



Mortimer Wilson School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112931
LEA DERBYSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 279056
Inspection dates 16 January 2006 to 17 January 2006
Reporting inspector Dr. Tony Beaver LI

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

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|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| Type of school | Comprehensive | School address | Grange Street |
| School category | Community | | DE55 7JA |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 18 | | |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01773832331 |
| Number on roll | 725 | Fax number | 01773830876 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair of governors | Ms.Jane Grenfell |
| Date of previous inspection | 20 November 2000 | Headteacher | Mrs. Wendy Sharp |

| Age group | Inspection dates | Inspection number |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 11 to 18 | 16 January 2006 - 17 January 2006 | 279056 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Mortimer Wilson School is in Alferton, Derbyshire. It is a below average sized, mixed comprehensive school, with 725 students on roll, including 76 sixth formers. The vast majority of students are White British. Most students have below average socio-economic backgrounds and more than is usual claim free school meals. Above average numbers have special educational needs and statements of need. Students' attainment is well below average when they enter the school. Mobility is below average, but increasing numbers with acute personal difficulties are joining the school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Mortimer Wilson School correctly evaluates its effectiveness as satisfactory. Although standards are below average in Key Stage 3 and low in Key Stage 4, students' rate of progress is satisfactory, and increasing. Literacy is a weakness. The number of students has fallen since 2000, but is now rising again as parents and students rightly show increased confidence in the school. Students behave satisfactorily. Most have positive attitudes to school and to learning, but a small minority does not attend regularly enough. Teaching is satisfactory overall, and some is good, but it varies too much in quality. The curriculum is satisfactory and has good features. For example, vocational opportunities are impressive and meet students' learning needs well. Although the school takes good personal care of each student, support and guidance do not yet enable students to progress well enough to reach the challenging targets set. Careers guidance is good. Links with support services, local business, other educational institutions and the community are good. The school's leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher is giving the school vigorous and very effective leadership, so the pace of improvement is rapidly increasing. The governing body is committed, informed and supportive. The school has modest funding and a deficit. However, repayment is well managed and the value for money is satisfactory. Since the last inspection, there has been a fall in standards, but progress is again satisfactory and improving. Most issues from the last inspection have been resolved. Leaders and managers have good capacity to take the school forward to reach higher standards and an improved quality of education.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation that the sixth form's effectiveness is satisfactory. Students make satisfactory progress to reach average standards on advanced courses. They act sensibly and work hard. Most complete the courses they begin. Teaching is satisfactory overall. The curriculum gives a satisfactory range of courses to meet students' needs and interests. Students are satisfactorily cared for and get good careers and educational guidance. Leadership and management are satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Enhance students' literacy skills by developing, monitoring and evaluating their systematic use across all subjects, so that standards improve.
- Raise the quality of teaching to the level of the school's best practice so that all students make good progress.
- Continue to work with students and parents to ensure the rate of attendance further improves.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are well below average overall, but achievement is satisfactory. Students enter the school with well below average standards, and their literacy skills are often poor. Standards in Key Stages 3 and 4 declined between 2003 and 2004 and in the latter year, they were exceptionally low. However, robust strategies put in place to address students' underachievement are starting to get results. Key Stage 3 students make satisfactory progress, although standards were well below average in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests in 2004 and 2005. Students achieved satisfactorily in mathematics and science, with the help of some good teaching. They achieved least well in English, in which standards were low in 2004 and 2005. Their weak literacy skills restrict their progress in all subjects. The 2004 and 2005 GCSE examination results were exceptionally low. The percentage of students attaining five or more grades A* to C was well below average. However, this result in 2005 was 10% higher than in 2004. In both years, the school did not reach its targets. Although progress and achievement are satisfactory in Key Stage 4, they remain better in mathematics and science than in English. Students' 2005 GCSE results in German and drama were impressive. Boys make better progress than girls in Years 7 to 11. Students with learning difficulties achieve satisfactorily. Low literacy standards continue to hinder students' progress and achievement. Students enter the sixth form with standards below those usually found at the start of advanced courses. Their overall advanced course performance was average in 2004 and results were similar in 2005. Most students complete their courses successfully and achieve satisfactorily.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The personal development and well-being of all students are satisfactory. Many enjoy school. Consequently, attendance has improved, although it is not yet satisfactory. The school has effective strategies in place to encourage better attendance. Behaviour is almost always at least satisfactory and often good in and between lessons. The number of exclusions has fallen since last year because effective alternative procedures are in place for dealing with badly behaved students. There is a small amount of bullying, but students say it is dealt with promptly and thoroughly. Students are gaining important life skills from the positions of responsibility the school provides. For example, the pro-active Year 11 Senior Student group is giving helpful advice to Year 9 students in choosing subject options. The school continues to promote safe and healthy lifestyles. For example, the school council has helped devise healthy food options at lunchtime. A relevant personal, social and health education programme reinforces moral and social values. Students are considerate and helpful to those in need. Many contribute well to the school community. For example, they act as 'peer listeners' to help students who encounter difficulties of any kind, and contribute responsibly to the local community. Spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. Students gain important numerical skills which contribute well to their future economic

