



Wirral Grammar School for Boys

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105113
LEA Wirral
Inspection number 277300
Inspection dates 22 March 2006 to 23 March 2006
Reporting inspector Ms Susan Wareing HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Cross Lane
School category	Foundation		Bebington
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Wirral, Merseyside CH63 3AQ
Gender of pupils	Boys	Telephone number	0151 6440908
Number on roll	1008	Fax number	0151 6438317
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr B Edmondson
Date of previous inspection	8 May 2000	Headteacher	Mr A Cooper

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 18	22 March 2006 - 23 March 2006	277300

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is a larger than average boys' selective grammar school. It acquired business and enterprise status in January 2006. Students come from a variety of social backgrounds but few are entitled to free school meals. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also below average. Most students are of White British heritage. The majority of boys enter the sixth form and continue on to university, with many attending their first choice university.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Wirral Grammar School for boys provides a good and effective education for pupils and some aspects of the school's work are outstanding. This judgement differs from that of the school which considers its overall effectiveness to be satisfactory. The school is well led and effective action is taken to maintain high standards. Students' prior attainment is exceptionally high and they leave the school with similarly high standards, although even more could achieve the highest levels at general certificate of secondary education (GCSE). Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. Achievement in the sixth form is outstanding.

Students' personal development is also outstanding. They are self-disciplined and mature, and take pride in and responsibility for their work. In Years 7 to 11, students could gain from an increased understanding of cultural diversity. Teaching is good overall with some outstanding features. Lessons are generally well paced with a high level of challenge. In the main school, lesson planning to meet the needs of different groups, especially the most able, varies across subjects and students do not always know exactly how to improve. In the sixth form teaching is outstanding.

The curriculum is good, and students value the range of extra-curricular activities which is outstanding. Care, guidance and support are good and support for sixth form students is outstanding. The school is well led and all leaders share a clear sense of purpose. All issues identified in the last inspection have been addressed and the school's planning identifies appropriate priorities for further improvement. In the last year, the school's designation as a business enterprise college has contributed to planning for an ambitious building programme, as well as a more business related curriculum. New appointments have strengthened the school's already good capacity to improve. The school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The sixth form is outstanding. Standards are among the highest found nationally and the sixth form attracts most students from the main school, as well as a proportion from other establishments. Students are offered a wide range of general certificate of education advanced-level (GCE A-level) subjects and most proceed to higher education. They benefit from the challenge and variety of teaching styles, and they successfully promote independent learning. Students also appreciate the breadth of the curricular and extra-curricular provision. Students' personal development is highly effective. They are well cared for and close, productive relations with teachers help to ensure students leave the sixth form as well balanced, mature and industrious individuals. The sixth form is exceptionally well led and managed, with demonstrably successful guidance available for high attainers as well as for any who might experience difficulties. The sixth form enjoys an excellent reputation and has developed valuable links with external agencies such as Connexions as well as with colleges, universities and industry.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that those students capable of obtaining A* grades at GCSE actually do so.
- Ensure that all students know, in every subject, how well they are doing and exactly what they need to do to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students enter the school with exceptionally high attainment. Due to the school's work on improving teaching and learning they make good progress during Years 7 to 9. Consequently, their standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Key Stage 3 are consistently well above average. However, in 2005 there was a dip in English results at higher levels, which the school has taken steps to tackle.

Results gained in external tests and GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 are exceptionally high. In 2005, the proportion of pupils achieving five or more GCSE grades A* to C, was significantly higher than the two previous years. Particular improvements were achieved in separate sciences, French and religious education. Only a small minority of students gained fewer than five A* to C grades, or achieved lower than grade C in individual subjects. Given pupils' achievement on entry to the school, their progress is good, although more could be done to ensure that the significant minority of pupils who are capable of gaining the highest grades actually go on to do so. The school recognises this relative degree of underachievement, particularly at grade A*, and measures are in hand to deal with this.

Students enter the sixth form with the exceptionally high standards gained at GCSE. Due to the outstanding quality of teaching and learning, assessment and guidance they make excellent progress and achieve outstanding results. In

2005, for instance, GCE A-level results were in the top 9% of those found nationally.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development at this school is outstanding, and it makes a significant contribution to students' good progress. Students are particularly mature, confident and responsible, and take pride in their achievements. Spiritual, moral and social development is excellent overall and helps students to think deeply about relationships and harmony. Cultural development is also good, although pupils say that they want to learn more about the perspectives and lives of people from different racial backgrounds. Personal and social education helps students to reflect on important matters, developing values such as hard work, respect, co-operation and fairness. Attendance is excellent, reflecting students' tremendous enthusiasm and enjoyment of learning. Their behaviour is exemplary. Occasional lapses in self-discipline are dealt with very effectively. Students' contribution to the community through charity fund

