



# Wildern School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 116414  
**LEA** Hampshire LEA  
**Inspection number** 279822  
**Inspection dates** 22 March 2006 to 22 March 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Jennifer Smith

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to inspect any school in England. The inspection is to be treated as a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Wildern Lane
<b>School category</b>	Community		Hedge End
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16		Southampton SO30 4EJ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01489783473
<b>Number on roll</b>	1810	<b>Fax number</b>	01489790927
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Ms Glenda Lane
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	15 May 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Jeffrey Threlfall

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 16	22 March 2006 - 22 March 2006	279822

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools and two additional inspectors. During the one day inspection paired observations were carried out with senior leaders and with pupils in the school. Inspectors scrutinised documents, met with a range of teachers and pupils and analysed questionnaire responses from parents. The inspectors' judgements concurred with the excellent evidence provided by the school.

## Description of the school

Wildern School is an 11 - 16 co-educational comprehensive school serving the Hedge End, West End and Eastleigh areas of Southampton. As a community school it is open seven days a week. The school is heavily over-subscribed; at present the roll is 1807. Few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and very few do not speak English as their first language. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is low. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is similar to the national average but for pupils with a statement of special educational need it is low. The school was granted Performing Arts specialist status in 2001 and was successfully redesignated recently. It has further been awarded specialisms in Raising Achievement Transforming Learning and Leading Edge. In collaboration with the National College for School Leadership it leads a networked learning community and supports other schools in challenging circumstances. As part of a Department for Education and Skills initiative the majority of pupils complete the Key Stage 3 curriculum in two years rather than three.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

'I am looking forward to my son's success within a supportive well managed school and hope the Ofsted report reflects what a quality school Wildern is.'

This sentiment from a parent captures the judgement of inspectors; Wildern School is an outstanding school, a school of tremendous creative energy that enables pupils to achieve highly.

The school has progressed well since its last inspection and has embraced a number of initiatives, which has enabled standards in the school to rise consistently each year, to well above the national average. The inspirational leadership of the headteacher and his senior leadership team have created a highly effective learning institution for pupils and staff alike.

The headteacher and the senior staff present a clear vision for the future of the school and provide very effective direction. All teachers share their aspirations and work hard to bring them about. The headteacher reflects, quite rightly, that he is proud of leading the school. As he puts it: 'the creation of an outstanding learning environment, which has strong leadership, high quality learning and teaching within a safe, structured and creative atmosphere where outcomes for pupils are remarkable; no pupil is permanently excluded and they enjoy the Wildern experience.'

The school evaluates itself well and can provide robust evidence to support the areas that it judges are its strengths and correctly identifies areas for development. Inspectors fully concur with these judgements.

Pupils enter the school with standards that are slightly above the national average and make very good progress throughout Key Stage 3, so that by Year 9 they attain standards that are well above the national average. In Years 10 and 11 standards are outstanding.

Pupils have a positive attitude to their learning and behave very well in lessons and around the school. The 'culture of learning' that the teachers talk about is evident in the way pupils respond to their teachers and work hard. Teaching is lively and stimulating ensuring that pupils' learning is nearly always good and often outstanding.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They are justly proud of their school and thoroughly enjoy coming to it. Pupils were brimming over with excitement when speaking to inspectors about what their school had to offer, including the excellent opportunities provided by the D@art Centre, the computer and sports facilities. They want to share their school with everyone. Pupils say, 'Teachers genuinely care about the students here, and we in turn feel we really matter.'

Pupils rightly praise highly the quality of teaching they receive, recognising the importance of their teachers' skills in making them feel motivated and enabling them to learn really well. 'We know our teachers care about us and want us to be successful,' said a Year 9 girl. The school's status as a Performing Arts College brings huge benefits, developing pupils' talents, raising their self-esteem and giving them a feeling of pride in their achievements.

One of the school's great strengths is that it listens to what pupils say and responds with positive action. The school's most innovative current development is the creation of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). This web-based service, entirely personalised by the school, for the school, is proving enormously popular and has already stimulated pupils to generate new ideas and new ways of taking advantage of its potential. It is emblematic of the school's desire not only to stand at the leading edge, but also to involve all members of its community in a shared venture.

Every Child Matters is at the heart of the pastoral system at Wildern. Pupils know what it means to be healthy and how to stay safe. Enjoyment is paramount. The procedures and systems in place to guide and support pupils are thorough and understood by all. There is a great sense of collective responsibility and team work amongst year leaders who want only the very best for all their pupils.

Perhaps the school is best summed up by a teacher who joined the school less than two terms ago when he said, 'I found the values and partnership of the senior leadership team, who have helped me to settle in quickly and to flourish and develop, are shared at all levels in the school; thus making a positive, exciting, rewarding and enthusiastic environment in which to work and learn.'

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils make very good progress through Years 7 to 9 and achieve very well. Standards are well above the national average by the end of Year 9. Year 8 pupils who were entered for their National Curriculum tests a year early in 2005, also attained high standards.

Pupils make excellent progress during Years 10 and 11 and results are outstanding. Boys and girls and pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities all make excellent progress. In 2005, 86% of pupils achieved a least 5 A\*-C grades in GCSE, exceeding the school's targets. The school has maintained this very high level of success for two years. GCSE results were particularly good in art and design, science, design technology, geography, German, history, mathematics and religious education. Although English results at Key Stage 4 were above the national average they are not yet at the very high level of many other subjects. The school has analysed this very carefully and is pushing ahead to reach similar aspirational targets in this subject.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

The contributions that learners make to the school are outstanding. The school council is highly effective and together with the over-arching school cabinet gives the pupils ownership of decisions and changes made within the school. It is best summed up in the words of a Year 10 member of the cabinet, 'I have really enjoyed my role within the school cabinet, as it allows me to make suggestions from a student's point of view. I can also take forward ideas and concerns from other students in the school. I have

enjoyed the responsibility and the way that teachers listen to the points I have to make.'

