

Woodchurch High School Engineering College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105095
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	395308
Inspection dates	11–12 July 2012
Lead inspector	Sue Harrison 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,339
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony Smith
Headteacher	Rebekah Phillips
Date of previous school inspection	18 March 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional Inspector
Additional Inspector
Additional Inspector
Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 42 lessons delivered by the same number of teachers. They scrutinised students' books and looked at school documentation that included self-evaluation and development plans, and data on the attainment and progress of the current cohort of students. Inspectors held meetings with groups of staff, students and governors and analysed 335 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, as well as those completed by staff and students.

Information about the school

This larger than average secondary school enrolls about 5% more boys than girls. Around 97% of its students are White British in origin. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free schools meals is double the national average. The proportion of students supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also well above average. The school houses a designated unit for students with autistic spectrum disorders and special provision is also made for students with medical and physical impairment. The school has gained many awards, including the Wirral Inclusion Award and the North West Special Educational Needs Award. In January 2010, Woodchurch High became a Trust School. The partners who form the Board of Trustees are The Church of England, Liverpool Hope University and a private company that supports the school's engineering specialism. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress. The school is consistently over-subscribed.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- Woodchurch is a good school. It is not outstanding as it is not yet successful in ensuring that all students meet their full potential in all subjects. It provides well for students with a wide range of needs and generally ensures they achieve well. It is characterised by an inclusive and caring ethos. An increased emphasis on raising aspirations and standards is beginning to have a very positive impact on achievement.
- In most years students make good progress. The Year 11 cohort that left in 2011 did not achieve as well as expected. However, swift action to identify the reasons for this and take appropriate action has led to significant improvement in the current year. Inspectors found standards of work and the progress being made by students to be good.
- A high proportion of lessons are good or better. Most teachers plan well for the different needs of students in their groups. The school places a high emphasis on developing literacy skills and this is well evidenced in many lessons. Teachers are also skilful at using topics to help students develop their social, moral, spiritual and cultural awareness. A minority of lessons fail to engage the students as well, and their progress is more limited.
- The school provides a safe, calm and purposeful environment. The majority of students enjoy school and attend well. Students are generally polite, well behaved and show good attitudes to learning.
- The school is well led. The headteacher sets high standards for staff and students and performance management is strong. The priority placed on improving teaching is proving effective. Tracking systems to monitor students' progress against their targets have improved significantly this year, although it is too early to judge their full impact. The curriculum is very well matched to the range of students' needs.
- The school engages well with parents, carers and the local community and, of the parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted survey, 96% would recommend the school to others.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching further so that all is good or better by:
 - continuing to share the good practice that exists
 - ensuring that students are effectively involved in the learning in all lessons
 - ensuring all teachers make frequent checks on the extent to which students understand their learning.
- Monitor carefully the effectiveness of improvements in target-setting and progress-tracking systems this year, and use this to encourage even higher aspirations so that students achieve their full potential in all subjects.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Inspectors agree with parents and carers that students generally achieve well at the school. Students show a positive attitude to learning. They gain a wide range of skills that prepares them well for when they leave school. In science, and a range of other subjects, they demonstrate good investigation and problem-solving skills. For example, in a technology lesson focussing on design and manufacturing, students were able to modify their ideas after their initial trial in order to improve the product. Students work well together in teams, sharing ideas and helping each other. They willingly take on roles of responsibility and show mature judgement in choosing learning mentors with the skills to guide others when working in groups. Students' literacy skills are well developed across the curriculum as well as in English lessons. In a religious studies lesson, students were able to use listening and speaking skills well in a discussion on charities and then employed persuasive language effectively in their written work when designing posters.

Students show a good standard of work in practical sessions. They gain useful work-related skills, particularly in the vocational curriculum. A land-based course is very successful at developing a whole range of skills. Students acquire animal care knowledge and also develop responsibility for ensuring the welfare of the animals. The course is used well to promote understanding of moral and welfare issues and is just one example of the successful promotion of students' social, moral, cultural and spiritual awareness across the school. Students on the land-based courses have won prizes at the Cheshire Show and one progressed to the Young Shepherd National Final.

Students generally enter the school with below average attainment on entry and make good progress against their starting points. Levels of attainment for Year 11 dipped in 2011 but there is strong evidence in the current year that this has been reversed. They achieved well in a number of subjects, including science and humanities, but did not do as well as expected in English and mathematics. The school has carried out a thorough analysis of the reasons for this and put effective actions in place. In particular, progress tracking was not sufficiently effective and this led to inaccurate targeting of interventions aimed at preventing underachievement. In the current year, target-setting and monitoring of students' progress is more rigorous. School data shows a significant improvement in projected outcomes for the current Year 11. This is informed by results from early entry to examinations in the core

subjects. Inspectors' observations of lessons and scrutiny of books showed standards of work and progress to be good across a wide range of subjects, including in English and mathematics.

There are no significant gaps between the achievement of boys and girls. The school is working hard to increase the achievement level of students known to be eligible for free school meals. In 2011 they made satisfactory progress overall, and there is evidence to show further improvement in the current year. Disabled students and those with special educational needs achieve well at the school as a result of a curriculum tailored to their needs, generally effective use of additional support and modifications to learning resources in lessons.

