



# Weston Road High School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 124446  
**LEA** Staffordshire  
**Inspection number** 281727  
**Inspection dates** 21 September 2005 to 22 September 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Meg Buckingham HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Blackheath Lane
<b>School category</b>	Community		Stafford
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18		Staffordshire ST18 0YG
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01785 356700
<b>Number on roll</b>	1045	<b>Fax number</b>	01785 356700
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	20 September 1999	<b>Headteacher</b>	Dr Greg Taylor

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 18	21 September 2005 - 22 September 2005	281727

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools and one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Weston Road High School serves a socially and economically diverse catchment of villages and some eastern areas of Stafford. It is above average in size for secondary schools nationally, but well below average for the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, and pupils from minority ethnic groups. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with statements of special educational need, is marginally above the national average. Pupils' attainment when they start school at age 11 varies slightly from year to year; they are at or slightly above the national average.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory with some good features, matching the school's own overall assessment. It provides a good quality of care, support and guidance for its pupils, and most respond very well to the school's supportive ethos. The senior leadership team know the strengths of the school and areas of the provision that require improvement. Since his appointment a year ago, the headteacher has gained the respect of staff and a clear agenda for development has been set, involving consultation with staff, pupils and parents. Standards are improving in some subjects but this improvement is not consistent across all subjects or for all pupils across the curriculum. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, with some good and occasionally outstanding practice. However, teaching does not always focus on pupils' individual needs, abilities and different ways of learning. The school runs well from day to day. It has begun several initiatives to bring about improvement but rigorous checking of the success of such actions is not secure. Senior managers have shown they can achieve improvement in areas they have tackled and the school is moving in the right direction, with the capacity to improve further. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 3**

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are satisfactory, which differs from the school's assessment that they are good. The sixth form has remained small but each year it is the first choice destination of many Year 11 leavers, who particularly value the continuity of having the same teachers. The school ensures students have access to the broad choice of A-level subjects available through the Stafford Collegiate. However, in the current year, the Stafford Collegiate has not been successful in recruiting students to a satisfactory range of vocational qualifications. Retention rates are high and the sixth form provides students with a very supportive environment, strongly focused on their personal development. Overall pass rates have improved since the last inspection. They are generally satisfactory but the proportion of students achieving higher grades is low. Aspirations are not high enough and the progress of individual students is not checked closely to see whether they are achieving enough. Teaching does not cater sufficiently for different abilities and learning preferences.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- plan lessons more effectively to meet the needs of individual pupils
- continue to work to improve provision and standards in subjects where they are weakest, particularly at Key Stage 4
- check more rigorously the success of the actions taken to bring about improvement in all areas of the school.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall but there are some significant variations across subjects and in the achievements of some boys and girls. Standards by the end of Year 11 have improved since the last inspection. Although results in 2005 dipped slightly, there continues to be an upward trend. Between Years 7 and 11, pupils make good progress in mathematics and science and do very well in art and design, French and history. However, in English, pupils do not do well enough and standards at GCSE are lower than they are in mathematics and science. The most able boys at the end of Year 9 do not make good enough progress in Years 10 and 11 and therefore underachieve in their examinations. The progress made by pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is, however, good because of the good individual support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants. Overall the school has a clear view of how well pupils are doing and is setting challenging targets to improve achievement, particularly where standards are weaker.

In the sixth form, results have improved significantly since the last inspection although, again, there was a slight dip in 2005. Overall, achievement is satisfactory with many students achieving well. However, the most able students do not do well enough in their A-levels, with too few of them attaining the highest grades. The picture of achievement in vocational subjects is better with all students doing well.

Grade: 3

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

### **Grade: 2**

The large majority of pupils enjoy their education at Weston Road High School. Attendance is satisfactory. In lessons, most pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. Pupils speak warmly about the school and feel well cared for. Behaviour is usually very good. The school provides an environment in which pupils feel safe. However, the school has not done enough to allay the concerns of some parents about the few instances of bullying and disruptive behaviour by a small minority of pupils. The level of permanent exclusions is low. The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities, complementing work in lessons and contributing significantly to pupils' personal development. The school recognises the scope to make further progress in the coverage of citizenship, promoting healthy eating and developing some aspects of race relations through the curriculum. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds integrate well. Pupils gain confidence as they are consulted through focus groups, surveys, year councils and a school council. However, there is a need to strengthen the operation and influence of the school council; this has been recognised by the school. Pupils have good opportunities to become involved in activities which make a positive contribution to the community. For example, each year group adopts a charity and engages in a variety of fund raising events. Enterprise and work-related education remains a weaker aspect of the curriculum.

Grade: 2

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, with examples of good and outstanding teaching. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is usually very good, as are relationships, and pupils enjoy their studies. Teachers manage mainly effectively the few examples of minor disruptive behaviour in their classes. In the best lessons, good routines are in place, the work is demanding and exciting. Pupils work hard and make good progress, often working productively in groups. This is not a consistent picture across the school. Sometimes pupils are not fully engaged in the work set, lose interest and make limited progress. This is because teachers do not always take sufficient account of the different needs and abilities of pupils when planning their lessons. As a result, some more able pupils are not always doing well enough because the work is not sufficiently demanding, while others struggle with work that is too difficult. Opportunities for pupils to extend their learning at home are often lost because homework is not regularly set. The teaching and learning of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are good. These pupils receive very good support, including the effective use of teaching assistants. The school has worked hard in the last year to improve teaching and learning and this is beginning to pay dividends.

