

Wardle High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105852
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	377314
Inspection dates	9–10 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Patrick Geraghty HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
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	1,145
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	36
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Taylor
Headteacher	Graham Wright
Date of previous school inspection	08 July 2009
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors spent the majority of their time visiting 42 lessons observing 41 teachers. They also held meetings with staff, groups of students and the Chair of the Governing Body. Documentation was scrutinised including: information related to the tracking of the academic and personal progress of students; detailed analysis of students' attainment and progress; the school's self-evaluation; minutes from meetings of the governing body; and evidence to demonstrate how the school supports students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. Inspectors also examined evaluations undertaken by the school to ensure that it meets statutory requirements with regard to safeguarding. In addition, 179 parental questionnaires were scrutinised along with questionnaires returned by a representative sample of staff and students.

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

- Whether strategies to improve students' attainment and progress at Key Stages 3 and 4 have been effective and are sustainable.
- Whether teaching and learning are sufficiently challenging to promote and sustain even better outcomes for students.
- Whether the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation by leaders and managers at all levels is sufficiently well embedded to drive and sustain improvement.

Information about the school

Wardle High is a larger than average secondary school. It has held specialist status for the performing arts since 2003. Most students come from the local area where socio-economic circumstances are broadly average. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. Almost all students are White British, with only a small number from other backgrounds. The school is resourced for physically impaired students. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, as is that of those with a statement of special educational needs. The school has achieved the Artsmark and Healthy Schools status as well as Investors in People status. The governing body decided in 2010 that sixth form provision will close in July 2012.

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

This is a good school. The headteacher has skilfully and purposefully guided the school on a journey, over six years, from special measures to the establishment of a culture of confidence, ambition and improvement. Students throughout their time at the school make good progress. The school's tracking and evaluation systems are robust. Data are used well to evaluate performance and plan improvement. Staff morale is high. Students are very well behaved, enjoy their learning and feel exceptionally safe. They are highly supportive of the school and make an excellent contribution to a harmonious and well-focused educational community. Relationships across the school are very good. The school's managers recognise that in order to achieve their stated ambition of becoming an outstanding school they need to further accelerate improvement trends in Key Stage 4 examination pass rates.

There is much good teaching. In these lessons students are challenged, develop well-tuned communication and group skills and enthusiastically engage in active and cooperative learning. However, identification and promotion of the sharing of good practice by the outstanding and good teachers is underdeveloped. Some marking and lesson guidance fails to indicate to students what they need to do to improve. The curriculum matches students' needs well. The introduction of vocational courses and the restructuring of Key Stage 3 provision in 2009 have produced a broad and balanced curriculum that more fully meets the needs of all students. The specialism of performing arts has had a positive impact on developing curriculum opportunities and external partnerships. Dedicated curriculum initiatives at Key Stage 4 have contributed to improved attainment across all groups of students. There is good use of information and communication technology (ICT) to promote learning. A high percentage of students progress to further education or work-based learning. Outstanding care, support and guidance enable students to succeed.

The headteacher has a strong commitment to embedding a culture of continuous improvement and challenge. He has led the school very well and sets ambitious targets for the future. He is ably supported by a very strong deputy and a good senior management team. The school knows itself well and recognises that the managers of teaching need to build a clearer focus on the development of learning skills. Partnerships are excellent. Equality of opportunities for all is well promoted. Parents are supportive of the school and its ethos. Safeguarding is outstanding. Governors provide very effective links with the local community and are highly supportive of the school. They are very challenging in their pursuit of further