Quality of teaching

Parents, carers and students are positive about the quality of teaching and inspectors found a high proportion of teaching to be good or better. Most teachers have an excellent rapport with their students and are enthusiastic in delivering their subject specialisms. Teachers use their detailed knowledge of the students in their classes to plan learning activities that motivate and help students to understand the work. They provide a range of learning resources for students who are working at different levels. For example, in a history class on the use of source materials, students were given the choice of tackling the subsequent written task using a sheet with minimal guidance or one with more prompts to help them structure their essay. The use of varied resources to meet different needs ensures that students with disabilities and special educational needs are able to participate well in lessons, aided by generally effective support from teaching assistants where appropriate. In some cases, they work in discrete groups with work targeted to their specific needs rather than in mainstream classes.

Students are encouraged to think for themselves and develop confidence as independent learners. Teachers are skilful at the use of techniques to encourage this. Question and answer is used effectively in many lessons to help students extend their thinking and develop reasons for their answers. Inspectors saw several examples of students assessing their own work and that of their peers, and students explained how this helps them to know how well they are doing and what they could do to improve further. Books are generally marked regularly and give clear guidance to students.

The school's emphasis on developing literacy skills is effective. Teachers focus on key words for their subjects and ensure students have regular opportunities to develop their reading skills. Teachers are skilful at using the curriculum to develop students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural awareness. In one example observed, Year 8 students were engrossed in a discussion about basic human rights linked to the work they were doing on the holocaust. In an English lesson where students were studying *'Of Mice and Men'* they were able to use the text to explore concepts of discrimination relating to disability and racism.

In the small number of less effective classes, lessons are heavily teacher-led and do not provide sufficient challenge for students. There is insufficient planning to meet the needs of different students in the group and not enough checking of their understanding.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The school provides a calm, orderly and safe environment for learning. The overwhelming majority of students are very well behaved in lessons and around the school. Parents, carers and students are positive about behaviour, although they cite examples of misbehaviour in a small number of lessons. The school sets high expectations in relation to behaviour, students are very clear about the rules and the school is swift to impose sanctions where appropriate. This has contributed to a higher than average rate of fixed-term exclusions, but figures for the current year show a reduction as the school introduces alternative arrangements, including extra work in the evening rather than exclusion. School data also shows that the proportion of exclusions decreases as students move up the year groups. The school enrolls a higher than average number of students with identified behavioural needs and is generally successful at enabling these students to develop coping strategies. Students enjoy coming to school and most of them attend well. The school is working hard to reduce the above average number of persistent absentees. Punctuality to lessons is very good.

The school promotes a good understanding amongst students of what constitutes bullying and harassment and appropriate measures are in place to deal with incidents. A very small number of parents, carers and students who responded to the Ofsted survey are not fully satisfied with the school's response. Students understand clearly how to assess situations for any potential risk and benefit from interesting role-play sessions delivered by the police on the nature of bullying and the forms it can take, including racist, homophobic and gender based bullying.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has a relentless focus on improving achievement for all students and sets high standards. In recognition of the need to update teaching and learning techniques, a successful professional development programme is in place. The quality of teaching is monitored regularly and the school has a very clear understanding of what constitutes an effective lesson. As a result of rigorous self-assessment and performance management that is linked well to training, the proportion of teaching that is good or better has increased significantly. The majority of staff support the higher expectations and are keen to implement improvements.

The governing body provides a good level of challenge and support for the school. Members ensure a clear strategy is in place for the governing body's future development and monitor well its performance against targets. They also ensure that arrangements for students' safeguarding meet regulatory requirements. Swift action by the school following last year's lower examination outcomes resulted in immediate and effective action to redress the situation.

The capacity of leadership across the school is improving. Staff who have been appointed to new leadership roles in the core subjects are supported well by the headteacher. They have introduced effective strategies to address issues. The school has a good capacity to make further improvements.

The curriculum is very well matched to the needs of students. At Key Stage 3 they benefit from an emphasis on developing study skills, and they enjoy the integrated humanities projects that help to ensure a smooth transition from primary school. In Year 9, students

are now able to start Key Stage 4 work, where appropriate. They receive good guidance on the wide range of options open to them. The curriculum is enhanced by very effective partnerships with primary schools and post-16 providers. A high proportion of students continue in education or training after leaving school. Enrichment opportunities are extensive and well attended. Curriculum planning for moral, social, spiritual and cultural education is impressive, with detailed schemes of work for each year group and effective use of local, national and international links.

Equality of opportunity is well promoted. For example, the high proportion of students with disabilities and special educational needs are well integrated into the school. Students show respect for each other and those from different cultures.

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.



13 July 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Woodchurch High School Engineering College, Wirral CH49 7NG

I am writing to tell you about the findings of the recent inspection of your school. Thank you for helping us to find our way around and for giving us your views.

We agree with what many of you told us, that this is a good school. You enjoy most of your lessons and work hard. As a result the standard of your work and the progress you make are generally good. Examination results dipped slightly in English and mathematics in 2011 but are projected to be much better for the current Year 11. We were impressed by how well you know your targets and levels of progress and how teachers guide you on how to improve further. The vast majority of you behave very well and are a credit to yourselves and the school. You enjoy the wide range of subjects you can take, especially at Key Stage 4, and all the extra activities you can take part in. It was good to see how many of you gain prizes and awards for your efforts and achievements. We think the school is very well led. In order to improve it even further, we have asked the headteacher to ensure that:

- you are well involved in your learning in all lessons and that there are frequent checks on the amount of learning taking place
- target-setting and progress monitoring are used effectively to ensure you and your teachers strive for you to reach your full potential in all subjects.

You can help by trying your best at all times and telling staff when you need more help.

Yours sincerely

Sue Harrison
Her Majesty's Inspector

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