

Wath Comprehensive School : A Language College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106954
Local authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	377500
Inspection dates	5–6 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Bernard Campbell HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,889
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	398
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Irene Hartley
Headteacher	Patricia Ward
Date of previous school inspection	13 December 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 48 lessons taught by 48 teachers and held meetings with school leaders, governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work and looked at improvement plans, monitoring records and safeguarding documentation. They also took account of questionnaires from 302 parents and carers, 150 students and 31 staff.

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

- Attainment and progress and whether achievement is good or satisfactory in the main school.
- Outcomes in the sixth form and whether they are better than satisfactory.
- How effectively teaching and the use of assessment data are securing good progress and learning by students of all abilities and at all key stages.
- How consistently leaders use self-evaluation and precisely targeted actions to drive improvement in teaching, learning and students' outcomes.

Information about the school

Wath Comprehensive is much larger than the average secondary school and has a very large sixth form. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is well below average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The school has a specialism in languages.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Wath Comprehensive is a good school that successfully raises aspirations and enables students of all abilities to develop their academic and vocational potential and their wider personal skills. Students achieve well and make good progress. There has been a sustained rise in the overall level of GCSE qualifications and attainment is above average. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is just above average. Attainment and progress are better in English than mathematics. Students attain well on some science courses but not others and, as a result, alternative courses have been introduced. A high proportion gain qualifications in modern foreign languages, which is the school's specialism.

Students, parents and carers express high levels of confidence in the school. Students feel very safe in the caring and orderly environment. Students make an outstanding contribution to the life of the school. Large numbers of students, of all ages and backgrounds, take on a wide range of responsibilities in the school and local community. Behaviour is good. Attendance is above average and improving.

Teaching and the use of assessment are good. The majority of teaching is good or better. Satisfactory teaching occurs more often with lower ability groups. On occasion, teachers do not identify and meet the full range of needs in the class. The good curriculum has increased vocational opportunities while maintaining the emphasis on academic achievement. The great range of extra-curricular activity contributes significantly to students' personal development and high levels of enjoyment. Outstanding care, guidance and support are highly personal to the needs of individual students and the extensive mentoring ensures that a wide range of student groups receive effective, dedicated support.

The sixth form is satisfactory. Students make broadly the progress expected. There is some inconsistency in students' outcomes across subjects. Teaching is good. Leaders have not been sufficiently robust in tackling weaker outcomes in a number of subjects. The analysis of sixth form performance data is not sharp enough and improved target setting and tracking have not yet had an impact on ensuring the consistency of students' progress.

The headteacher's strong and caring leadership has won the respect and commitment of students, staff, parents, carers and governors. Leaders communicate

high aspirations for students. They have developed a strong culture of collective professional endeavour among staff. Leaders have an accurate understanding of strengths and weaknesses based on detailed analysis of performance. Outcomes are generally good and improving and the school has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that students in the sixth form make consistently good progress across all subjects by improving the analysis of performance, the accuracy of target setting and monitoring, and the robustness of leaders' actions.
- Further raise attainment and increase the progress made by students, especially in mathematics and science, by:
 - extending the school's good practice in using assessment data to ensure that teaching more fully meets the range of students' learning needs within lessons and across the ability range
 - ensuring that students make good progress on all science courses.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students enter the school with average attainment. They make good progress in reaching an overall level of attainment at age 16 that is above average. The proportion gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is just above average. Attainment is above average in English language and below average in mathematics. The proportion of students gaining GCSE grades at A* or A in three subjects has risen faster than nationally.

Students make good progress in English. The proportion making the expected progress in GCSE mathematics fell below the national average in 2010 but was closer to the national average in 2011. Results from GCSE modules in mathematics show that the current Year 11 students are making faster progress. At Key Stage 3 teacher assessments indicate that Year 9 students make good progress against their targets in English and science and at least satisfactory progress in mathematics. Students make satisfactory progress in the sixth form. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress in gaining a wide range of qualifications. A small group with low levels of literacy and numeracy are showing early signs of making good progress in a new teaching programme at Key Stage 3.

Learning is good. Students' positive attitudes and good behaviour contribute well to lessons. Students make productive use of opportunities to discuss and to work independently. Students are confident to ask questions and they carry out peer-assessment with mutual respect. On occasion, learning slows when the objective does not provide precise guidance, too much time is given for a task or when the teacher moves on too quickly before students have understood. On occasion, students in lower-ability classes lack concentration and confidence, which slows progress.

Students make an outstanding contribution to the school and local community through a substantial and diverse range of activity involving the full range of students. Many are involved in student council activities and as prefects. Students are involved in the school’s reviews of teaching and the appointment of staff. They make a significant contribution in creating ‘safe havens’ and in resolving disputes. Some lead sports and drama activities in primary schools and many are involved in sporting and cultural activity. These opportunities help them to develop healthy lifestyles well and many try to eat healthily.

