



Welling School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 101467
Local Authority Bexley
Inspection number 286072
Inspection dates 6–7 December 2006
Reporting inspector Samantha Morgan-Price HMI

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

Type of school	Modern (non-selective)	School address	Elsa Road
School category	Community		Welling
Age range of pupils	11–18		DA16 1LB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	020 8304 8531
Number on roll (school)	1583	Fax number	020 8301 6414
Number on roll (6th form)	153		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Wendy Perfect
		Headteacher	Christine Jefferys
Date of previous school inspection	10 December 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	6–7 December 2006	286072

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Welling School is a secondary modern school for students aged 11–18. The school is a specialist visual arts college and training school. The school operates within a selective system where a quarter of the more able students in the area attend grammar schools. The social and economic background of students is broadly average, although a lower than average number come from homes where adults have higher education. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is in line with the national average. The overall attainment of students on entry to the school at age 11 is below average. The proportion of students with special educational needs is above the national average. About eleven per cent of students come from families of minority ethnic heritage.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could be reasonably expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to students' attainment and the quality of teaching and learning especially in Years 7 to 9.

Welling School has some good features but its overall effectiveness is inadequate. The school judged its effectiveness to be good but inspectors found that, although the school has strengths, there are also significant shortcomings. Overall achievement in Years 7 to 11 is inadequate and this arises from weaknesses in teaching and learning.

Standards in Years 7 to 11 are below average and students' overall progress is inadequate. Students in Years 7 to 9 make much less progress than they should, given their starting points. Although progress is satisfactory among students in Years 10 and 11, it is not good enough to compensate for earlier underachievement in the core subjects. Sixth form students make good progress, achieving average standards overall. Progress is good in the visual and media arts in both the sixth form and in Years 10 and 11.

Overall, the quality of teaching is not high enough to ensure adequate progress, particularly in Years 7 to 9. There is poor behaviour in some lessons which also hampers progress. Teachers' use of assessment information is underdeveloped resulting in too much variation in the quality of target setting across subjects.

Most students enjoy school, taking advantage of a curriculum which provides a satisfactory range of opportunities in and outside school hours. However, attendance at the school is below average. Students feel safe and respond to encouragement to adopt a healthy lifestyle and play a part in the school community.

The life of the school is enriched by the school's specialist Arts College status which draws students into the visual and media arts. The emphasis on the arts creates some beneficial partnerships which raise the school's reputation and profile. The creative and cultural life of the school is enriched by its excellent gallery.

The school has made progress with most of the issues raised at the last inspection. Leadership and management are satisfactory and have successfully brought about improving standards in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. These improvements demonstrate that the school has the capacity to improve further. However, there remain significant weaknesses in Years 7 to 9 that have not been addressed with sufficient urgency. While the school's self-evaluation processes have identified most of the areas for improvement, the actions taken have not yet had sufficient impact.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Welling sixth form is popular with students. The number of students is increasing and the retention rates are improving. Students of a wide range of ability join the sixth form and a good induction programme ensures that the courses on offer are well matched to their needs. Teaching is satisfactory and standards have steadily improved and are now broadly average, indicating that the students make good progress overall, considering their low starting points. Students progress well because they are well motivated, have good relationships with staff and benefit from contact with students from the other schools in the partnership. The school cares for the students well and their personal development is sound. It works well with its partnership schools to widen the curriculum. The curriculum is satisfactory and there are plans to extend the range and level of courses further. Students are given good opportunities to take responsibility, such as mentoring younger students. The new leadership of the sixth form is satisfactory. There are many new initiatives, for example teaching is now being developed with a view to creating a more independent style of learning. Many of the initiatives are still in their infancy. Although their impact has yet to be fully realised, they illustrate that the school continues to strive for further improvement in the sixth form. The steady rise in standards that has already taken place, demonstrates that there is the capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in core subjects, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- Improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning so that students make faster progress particularly during Years 7 to 9.
- Implement and evaluate more urgently actions to secure improvements in academic performance and attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students on entry to the school have attainment that is below average, and the profile of learners is changing. Students who are currently in Year 11 attained better results in Year 6 examinations than those currently in Year 7. Students make inadequate progress across Years 7 to 9 and results at the end of Year 9 show that standards fell considerably in English and science in 2006. Students' attainment in mathematics was maintained, but remained low. Overall, standards are below average in Year 9 and school targets have not been achieved.

Students make satisfactory progress in Years 10 and 11, although they do not make enough progress to make up for their slow progress in Years 7 to 9. Standards in Years 10 and 11 have risen in the last two years but remain below average. Boys, in particular, did much better in 2006 than in 2005. Overall, there is an improving trend in standards.

The proportion of students gaining at least one qualification by the end of Year 11 is broadly average. Progress made by students in the sixth form is good and standards are average.

The achievement of students with learning difficulties or disabilities is better than that of the others as a result of the good support that they receive.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Most students enjoy school and are keen to learn. The school has identified the need to raise attendance and actions have been put in place. Despite these efforts attendance remains below average.

Students say they feel safe because any bullying is dealt with effectively by staff, but a few parents are worried about some students' behaviour. The school is making provision to manage disruptive behaviour in an attempt to avoid the need for exclusion; nevertheless the exclusion rate is high.

Students are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles through sporting activities. The school canteen offers a range of healthy eating options. Students' moral and social development is satisfactory because they have opportunities to work closely with external groups, such as the community police team in the citizenship programme. They develop spiritual awareness in assemblies and tutor periods. Students play an active part in community life through student councils. They have influenced the design of the sixth form uniform.