well-being. The very detailed careers programme is a strength. Students willingly take up a good variety of opportunities to learn skills relevant to working life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory and some teaching is good. When students make good progress, it is the result of good teaching. For example, the lesson pace is brisk, expectations are high, students are well challenged, and made fully aware of precisely what they are to learn. Learning and achievement are most effective when teachers use incisive questioning and a good range of activities that hold students' interest. Teaching and learning are less successful when lessons have little sense of urgency, and students are not encouraged enough to use their initiative or share responsibility for their own learning. There are too many occasions when teachers do not make clear what precise skills or knowledge they want students to acquire during the lesson. Consequently, learning is not directed well enough for students to make the progress that they could. Assessment of work is satisfactory. Good procedures are in place for assessing and tracking students' progress but not all teachers make best use of this information to ensure that work is well matched to students' individual attainment levels. At its best, regular marking helps students by indicating what they need to do to improve, but this good practice is not consistent across the school. Teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory, although at times more could be asked of the students.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory overall. Teaching time has been increased since the last inspection, although it is still below the recommended minimum in Key Stage 4. At that level, the curriculum serves the needs of learners well, except that time for physical education is below the national expectation. Students have a good range of opportunities in vocational education, including a Young Apprenticeship in engineering. The school works closely with other institutions to extend the range of vocational opportunities available. There is effective provision for numeracy, especially in mathematics, but insufficient support for literacy. Students take good advantage of the sound range of extra-curricular opportunities. Sixth formers have a satisfactory range of advanced and lower-level courses, but little other curricular provision.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, support and guidance of students in the main school and the sixth form are satisfactory. The school takes good care of students' health and safety and child protection arrangements are fully in place. Students feel safe in school. The school

works very effectively to support any students at risk and works well with external agencies. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the improved communication from school, including the Progress Review Days, which are enabling them to have a greater involvement in their children's learning. Arrangements are helpful to students joining the school at the age of 11 and the sixth form. Those with special educational needs are identified quickly and have well structured individual learning plans. However, insufficient detailed data are compiled to record and focus their progress. Teaching assistants give appropriate support. Structured and consistent support and monitoring are not in place for the most able, restricting their progress. Teachers set targets with students but monitoring of progress is inconsistent. Students are often unsure of their targets and how to achieve them. Therefore they do not always make the progress they could.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management have an accurate and realistic understanding of the quality of the work of both main school and sixth form. The headteacher is making a substantial and impressive contribution to renewing the school's direction and sense of purpose. She has the confidence of colleagues and governors. Together, they are determinedly tackling weaknesses and raising standards. Links with parents, support agencies, other educational institutions, the community and business are being strengthened. Students and parents are increasingly consulted and their views help to shape change and innovation. Monitoring and evaluation of performance are accurate and increasingly effective in improving standards, progress and the quality of education. Teaching is satisfactory overall, but managers are not satisfied with its quality and are determined to improve it. Care, support and curricular opportunities are satisfactory, and have many good features. The, often acute, needs of individual students are increasingly well met. Most students respond well and have positive attitudes to school. Governors support the headteacher and school well. They are well informed, but were not alert to the school's financial deficit. However, they are managing its removal with care. The school's leaders have worked tirelessly, and with some success, to gain additional funds to improve the extensive parts of the accommodation that are shabby and poor. Sound progress has been made in resolving the key issues from the last inspection. Recent improvements show that leaders and managers have strong resolve and considerable expertise to take the school further forward.

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Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

| | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 3 | 3 |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 2 | 3 |
| The quality and standards in foundation stage | NA | NA |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 3 | 3 |
| 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? | 3 | 3 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 4 | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 | 3 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress | 3 | |

Personal development and well-being

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 3 | 3 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 3 | |
| The behaviour of learners | 3 | |
| The attendance of learners | 4 | |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 3 | |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 3 | |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 3 | |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 3 | |
| 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? | 3 | 3 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 3 | 3 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 3 | 3 |

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? | 3 | 3 |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 3 | |
| How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review | 3 | |
| 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 | 3 | |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 3 | |
| The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected | Yes | insufficient evidence |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 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

Inspectors thank you very much for the help and courtesy that so many of you showed us during our recent inspection of your school. Many of you told us that you enjoyed attending Mortimer Wilson and had pride in your school. You said you thought the buildings should be better, and we fully agree with you. We found that the standards many of you reach could be higher. However, test and examination results improved last year and inspectors found good evidence of better progress. If you work hard with your teachers, you should get good results. Your reading, writing, speaking and listening skills are key areas for further improvement, and as these are so vital to you getting a job or continuing in education, we trust all of you will work hard at these. We were impressed that most of you behave responsibly and work purposefully in class. A small number of you do not attend regularly enough and so miss out on key learning opportunities. Some teachers have real talent, so you respond very well to them in class and make very good progress. Not all are as good as this. Your school cares for you and gives you a sound choice of courses and extra-curricular opportunities. Your opportunities to study vocational courses are particularly good. Most of you think the headteacher and the school's leaders are doing a really good job in helping the school to improve, and we fully agree with you. We are confident that your school is getting better, and if you put in the effort needed, you will do well at Mortimer Wilson.