtain their support, for example in improving attendance officers have worked well to improve attendance so that is close to the national average from a low base and persistent absence has been reduced considerably.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

There is a great deal of confidence in the ambition of the new headteacher, who in a short time has raised staff expectations and driven improvements on a number of fronts. There is renewed determination by senior and middle leaders in tackling the school’s key priorities. Underachievement is being challenged. Commitment is evident at all levels and staff morale is high. Detailed monitoring and evaluation of the work of subjects areas are leading to a quickened pace of improvement, most notably in mathematics. Middle leaders have a good understanding of data and whole-school priorities. The impact of recent actions is not sufficiently embedded to redress the variability in teaching and the performance of departments and groups of students. Senior leaders have consistently communicated high expectations about teaching and learning with staff and provide an accurate diagnosis of teaching. The impact of the professional development activities was seen in the good or better lessons.

The governing body is supportive to the school and discharges its statutory duties appropriately. Its members understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Their involvement in the evaluation of the school’s progress is not yet sufficiently widespread. All safeguarding arrangements are met; the school has very clear policies, strategies and procedures which rigorously ensure the safety and welfare of students. The school has a generally positive relationship with parents and carers, providing them with frequent information. Good partnerships to promote students’ learning and well-being are evident in curriculum links and care, guidance and support links with a wide range of external agencies.

Equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination are central to the school’s aims, and discriminatory behaviour is always challenged. The school undertakes a detailed

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analysis of the performance of a range of groups and is targeting appropriate action to close gaps in performance. The school has a clear understanding of its local context. It is itself a cohesive community with a broad social and cultural mix, and elements of the curriculum, as well as a range of trips and visits, help to develop pupils’ understanding of other cultures and communities. The link with China is valuable in this respect. The school recognises that it has not yet developed a sufficiently rigorous analysis or detailed plan to promote community cohesion, in terms of the broader national and global contexts.

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	3
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
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

The majority of students make satisfactory progress and demonstrate sensible, mature attitudes to their studies. Students make good use of opportunities to contribute to the school and local community through a variety of roles, including paired reading with younger students and acting as lunchtime and breakfast supervisors, head boy/girl or deputies. The large majority go on to higher education.

Teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory. Particular strengths in lessons include high quality dialogue facilitated by probing questioning and strongly developed skills of critical thinking. Opportunities for independent learning are limited and students do not have a sufficient focus on what to do to improve. The school offers an increasingly broad range of courses with more vocational courses. However, not all courses are suited to the needs of the students or support their future aspirations.

Leaders and managers understand the strengths and weaknesses of the sixth form and now have clear plans with a stronger focus on improving students’ outcomes that are integral to the whole-school development process. Measures taken in 2010

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included increasing entry requirements for a number of subjects, and an improved induction programme and its impact are reflected in improved pass rates at A- and AS-level in 2011. Appropriate tracking systems are now in place to help monitor individual students' progress and target any who underperform.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	3
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

A very small minority of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. Of those that did respond, the majority were positive about the work of the school and in particular agreed that their child enjoys school and is safe. The lead inspector had a detailed discussion with the headteacher about the results of the questionnaires and individual issues raised by parents and carers to inform the school's future work.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at John Willmott 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 99 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1158 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	37	37	54	55	6	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	40	40	55	56	3	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	43	43	43	43	8	8	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	35	50	51	9	9	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	32	32	55	56	8	8	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	22	22	53	54	15	15	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	28	50	51	15	15	1	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)	31	31	50	51	6	6	2	2
The school meets my child’s particular needs	34	34	52	53	6	6	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	38	38	43	43	10	10	5	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	30	30	43	43	9	9	4	4
The school is led and managed effectively	30	30	49	49	8	8	3	3
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	40	40	48	48	8	8	1	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 8 April 2011 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.



16 September 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of John Willmott School, Sutton Coldfield, B75 7DY

Thank you for making the inspection team so welcome at your school. We all enjoyed talking with you and you helped us to find out about the school. The school provides you with a satisfactory quality of education overall. However, the new headteacher is making some important improvements and some things are already good.

- You feel safe and your behaviour is good.
- Students whose circumstances make them vulnerable are well served by the close attention the school gives to their needs.
- The quality of care, guidance and support you receive is good.
- The wide range of curriculum options are increasingly meeting your needs and aspirations so more of you are gaining qualifications.
- There are many strong partnerships with local schools, colleges and other agencies to support your personal development.
- Senior leaders and managers are successfully bringing about improvements in mathematics, ensuring above average attainment in science, and reducing the number of you who miss school – as a result, GSCE results continue to improve.
- Staff are very committed to supporting you.

We have asked the school to make the following improvements.

- Increase the number of lessons where teaching is good to improve the progress you make at school.
- Continue to improve performance in English and mathematics.
- Improve achievement in the sixth form.

You too can help the school to improve by focusing on what you need to learn in lessons. We wish you all every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Davinder Dosanjh
Her Majesty's Inspector

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