

Wexham School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	110078
Local authority	Slough
Inspection number	378048
Inspection dates	30–31 May 2012
Lead inspector	Meena Kumari Wood HMI

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

Type of school	All-through
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	921
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	168
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs S D'Arcy
Headteacher	Mary Sparrow
Date of previous school inspection	9–10 December 2008
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Age group	11–18
Inspection date(s)	30–31 May 2012
Inspection number	378408



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Introduction

Inspection team

Meena Kumari Wood

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lesley Leak

Additional Inspector

Andrew Lyons

Additional Inspector

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Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 35 teachers teaching 35 lessons, of which 5 were joint observations with members of the senior and middle leadership teams. In addition, inspectors visited a support session in the autism resource base and carried out learning walks that focused on the learning and progress of students. Meetings were held with four groups of students, school staff, including senior and middle leaders, the Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and a governor. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online Parent View questionnaire in planning the inspection, observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including departmental development plans, the school achievement plan and the school self-evaluation, case studies of students whose circumstances have made them vulnerable, the safeguarding and equality policies and the school's internal observations of teaching. In addition, they analysed 125 questionnaires returned by parents and carers and others completed by students and staff.

Information about the school

This school is an average-sized secondary school and has a smaller-than-average sixth form as well as a small specialist resource base for students with autism. It is a specialist sports college serving a culturally diverse community and is a non-selective school in an area where there are also selective and grammar schools. The proportion of students entering or leaving the school other than at the usual times is lower than the national average for secondary schools. A high proportion of students are known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is above the average; many of these have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, or dyslexia. The proportion of those with a statement of special educational needs is in line with the average. The majority of the students are of Pakistani heritage, and smaller numbers from Indian, White British, Black African and Black Caribbean backgrounds. A small number of students are at the early stages of speaking English as an additional language. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory and improving school with a good sixth form. Most parents, carers and students are positive about the standard of education and care provided. The school is not good because students' progress from their starting points is not yet good, with some variability across subjects. Virtually all students progress to post-16 education, employment or training. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Sixth form students make at least the progress expected, with good progress in AS level and BTEC subjects. The vast majority of students stay on into Years 12 and 13 and A-level results are steadily improving.
- Teaching is satisfactory with much that is good across the school. Where lessons match students' needs and abilities through well-structured tasks and teachers check learning, students make good and, in a few cases, outstanding progress. In some lessons, assessment activities and marking are not always employed effectively to plan learning in line with students' targets and do not inform students of where they can improve, especially with their literacy and numeracy skills. The school's curriculum has particular strengths in English, physical education and BTEC subjects.
- Focused support for disabled students, those with special educational needs and those with autism, results in most making good progress. Attendance is high. The majority of students feel safe; their behaviour is satisfactory and most are well-focused learners.
- The headteacher, supported by effective governance, is beginning to successfully identify weaknesses in students' achievement through rigorous monitoring of students' progress and targeted support for staffing. Staff performance is managed satisfactorily and a priority is continuity in staffing. This has resulted in overall strengthening of students' achievement and improvements to the quality of teaching in Key Stage 4, especially in English. The monitoring of students' progress in mathematics is not as robust, and there is inconsistency in the way that middle leaders monitor teaching and assessment across subject areas.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the progress and raise the attainment of all students across the school, in all subjects, and especially mathematics by:
 - matching teacher expectations, lesson activities and tasks to students' abilities, knowledge, skills and target grades to plan more appropriate lesson activities
 - more rigorous monitoring of students' progress in lessons and their work over time by senior and middle leaders.
- Develop greater consistency in assessment across subjects by ensuring that:
 - all teachers build on identified good practice
 - regular feedback to students on their classwork and homework consistently informs them of how to improve and develops their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Develop greater strategic and operational capacity in middle leaders through
 - sharing of good teaching practice
 - consistent monitoring of teaching and assessment across all subjects

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire believe that achievement is satisfactory for students. Inspectors judge that overall achievement is satisfactory, although in the sixth form and in particular subjects, such as English and physical education, the achievement of students is good. Between Years 7 and 11 the majority make satisfactory progress given their generally low starting points. Overall students' attainment by the end of Year 11 is average. However, students' achievement is weaker in mathematics with too much variability in the levels of progress made by different groups of students. These include lower ability students and those of Pakistani heritage. As a consequence, senior managers have rightly ensured appropriate interventions for Year 11 students. Those who spoke with inspectors reported that they believed they had gained the important skills and confidence they needed to successfully complete their examinations.

In general, students known to be eligible for free school meals are exceeding their targets. Students in the sixth form make improving levels of progress in their chosen AS and A-level subjects and the progress they make in business and BTEC National Certificate subjects, such as travel and tourism and sport, is good.

The majority of students are keen to learn and opportunities to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are well exploited. In a Year 12 BTEC information and communication technology lesson students using a social network site received appropriate electronic feedback from the teacher and made good progress in improving the quality of their writing skills. However, where lessons do not include appropriate activities that meet the needs of all students, particularly

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the less able, progress for most is no better than satisfactory.

The school's accelerated readers' course for younger students is helping them develop more effective reading skills, but the weaker numeracy skills of students arriving in Year 7 have not been effectively addressed. The school is not consistently meeting the literacy needs of the high proportion of advanced bilingual learners, although some targeted activities in developing students' literacy skills were observed in English and humanities. In general, the focus on literacy and numeracy skills and pride in neat presentation of students' work are not in evidence in all lessons.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is satisfactory and improving, with much that is good. The responses from parents, carers and students to the inspection questionnaires reflected the majority view that teaching is good. Where teachers plan lessons in line with students' needs and abilities, tasks are well structured and teachers check what students are learning through skilful questioning. Outstanding teaching in one English lesson employed peer 'learning leaders' and this effectively helped students develop their skills and knowledge in line with their target levels. This activity promoted peer checking and lively discussion; students demonstrated reasoned understanding when questioned.