improvement. The school provides good value for money and has a good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further increase the proportion of outstanding and good teaching by ensuring:
 - that the managers of teaching develop a clear focus on the development of learning skills
 - that the best teachers are involved in the dissemination of their good and outstanding practice so that the quality of teaching and learning are further strengthened.
- Improve assessment to support learning by ensuring:
 - marking in all subjects gives a clear indication to students of what they need to do to improve
 - consistency in the use of data for lesson planning across the curriculum
 - guidance in all lessons informs students of what they need to do to improve.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Overall, students make good progress from average starting points as they move through the school. In the best lessons students work with much enthusiasm and make good progress in developing their abilities in learning. This was exemplified in a good English lesson where students were enthused by the challenges of understanding the prologue of the Canterbury Tales and in translating middle English into current language usage. Students took much delight in translating the description of the young knight and were both amused and appreciative of one student's astute declaration that he was 'a player'. The progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. The proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE rose significantly in 2011. When English and mathematics are included this figure is broadly in line with the national average. The most recent modular examination results and scrutiny of current tracking information indicates that a strong trend of improvement is continuing. Gaps in performance between groups of students, such as those known to be eligible for free school meals, are narrowing as a result of focused intervention. The school is aware of the continuing need to ensure that all students achieve to their potential and recognises the need to further accelerate attainment at Key Stage 4.

Students' personal development is good. They report that they feel exceptionally safe and that instances of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively. Older students act as positive role models for younger students. The school focus over several years on enhancing students' behaviour has been highly successful. Students behave very well, both in lessons and around the school, and make an excellent contribution to a highly harmonious educational community. Involvement with the wider community is excellent, with students engaged in numerous charitable activities and cultural events. Students understand what they need to do to lead a healthy lifestyle. The school has rigorous procedures in place to follow up student absence and, as a

result, attendance has improved. This, together with good development of ICT skills, is ensuring that students are prepared well for the next stage of their education or the world of work. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

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	3
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good. The best lessons are characterised by a sense of purpose and challenge. Students are engaged and respond with enthusiasm to the variety of activities and opportunities to develop their understanding and skills. Well-focused questioning enables students to develop thinking skills; they relish the opportunity to develop spoken and presentational skills. Teachers use praise and encouragement to promote high expectations. Resources are well designed and used effectively with good use of technology to support learning. In satisfactory lessons, the pace is slower and too much teacher talk limits opportunities for students to develop independent learning skills. The planning of group and paired work is less effective. Data are not always used effectively to plan lessons and to inform on the variety of activities that will meet the needs of all students and enable them to make at least good progress. There is insufficient sharing of good practice across subjects to ensure the most skilled teachers share their approaches, ideas and strategies and enable the level of teaching across the school to be raised. The use of assessment to support learning is satisfactory. In some subjects there is infrequent guidance given to students as to what they need to do next to improve. There is also too much variability in the quality of marking of students' work. Very good marking practice was seen in English and in design and technology.

The curriculum is good. The curriculum, refocused in 2009, now more fully meets the needs of all students. The Year 7 'transformation' curriculum has a strong focus on developing literacy and numeracy and in building communication and learning skills to enable stronger foundations for the challenges of Key Stage 4 work. Students are offered the opportunity for early entry in GCSE performing arts in Year 9. The recent introduction of BTEC courses at Key Stage 4 is impacting on meeting students' needs

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

and improved examination results in 2011. Well-developed partnerships are supporting curriculum innovation. There are a good range of additional and enrichment activities which are enhanced by the work of the performing arts specialism. The school has maintained a strong tradition and national reputation for brass band playing. While there was evidence of cross-curricular literacy development this was less apparent for numeracy.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Staff know students well and students have total confidence that they are very well cared for and guided throughout their school career. Transition arrangements from primary schools are very effective and students settle into school quickly, with confidence and enjoyment. Close monitoring and tracking of academic progress and personal development ensure very well-targeted and guided intervention. Well-developed partnerships with external agencies complement the high-quality support offered by the school for all its students. Provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are exemplary. Following the decision to close the sixth-form provision, the school has been proactive in ensuring that Year 10 and 11 students receive high-quality advice and guidance on post-16 opportunities within the extended local area. Effective steps have been taken to improve attendance and persistent absences have been significantly reduced. Students were highly positive about the very effective system of incentives and rewards established.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides strong strategic leadership, with a clear vision on embedding an aspirational and high-performance culture within the school. The school community has a strong sense of purpose and direction as a result of the good work of leaders and managers at all levels. As a consequence, staff morale is high and buoyed by the improvements made over the last five years. Communication between staff is good. However, senior leaders acknowledge that improvement in Key Stage 4 examination results has been too gradual and requires greater acceleration. Robust systems to track and monitor students' progress are embedded. While teaching is good, the dissemination of good practice is insufficiently focused on improving learning. The school recognises that the managers of teaching need to build a clearer focus on the development of learning skills. Self-evaluation is accurate and self-critical and impacts on staff at all levels. Subject and middle leaders have welcomed regular and rigorous monitoring and evaluation. The highly able governing body makes an excellent contribution to the school's work. They are very well led by a Chair who has a strong focus on improvement. Governors are both supportive and highly challenging of school leaders. They actively seek and consider the views of parents and are excellent conduits for the school's links with its community as well as