raising and voluntary community projects is outstanding. The school council provides opportunities for many to develop a good understanding of citizenship, although they could be given a greater say in whole school matters. Students adopt healthy lifestyles, and have an especially good awareness of dangers to health from smoking and drug abuse. They are well prepared for their future economic well-being through events such as regular enterprise days.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The quality of teaching and learning is good and in the sixth form it is outstanding. Enthusiastic subject specialists provide dynamic teaching, leading to vibrant learning. Teachers set challenging tasks and plan incisive question and answer sessions in which students are eager to participate. Consequently, they work very hard, and progress in nearly all lessons is at least good. This reflects the success of the school's attempts to spread good practice in teaching and learning. Sixth form students in particular use individual research skills to an exceptionally high level and rise to teachers' high expectations of them. In outstanding lessons, teachers make strong and targeted provision for the needs of the most able students. However, while discrete provision for gifted and talented students is good across the school, provision for these pupils in lessons is not yet sufficiently well embedded in all subjects. In many, but not in all subjects, pupils know how well they are doing, how well they should be doing and how to improve. The school's improvement plan rightly identifies provision for the most able students and more effective assessment as major factors in increasing the proportion of A* grades. Sound plans are in place to ensure that all assessment is as effective as the best in helping all pupils to progress as well as they can. In the sixth form, assessment is very secure.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good, offering students a broad and balanced programme of study throughout the school. The time allocated to physical education is above average, enhancing students' fitness, health and well-being. In response to a dip in progress in English in 2005, staffing was increased and more setting was introduced. This has begun to improve progress. From Year 8, the curriculum is extended: for example, biology, chemistry and physics are taught separately. In year 10, the choice of vocational subjects is limited. However, the school's recently acquired business enterprise status has enabled firm planning to offer more. Students achieve well in physical education and would also like the chance to study the subject at GCSE. In personal, social and health education, students gain an awareness of the range of possible career choices and develop their understanding of citizenship.

Sixth formers have a wide choice of advanced academic courses. Most students take only three subjects in Year 12, depending on general studies to add breadth. However, some students study additional advanced-subsidary level (AS-level) courses.

No provision is currently made for the teaching of religious education in Year 12 or for the study of vocational qualifications.

Students throughout the school place great value on the extra-curricular activities available to them. An extensive range of opportunities, such as in music and in drama is an outstanding feature of the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Support and guidance are good in the main school and outstanding in the sixth form. Health, safety and child protection procedures are robust and well known by all staff. Procedures to support students and those in local authority care are good. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported through good links in the community and draw effectively on local authority support services. There is good extra-curricular provision for gifted and talented pupils but more could be done through sharper lesson planning and assessment to help them to reach the highest grades at GCSE. Day to day pastoral care is outstanding and makes a significant contribution to learners' personal development. Communication with parents and carers is effective and regular. Bulletins are sent home at the end of each term to inform parents and carers of students' progress. Procedures for target setting, review and academic guidance are outstanding and their use in the most effective departments is a major factor in students' achievements. Teachers regularly review progress with students, so that they know precisely what good achievement is, and what they need to do to improve. However, this is not yet done consistently across all subjects. Excellent links with universities, plus outstanding examination results, contribute to students obtaining places at their first choice universities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school's leadership and management are good and in the sixth form outstanding. The school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses in some aspects of its work is modest. The school promotes outstanding personal development and standards and good achievement for all students within its strongly caring ethos. Standards of care, guidance and support meet students' needs well and new initiatives, such as the development of teaching and learning, have had a significant impact. In Years 7 to 9 especially, the quality of teaching has improved with better lesson structure and clear objectives which engage students more effectively in their learning. However, good practice in target-setting and assessment is not yet fully embedded across all

departments. This means that students do not always know exactly what to do in order to improve their performance and, for example, reach the highest GCSE grades. The headteacher and senior leaders set clear and appropriate priorities for improvement and work collaboratively with subject and pastoral leaders to achieve them. New heads of department have been appointed in a number of subjects and are beginning to have a positive impact on students' achievement. Leaders at all levels know what they need to do in order to improve and they contribute to the school's overall capacity for further improvement. The school's recent designation as a business enterprise college is also beginning to add capacity in terms of the building programme and development of a more work related curriculum. Teachers' professional development is well managed and senior leaders have seized opportunities offered by workforce reform to increase time for this. Governors have strong links with senior leaders and understand the work of the school well. Their links with subject departments

are less well developed. They interrogate proposals for new developments rigorously and are fully involved in improvement planning.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Following our visit to inspect your school we would like to tell you about the things we found out. We enjoyed talking to you and found your confidence and maturity both outstanding. We learned how much you enjoy coming to Wirral Grammar School for Boys because it is a good school which helps you to reach exceptionally high standards. That is why most of you choose to stay on into the sixth form where your standards and progress are outstanding. You generally make good progress, and we agree with the school that even more of you could reach the highest grade (A*) in your GCSE subjects. The teachers have a very strong commitment to your achievement not just in tests and examinations but in your wider personal development. They support you well (and in the sixth form extremely well) and offer you good advice on further study. Teachers know a great deal about their subjects. Their teaching is good and sometimes, especially in the sixth form, it is outstanding. Staff have high expectations of you and challenge you to work very hard. This encourages you to take responsibility for and great pride in your work.

We know how much you value the exceptionally wide range of activities and opportunities which the school provides outside lessons. You appreciate the chance to think about relationships and other important matters and we know that you would like more opportunities to learn about the attitudes and lives of people in our society from different backgrounds, faiths and cultures. We agree with you. The school has made a lot of improvements since the last inspection. Teachers have worked hard to make sure that more of your lessons are as interesting and stimulating as the best. You have new accommodation in ICT and Technology and more building is planned. The fact that the school has become a Business Enterprise College is an exciting development which should help you to enjoy it even more and prepare you even better for the world of work. We think that the school should now make sure that:

- all of you who can achieve A* grades at GCSE do so
- all of you know in every subject how well you are doing and exactly what you need to do to improve.

I would like to thank those of you who talked to the inspectors to let us know what you think of the school. We found this very helpful. I would like to wish you all every success for your future at Wirral Grammar School for Boys.