The senior leadership team greatly values the pupils' views. Pupils have evaluated learning by observing lessons as part of the interview process for new teachers.

A well-planned careers, business and financial programme, across all year groups, enables pupils to develop a very good understanding of the world of work and business. Pupils involved in an exciting 'Fair Trade Project' invited inspectors to a working lunch, where they discussed how they could encourage fellow pupils to buy their products, having discussed all of the business and ethical aspects of their new venture. Pupils are very mature and able to make informed decisions about their own future.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 1**

Because teachers are eager to develop their practice, they pass this enthusiasm on to their pupils. Lessons are characterised by lively delivery, active learning and the total involvement of pupils. Teachers have developed their questioning techniques well and expose their pupils to a variety of learning styles and different ways of extending their knowledge and skills.

Teachers make sure they keep their skills up to date by making full use of the new opportunities presented through new technology such as interactive white boards, computers and most interestingly of all, the virtual learning environment. One of the outstanding lessons in history for example, held the pupils and the inspector in rapt attention, the inspector having to enquire at the end of the day how the lesson ended!

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The school's broad, balanced and innovative curriculum exemplifies its eagerness to introduce new ideas and to keep moving ahead. Responding to national expectations, the school has included a very good range of vocational courses for learners in Years 10 and 11, ensuring that a suitable pathway is available for every pupil. Following consultation with parents and providers of education post-16, the school has condensed parts of the curriculum for younger pupils into two years instead of three. This together with advanced supplementary (AS) level work in some subjects in Year 11 offers greater challenge for the more able pupils.

Pupils report that all subjects are strong and they have difficulty identifying areas of weakness. In particular, they feel that the school takes care to include all pupils, making sure no-one is left out. The range of clubs and activities which take place outside school hours is very impressive, enabling pupils to achieve in ways which go well beyond the taught curriculum.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils commented that the key to Wildern's success is the 'communication between pupils and their teachers'. They always know that they will receive a helpful response. Pupils are supported within a happy school environment where academic progress goes hand in hand with personal and social development. So, if they need to talk to someone, they know that they can turn to their peer mentors, the 'Wildern Listeners' or indeed to a trained counsellor. Parental involvement is a high priority and the school seeks to engage them at all levels in helping their children make progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The headteacher's vision of Wildern School is to continue to embed the current ethos, as a school at the heart of the community and as a centre of excellence, with pupil centred personalised learning at the core, enabling each child to have the opportunity to achieve their best.

The very high calibre leadership provided by the headteacher and his senior team is recognised by pupils and their parents. The subject and curriculum leaders and the heads of year are fully involved in the development of initiatives in the school. They also provide excellent leadership of their areas and contribute significantly to the highly creative energy in this school. Governors provide very effective support and challenge to the senior leadership team.

The school's monitoring and evaluation is very good and the inspectors concur with the judgements it makes of itself. It rightly sees the continuous development of outstanding teaching as being at the forefront of all its activities. To make sure this happens, the leadership team has organised an extensive and thorough programme of monitoring, but it has also done much more than that. The real key to its success has been in generating an atmosphere of openness, in which staff are eager to discuss the areas of comparative weakness as well as the strengths of their teaching. Teachers receive feedback willingly and constantly seek ways of improving what they do. A sign of their confidence is their readiness to permit pupils to observe lessons of teachers being interviewed for positions in the school, so they gain a 'consumer's eye' view of quality.

The degree of consistency in all that the school seeks to achieve and the well paced introduction of any new innovation, underpin much of its success and ensures a secure and vibrant experience for its pupils and staff. The school recognises its own capacity to continue to grow and make still further improvements.

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## Inspection judgements

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

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

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1	NA
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

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

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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**

### **Pupils**

On behalf of the inspectors and myself who visited your school recently, I would like to thank you for the very polite and helpful way you welcomed us. We very much enjoyed discussing with you the work you were doing and looking at the progress you were making in school. You talked enthusiastically about your school and we hope you will take the time with your parents to read the full report. We thought you might like a summary of the inspection findings. The teaching we saw was lively and stimulating, you worked hard in these lessons and responded well to your teachers. We saw some outstanding lessons and saw that you take considerable pride in your achievements. You tell us that you enjoy coming to school and your teachers take good care of you and guide you well. In fact a pupil said, 'Teachers genuinely care about the pupils here and we in turn feel that we really matter.'

You take pride in the responsibilities that you have been given, for example, through the school cabinet and school council. You enjoy the wide range of activities that are provided outside of normal lessons. It was very interesting to listen to the work being undertaken by a group of pupils setting up a 'Fair Trade' shop and getting to grips with world sustainability. Your school has excellent facilities and we hope that you will continue to take advantage of these wonderful opportunities, including the virtual learning environment.

Your school has embarked on a range of initiatives designed to provide you with an excellent deal for your education. We believe that the specialist status of your school in the performing arts and more recently in raising achievement and transforming learning have helped to create an outstanding school. Your headteacher leads your school very well and is supported by an excellent staff. Finally, we would like to wish you all every success in your studies in this exciting school.

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Smith

HMI