the wider education and business sectors. Along with the headteacher, they have made an excellent contribution to tackling the school's historic adverse financial position. The school's engagement with parents and carers is good. The employment of a communications officer has made a positive difference to the quality and regularity of communications with parents and carers. Partnerships are excellent, well promoted and enhanced by the school's specialism in performing arts. They have had real impact on the quality of student outcomes, provision and opportunities. There are very strong links with local schools and colleges which add to the students' learning opportunities. Links with a variety of other agencies add to the outstanding quality of care, support and guidance for students. There is effective promotion of equality of opportunity through pastoral programmes and the broad and balanced curriculum. Any form of discrimination is challenged swiftly and robustly. Students from different backgrounds and needs engage harmoniously. The school monitors the performance of different groups well and strategies to tackle underachievement are well formed. The school promotes community cohesion well. Local and international initiatives are well promoted. Safeguarding is outstanding with much exemplary practice. Policies and procedures are highly comprehensive in range and coverage. The school's value for money, set against outcomes, is good.

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	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	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

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory. The sixth form will close in July 2012 and currently has 36 Year 13 students studying A levels. Attainment in the sixth form is average. Good teaching was observed in the sixth form. However, very small class sizes fail to offer students sufficient challenge and opportunities for discussion and engagement; many classes consist of one or two students. Students feel confident in their teachers and relationships are good. The leadership of the sixth form is satisfactory. Systems to analyse and evaluate student enrolment and progress are robust. Care, guidance and support are strong with good guidance and progression to higher education.

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

An analysis of responses to the questionnaire indicates that the majority of parents and carers are happy with their child's experience at school and that appropriate steps are taken to ensure that their child is well prepared for the future. However, a small minority of parents and carers raised concerns about smoking. The school has recognised some issues within some year groups and has developed strategies and interventions to tackle these. Inspectors noted the parental concerns and have asked the school to look at this area.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Wardle 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 179 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,145 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	70	39	94	53	8	4	3	2
The school keeps my child safe	71	40	97	54	7	4	4	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	48	27	115	64	11	6	3	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	58	32	104	58	10	6	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	57	32	109	61	6	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	46	26	110	61	14	8	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	22	109	61	16	9	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)	65	36	93	52	9	5	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	55	31	105	59	11	6	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	68	38	77	43	15	8	6	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	39	22	107	60	11	6	4	2
The school is led and managed effectively	74	41	85	47	9	5	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	84	47	80	45	5	3	5	3

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.



11 November 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Wardle High School, Rochdale, OL12 9RD

Thank you for the very warm and friendly welcome that you gave my colleagues and me when we inspected your school recently. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit to your school. We would also like to commend you for your good behaviour and your commitment to making the school a harmonious place in which to work. We would particularly like to thank the many of you who spoke with us.

Our inspection found that yours is now a good school. You are making good progress throughout your time at Wardle. Your results are improving. There is much good teaching in the school. In these lessons you respond well to the teachers' high expectations. Your curriculum options are good. The teachers and support staff give you outstanding care, guidance and support.

The leaders in your school worked with us to decide on some ways in which your school could be even better. We decided that, to achieve this, the school should:

- further increase the percentage of outstanding and good teaching by ensuring that the best teachers share their outstanding and good practice
- improve guidance in lessons and in marked work so that you are all clear about what you need to do next to improve.

You can help your school to improve further by ensuring everyone focuses on the pursuit of excellence and by trying hard in your studies so that you can achieve your full potential in life.

I wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Patrick Geraghty
Her Majesty's Inspector