Behaviour is good around the school. Attendance is above average and improving, although there is a lack of punctuality by a few. Students have a good understanding of what they need to do to succeed in the future and they enjoy the work experience opportunities. The development of work skills across all subjects successfully promotes their capacity to work with each other and adults. Many students are developing greater independence in their learning and show that they can solve problems and make decisions, but this needs further development.

Students deepen their experience and reflection through out-of-school activities and trips in a number of subjects including art, music, drama, history, geography, modern foreign languages and physical education. The extensive range of international visits and links develops students’ awareness of other cultures well. Students also acquire a good knowledge about other cultures in Great Britain. However, their opportunity to engage with young people of their own age from these groups is limited.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
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	2
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching and the use of assessment are good. In the large majority of lessons classroom relationships promote students’ confidence to offer their opinions and ask questions. Teachers plan well and devise varied and engaging tasks. Good use of grade criteria directs the learning of specific skills. Teachers’ expert knowledge is

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

used deftly to comment on students’ responses, question their thinking and deepen their understanding. Structured talk is used productively to develop students’ thinking and to develop their confidence in working independently and collaboratively. Teaching assistants often support students with special educational needs and/or disabilities well by helping students to make progress in learning a skill, without doing it for them. In less effective lessons, more often with lower-ability classes, teachers do not clearly identify and plan sufficiently for the range of students’ needs. On occasion, the teacher talks for too long which limits the engagement of students and results in off-task behaviour.

Students, parents and carers value the frequent information about their progress against their targets. Marking provides generally good guidance on what they do well and how to improve, though there is some variation in its quality. Students find the specific guidance on individual skills, for example in English, particularly helpful. This precise approach to assessment is less well developed in some subjects. Peer- and self-assessment often make a good contribution to learning.

The breadth and relevance of the curriculum have contributed to increased staying-on rates, higher attendance and reduced persistent absence. All students take at least one modern foreign language. The curriculum has been adjusted to meet the needs and interests of different groups. The tailored provision for students entering the school with low levels of literacy and numeracy has got off to a good start. The curriculum provides an effective whole-school approach to developing students’ personal and work-related skills. The range and variety of more extended tasks, and tasks related to the ‘real world’, are less well developed. The comprehensive extra-curricular programme has a high take-up across all year groups. This significantly enriches students’ experience and enhances their wider learning, their subject skills and understanding, and their enjoyment.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The school has a highly personalised approach to meeting a wide range of needs. The transition arrangements from primary school provide individually tailored arrangements for students with particular needs. Medical care is excellent. A number of parents and carers gave comments to the inspection team praising the high level of individual care and attention provided to meet their children’s particular or special needs and the great impact this had on their children’s learning and well-being. A wide range of specific groups of students with common academic or social needs are identified and dedicated programmes of mentoring support are provided, involving almost half the school teaching and support staff. The impact on these groups is closely and frequently monitored. Strikingly, the care is not just provided by the staff. Trained students play a significant role in staffing the ‘safe haven’ areas for students feeling vulnerable and play a very active role in dealing with conflict between students.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides strong and caring leadership that has won the respect and commitment of students, staff, parents, carers and governors. Leaders communicate high aspirations and they have developed a strong culture of professional endeavour among staff. Senior leaders work effectively with middle leaders to review progress and plan improvement. Short-term priorities are set and reviewed regularly. Programmes of self-evaluation systematically draw on students' work, their views, and observations of the work of the faculty as well as information about students' progress. Systems of accountability are rigorous and supportive. Decisive action has been taken to improve the quality of staffing when necessary. A wide range of staff are involved in activities to improve aspects of teaching and learning and share effective practice. Many have volunteered to join in a programme of lesson observation training to develop their own practice. Middle leaders are enthusiastic and proactive in bringing about improvements.

Target setting and assessment provide strong direction and a regular check on progress that students find helpful. The analysis of the progress of different groups focuses closely on ensuring equal opportunities in the curriculum and in activities outside the school day. Leaders have an accurate understanding of strengths and weaknesses based on detailed analysis of performance. On occasion, analysis of performance and judgements about weaknesses are not sufficiently sharp, for example in relation to the sixth form. The strategy for reviewing and changing the curriculum has brought about well-considered changes that have been implemented effectively. The leadership of care, guidance and support has been effective in promoting good behaviour, attendance and student safety.

Governors are active and well informed about school developments and activities. They understand the priorities for improvement and regularly monitor and question progress. They have constructive relationships with leaders, the school and the wider community. The school is a leader of high-quality practice in safeguarding and it plays a national role in influencing policies for looked after children. Procedures to involve students in making the school safe for others are imaginative and effective and have been used as a model of good practice by other schools.