Students appreciate the range of extra-curricular activities and participation is good. They benefit from good industry links that have been established through the visual arts college which includes work with the BBC. A range of opportunities exists for work related learning. Advice from staff and external agencies provides students with the capacity to make a positive contribution to the community and prepares them for the world of work. However, weaknesses in literacy and numeracy negatively affect students' future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Grade for sixth form: 3

Teaching and learning are inadequate overall. In a significant number of lessons some students make inadequate progress because the work is ill-matched to their needs or because of some inappropriate behaviour. These lessons are often too dominated by the teachers with insufficient opportunities for students to be involved. There is limited use of extension activities to challenge the most able students to help them achieve

highly enough. The quality of the marking of students' work is variable. Many comments are not specific and do not help students to improve their work. The use of assessment information to set targets and to inform the next steps in learning is underdeveloped.

Some good lessons exist. In these, teachers provide a variety of activities for students which promote good independent learning and team-working skills. These lessons are well planned and students' progress is effectively monitored. There is effective use of teaching assistants who contribute to the satisfactory progress made by students with learning difficulties and disabilities. There is good practice within art and media and modern foreign languages which needs to be shared to improve further the quality of teaching and learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum which meets national requirements. The majority of learners are well served by its breadth, balance and continuing developments. Students in Years 10 and 11 follow a good mix of academic and vocational courses and co-operation with local institutions has improved their options. The school's effort to improve the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 has been highly successful and has ensured that appropriate vocational qualifications are available to meet their needs. There have been recent developments to the curriculum, in the 'Opening Minds' and 'Learning to Learn' programmes, for example, in order to raise achievement in Years 7 to 9 but their impact has not yet been felt. The schools' specialist status has ensured that it has become a focus for good practice and expertise in the visual arts. Many students enthusiastically support the wide range of extra-curricular activities which enable them to develop creative and sporting skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school provides satisfactory care, guidance and support for its students. All requirements for child protection are in place and there are rigorous procedures for safeguarding students' health and safety. The school has introduced well focused systems to monitor and record absences but these have yet to bear fruit in increased attendance figures. Academic progress is now accurately assessed and tracked but teachers do not always use the information to plan lessons which meet students' needs. The new behaviour code has made clear the expectations the school has and it is being used in most lessons, but is not yet consistently applied. The school has been active in encouraging healthy eating. Students are prepared for employment by a programme of work related learning and work experience. In discussions with inspectors, students said that they appreciated the quality of the guidance they receive on subject options and careers. There is good support for students who have learning difficulties and disabilities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. School leaders and managers, including governors, have a clear vision that is shared and promotes effective team working. They have brought about improvements in the teaching and learning in the sixth form that have resulted in rising standards and good achievement. They have also brought about improvements in Years 10 and 11 that have again resulted in rising standards, although achievement is not yet satisfactory from Year 7 to 11. However, leaders and managers have not been sufficiently successful in bringing about improvements in Years 7 to 9.

The school is monitoring teaching and learning with a view to raising the standards students achieve. Senior managers have a clear picture of what needs to be improved and some appropriate steps have been taken. However, actions taken have had variable success and too little in Years 7 to 9.

The headteacher has acted effectively to strengthen staff teams and bring new leadership into the school, increasing the capacity to improve further. While senior leaders and governors have a generally accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, some evaluation, particularly of teaching and learning, is over-generous. Not all identified areas for improvement have, in the past, been tackled robustly or with sufficient urgency.

There has been recent improvement, through training, in building the capacity of middle leaders to evaluate the school's work, accept accountability and plan for improvements. The quality of middle leaders is improving.

The rebuilding of the school has been effectively managed. Improvements to the curriculum offer have increased students' motivation and enjoyment. The school's focus on improving behaviour is having a positive impact across many aspects of the school. Actions taken to address poor attendance have led to clearer expectations for all students, although they have not yet led to satisfactory levels of attendance. The leadership team has brought about an increasingly successful emphasis on meeting the needs of vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and disabilities so that they make better progress than other students. In this regard, they demonstrate high expectations of students.

Specialist Arts College status, developed in the last four years, has brought many benefits to the school and its links with the community. Such developments, and others, demonstrate that the school leaders and managers have the capacity to drive forward further improvements.

Governors are supportive of and knowledgeable about the school, enabling them to challenge the work of the school sufficiently to promote school improvement.

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?	4	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	2
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	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
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	4	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4	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 to below 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	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	Yes	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

After our visit to inspect your school, we would like to tell you about our findings. We thank you for welcoming us and telling us about your work and views of life in school. We agree with you that your school has many positive features.

- You have an excellent new school building.
- Many of you enjoy school life and appreciate the extra activities you can take part in.
- Staff care about you. They want to keep you safe and see you do well.

Those of you who are in the sixth form are making good progress and this is helping you to achieve appropriate qualifications by the time you leave. Those in Years 10 and 11 are making reasonable progress, but it is not enough to make up for the fact that many of you had fallen behind, and so you are not all reaching high enough standards. Those of you in Years 7 to 9 are not making enough progress overall. The school should take some specific actions to bring about improvement, particularly in Years 7 to 9. These are the things that need to be improved:

- the standards you reach in English, mathematics and science
- the quality of the teaching and learning, to help you all to make progress
- the rate at which improvements are made.

Everyone wants the very best for you and the school's leaders know how to improve the school. Some other inspectors will come back in the next few months to check the school's progress. You have a part to play in making things better by working hard and believing in yourselves.

We wish you all well in rising to these challenges.

Samantha Morgan Price HMI