Grade: 3

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

##### **Grade for sixth form: 3**

The quality of the curriculum and provision for other activities are good overall. The school reviews its curriculum regularly and has made changes to respond to the needs of pupils. In Years 7 to 9, pupils study a broad range of subjects and personal, social and health education. The school has broadened the choice of GCSEs and vocational courses in Years 10 and 11. This is welcomed by pupils. "A flexible 'alternative' curriculum that combines vocational studies taught at local colleges with other subjects taught in school is offered. This is a good development and pupils enjoy this course, and feel it prepares them well for working in the locality. All pupils undertake work experience but opportunities for them to develop enterprise skills are more limited. The sixth form curriculum generally is being extended, but with some reduction of vocational courses available this year. Pupils greatly appreciate the very good range of extra-curricular activities and many of them participate enthusiastically. Revision clubs, sports clubs, music and drama performance, and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award are a few examples of the many opportunities pupils have to extend their skills and interests outside the classroom. This provision makes a significant contribution to the curriculum overall and pupils' personal development.

Grade: 2

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support of pupils is good. The pastoral support is well led by a member of the senior leadership team, and the heads of year know their pupils very well. Pupils are confident in approaching heads of year and tutors for help with a wide range of personal and academic issues. Consequently, they feel safe and secure in the school's supportive environment. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make better than expected progress in Key Stage 4. Good encouragement is given to gifted and talented pupils to participate in challenging enrichment activities. Vulnerable young people are supported extremely well by staff. The school works very effectively with a wide network of external partners to provide appropriate support for pupils at risk. Careful attention is paid to child protection arrangements. Pupils and parents receive helpful information, advice and guidance on Key Stage 4 choices and on sixth form options, based on pupils' interests and prior performance. Pupils and parents are also involved with tutors in target setting, based on attainments and predicted grades. These targets are challenging and they cover both personal and academic issues. The results of these strategies have not yet been fully realised.

Grade: 2

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall with some good features. The new headteacher, through quiet determination, has given clear direction and set a challenging agenda to raise attainment, while sustaining the school's good quality of care and support for its pupils. The small leadership team has shared goals and works well, its members bringing complementary skills and experience to the task. Staff feel well supported by the senior leadership team and the school runs well day to day. The leadership of subjects is satisfactory overall. Many departments have planned well for improvement, which has been strengthened by the more formal approach over the last 12 months. Departmental improvement plans link closely with the school's priorities, but some are not clear enough about what action needs to be taken to raise attainment. The best have detailed targets with clear pathways on how they are to be achieved, and how pupils' progress is to be checked. Helpfully, moves have been made to share this effective practice more widely. The governing body is very supportive of the school, and is increasingly acting as a critical friend. Governors, with the senior leadership team, have a good grasp of the financial situation to resolve the historical deficit that restrains the current resources available in the school.

The school's view of its performance is largely accurate. It is concentrating its efforts on improving the right things. Action on key points from the last inspection has been generally satisfactory, but some issues are only now being addressed. Strategies to check that the action taken has been effective are not rigorously applied throughout the school. During the last year the school has moved forward on a number of initiatives and demonstrates satisfactory capacity to improve still further.

Grade: 3





## 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>	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	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	2	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
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	3	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	2

<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>	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	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

<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	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Dear Pupils,

Thank you for the friendly welcome and help you gave to the team when we came to inspect your school recently. We very much enjoyed talking to you, watching how you worked with your teachers and speaking to them about your progress at school.

We think you are part of a caring school that wants all of its pupils to achieve well and have high ambitions for the future. Most of you mix well with each other and get on with your teachers. You generally work hard in lessons, behave well and take care over your work. Your teachers give you good support and guidance during your time at school, and you say that you appreciate this help. Teachers also provide lots of opportunities for you to take part in activities other than in lessons, and many of you enjoy participating in them. Many of you do well in tests and examinations, but this is not the case in all your subjects. While we know your teachers do their best to help you learn, we think that sometimes the work they plan could take more account of your individual needs. In some lessons you could do with some more help; in others the work could be more challenging for you.

Your headteacher and other staff are looking closely at how the school can help you to achieve more. Over the last year some useful changes have already been introduced to the way your school is run. We know that you like being asked for your views about improving the school, and taking an active part in the year and school councils is one way you can continue to do this.

We believe your school is doing well in many areas, but we have asked your headteacher, his senior team and the rest of your teachers to do the following things:

plan the work set in some of your lessons a bit more carefully, especially if you are finding it too difficult or too easy

look even more closely at the effects of the changes that are being made to help the school improve further

find out why pupils achieve differently in different subjects and take action to bring weaker subjects up to the level of the best.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs M A Buckingham HM Inspector of Schools