The school has a highly positive relationship with parents and carers. It regularly surveys their views and acts upon their comments. Frequent reports inform parents and carers of how well their children are progressing. The school has a strong partnership with local primary schools for sports and languages and a developing partnership to promote school improvement. Links with other care and guidance agencies are strong. The school contributes strongly to community cohesion. Staff, students and governors have significant involvement in community-related events and organisations. The school's specialist status successfully creates awareness that the students are part of a global community. Links with students from other British ethnic groups are underdeveloped.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

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

Sixth form

Overall, student outcomes are in line with what was expected from their GCSE grades. However, the variation in outcomes across subjects is too wide, with persistent underachievement in a few subjects. Sixth form students willingly contribute to the life of the school, for example by actively coaching younger pupils in their reading or mentoring them to meet their GCSE target grades. In the main, students quickly develop a personal maturity and independent learning skills to make a strong contribution to their well-being and sixth form studies. Students have appropriately high aspirations and feel they are well supported in seeking university places and/or employment.

Teaching and the use of assessment are good. In the best lessons students make a strong contribution to lessons that are well planned and provide an appropriately high degree of challenge. Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and use their knowledge of examination assessment well to skilfully guide students on how to improve. Students value and appreciate the role played by their teachers, tutors and the sixth form leadership team. The school has successfully introduced a broader selection of vocational courses which has begun to better meet the wider range of needs and interests of a growing sixth form. Care, guidance and support, including the induction of sixth form students, are good.

Leaders have not been sufficiently robust in tackling the weaker attainment of students in a number of subjects. The analysis of performance data has not been sharp enough. Leaders have correctly identified the need to refine the way it sets targets and tracks the progress of students. Although these procedures are developing they are insufficiently embedded to have delivered the intended impact.

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	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers gave a strongly positive response to all questions on the questionnaire. Most are happy with their children's experience of the school and believe that it is well led and managed. A higher than average percentage said that their children enjoy school and feel safe. Most said that they are well informed about their children's progress and a few added positive comments about the frequency of reports. Most are happy with the quality of the teaching and the progress their children are making. Most feel that the school is meeting their particular needs. A few parents or carers contacted the inspection team to praise the individual care and attention given to their children's particular needs. A very few added positive comments about the range of extra-curricular activities and the good quality of transition from primary school. These views matched the views of the inspection team. A very few criticised the healthiness of school meals but the inspection found that healthy options are available. A very few criticised the ease of communicating with the school. The inspection found that the school worked hard to overcome any difficulties in communicating with parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Wath Comprehensive School : A Language College 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 302 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,889 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	109	36	187	62	4	1	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	120	40	176	58	4	1	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	136	45	154	51	6	2	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	112	37	172	57	9	3	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	100	33	188	62	5	2	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	73	24	179	59	30	10	3	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	65	22	187	62	33	11	1	0
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)	97	32	176	58	13	4	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	100	33	181	60	9	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	91	30	171	57	22	7	3	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	62	21	179	59	22	7	4	1
The school is led and managed effectively	96	32	185	61	3	1	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	137	45	153	51	6	2	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	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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 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.



7 October 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of Wath Comprehensive School : A Language College,
Rotherham, S63 7NW**

Thank you for being so welcoming when we came to inspect your school. We enjoyed meeting you very much indeed. We judged that your school is good. In the questionnaire that you completed almost all of you said that you learn a lot in lessons, you are well prepared for the future and that the headteacher and senior staff do a good job; we agree with you.

Here are some of the positive judgements we made about your school.

- Your GCSE results have improved. You do particularly well in English; the majority of you learn two foreign languages; and you gain a wide range of qualifications.
- Many of you take on extra responsibilities and you make an outstanding contribution to the life of the school.
- Teaching is good and the curriculum gives you good opportunities to achieve.
- The care you receive is outstanding, partly because you actively help to make sure students are safe and conflicts are resolved.
- The leaders and other staff have done a good job to improve the school.

To help the school to further improve, we have said that senior leaders should:

- ensure that students in the sixth form make consistently good progress across all subjects by improving the analysis of performance, the accuracy of target setting and monitoring, and the robustness of leaders' actions
- further raise attainment and increase the progress made by students, especially in mathematics and science, by
 - extending the school's good practice in using assessment to ensure that teaching more fully meets the range of students' learning needs within lessons and across the ability range.
 - ensuring that students make good progress on all science courses.

I hope you continue to contribute your ideas and enthusiasm to help the school make further improvements.

Yours sincerely

Bernard Campbell
Her Majesty's Inspector

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