In those lessons observed by inspectors, for instance in mathematics and science where teaching was mostly satisfactory, and in a few cases inadequate, this was because teachers' expectations and planning were not effectively matched to students' prior knowledge, skills and needs. In addition, teachers did not check students' learning often enough. In a Year 9 science lesson, with a diverse mix of students of differing abilities and prior knowledge, the planned activity was not helping students to deepen their understanding of essential concepts relating to the food carbon chain.

Assessment activities, such as peer- and self-assessment, are inconsistently used across subjects. Where these strategies are employed well, such as in English and physical education, students reflect and understand what they have learnt and, importantly, what they need to do next. However, there is an inconsistent approach in the quality of teachers' feedback to students on their written and oral work, including the development of their literacy skills. Even where teachers do provide good quality information, most do not ensure that students use the helpful information to improve. Assessment information is used effectively to provide out-of-lesson support for students with autism spectrum disorders and students at the early stages of acquiring English and, subsequently, they make good progress.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Most students report that they feel safe in school and that adults are approachable if they have concerns. However, not all students in speaking with inspectors expressed complete confidence in the school's systems for effectively tackling bullying,

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especially cyber bullying and homophobic bullying. Parents and carers support this view. Nevertheless, inspection evidence did not endorse this view; inspectors observed that the majority of students behave responsibly towards one another and towards adults, and incidents of bullying are effectively dealt with, when reported. Many parents, carers and students express concerns about behaviour around the school and a significant minority believes that learning in some lessons is disrupted by the poor behaviour of some students. Inspectors judged that in the majority of cases, students behave well in lessons and around the school. However, in a minority of lessons where activities were insufficiently absorbing or where students did not understand their work, a few chattered off task and distracted others. This was especially the case in those lessons where students had suffered disruptions to their learning through lack of staffing continuity.

The school's effective sanctions and rewards policies, together with consistently robust monitoring, have resulted in reducing incidents of anti-social behaviour and bullying, lowering exclusions and increasing attendance.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has provided good leadership on the twin priorities of raising standards and improving behaviour and attendance. Senior leaders continue to address variability in subject achievement through establishing a more skilled and stable staffing base. Self-evaluation processes demonstrate a school that, in most respects, knows its strengths and where it needs to improve, although there is some variability in the strategic and operational thinking of middle managers. Senior managers have worked hard to improve the quality of teaching and assessment through coaching and professional development; nevertheless, the school's view of the quality of teaching is not yet consistent across all subjects. This is because there is too little focus on the progress different groups of students make over time, teachers' checking of students' learning during lessons and too little sharing of good practice across subjects. Senior and middle leaders use good quality information on the standards reached by students during the year. Although this valuable information guides their regular progress checks, it is not used by teachers across all subjects to guide their lesson planning and is not reliably informing target setting. Inspectors observed good examples in English, business and physical education.

Effective internal support and good partnership work with external agencies are contributing well to the education and care of different groups of students and much valued by parents and carers. Efforts to involve more parents and carers in their children's learning have not been entirely successful, although some greatly appreciate their involvement in developing reading skills with younger students. A significant number of parents and carers believe that the school does not communicate well with them. During a time of significant change, the school is acutely aware of the need to extend its good practice to meet the needs of all its parents and carers.

The curriculum has a good impact on students' outcomes. The school has developed

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vocational and academic provision that is effectively meeting students' aspirations and needs across Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. The school's physical education specialism has an innovative 'sporting scholars' programme which, through coaching, extends students' cricket skills and encourages academic success.

Students broaden their horizons through assemblies and a range of extra-curricular activities that they greatly value and which develop their social, spiritual, moral and cultural skills. Sixth form students have good opportunities to visit their link school in South Africa where they lead sessions, for instance on sport. In Year 9, students receive good advice and guidance on their Key Stage 4 options. Sixth form students reported that the quality of course guidance in Years 11 and 12 was good.

The governing body fulfils its statutory obligations for ensuring that safeguarding requirements are met. The governors effectively support and challenge the leadership team in raising students' standards. The school's equalities plans monitor attainment of different student groups and challenge any form of discrimination, but there is less evaluation of the success of actions undertaken. School leaders have shown their ability to bring about improvement in raising standards and tackling anti-social behaviours. All this indicates a good capacity for further improvements.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



6 June 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Wexham School, Slough SL2 5QP

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed being in your lessons and were impressed by how polite most of you were and also by your good attendance. Well done!

Wexham School is a satisfactory and improving school with a good sixth form. Most of you enjoy your lessons, are keen to learn, make satisfactory progress and attain broadly average results. In many lessons we observed well-planned tasks and activities, but in others planning was not clear enough to help you to make the progress of which you are capable and your learning was not always checked often enough. However, the school is providing those of you who need it, especially in Year 11, with good subject support outside lessons. Your behaviour overall is satisfactory. Most of you told us that you felt safe and when you reported bullying incidents to staff, these were acted upon effectively. Those of you in the sixth form make good progress and achieve good results. You greatly value the opportunities you have to lead on school events, and virtually all of you go on to training, university or jobs when you leave.

We have asked the school's senior leaders to:

- improve your GCSE results across different subjects by making sure that you receive more detailed feedback on your work and ensuring that teachers plan suitably challenging and appropriate activities for you, and check your learning frequently
- monitor your progress in lessons and the marking of your work more closely to ensure that no-one underachieves in examinations and assessments and that you all develop good writing and numeracy skills.

You can contribute to your learning by acting on teacher feedback on your work and continuing to behave well during lessons and around school. We wish you well in your studies.

Yours sincerely

Meena Wood
Her Majesty's Inspector

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