

Wellacre Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106366
Local Authority	Trafford
Inspection number	287499
Inspection date	10 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Susan Wareing HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School	935
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr M Tanner
Headteacher	Mr Raymond Howell
Date of previous school inspection	15 April 2002
School address	Irlam Road Flixton Urmston Manchester Lancashire M41 6AP
Telephone number	0161 7485011
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Wellacre Technology and Vocational College is a secondary modern school that provides education and care for boys aged 11 to 16 within the borough of Trafford in Greater Manchester. The school is of broadly average size, although it is growing rapidly. Social and economic circumstances are diverse but broadly average compared to those found nationally. The great majority of students are of White British heritage and the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is lower than average. The proportion of students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Wellacre is an outstanding and happy school which knows itself very well. The students and the local community are very proud of the school's well established specialist technology status and of its recently acquired additional vocational specialism. Parents are overwhelmingly delighted with the school. Its very inclusive ethos is firmly based on valuing all its members and enabling them to succeed. This has allowed sustained long-term improvement and particular gains in students' achievement over the last two years.

Students' overall standards are good and their achievement is outstanding in relation to their starting points. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve especially well. The school's specialist status, along with consistently good and sometimes outstanding teaching contributes to this outstanding achievement. However, marking does not always inform students of exactly how to improve their work. An extensive range of local partnerships with other schools has achieved a curriculum which is highly responsive to students' individual learning and personal development needs and also benefits the wider community. As a high achieving school, Wellacre has been able to set in place firm and innovative plans to broaden post-16 opportunities for young people in the local area as well as students attending the college. The school's membership of local and national networks gives staff a very broad perspective on educational developments.

The school has successfully tackled all the issues from the last inspection. Its outstanding capacity to improve is demonstrated by the clarity of its vision for the future. The high calibre of the headteacher and leaders at all levels encourages the commitment of the whole staff to continuous improvement in students' achievement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure consistency in the quality of marking so that students always know exactly what to do in all subjects in order to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Achievement is outstanding overall and standards are good. Students' prior attainment on entry is broadly in line with the national average. However, many students enter this boys' secondary modern school with significant literacy problems.

In the Year 9 national tests in 2005, standards in English and mathematics were satisfactory but well above average in science. In 2006 overall standards in Year 9 were well above average. At Key Stage 4, both in 2005 and 2006, standards were also well above average. Pass rates at the higher GCSE grades, which were a key issue in the last inspection, have risen significantly.

These results represent outstanding progress against students' starting points. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make particularly impressive progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. During their time in the school they develop into very confident and articulate young people who interact very readily with

adults. Relationships within the school are very strong. Students' behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent and the number of exclusions is extremely low. Students are very aware of health and safety issues but they do not always adopt healthy practices. Attendance is good and students say that they enjoy school very much. Student's social and moral development is excellent. It is enhanced by a very strong programme of personal, social, and health education. This encourages students to explore, for example, the reasons for local social problems and world events. There are extensive opportunities to take responsibility, for example through charity and community work in local primary and special schools and as very active school council members. The school's attention to basic skills and enterprise education prepares students very well for the world of work. The school's many visitors and international links, such as teacher and student exchanges with a South African partner school, ensure that students are able to reflect on other cultures through direct experience. High quality assemblies, and opportunities for reflection and discussion in routine lessons, contribute very well to students' spiritual development.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good with many outstanding features and this reflects the considerable investment that the school has devoted to its development. Lessons seen in the inspection were well structured with good pace and clear objectives. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. They use effective questioning and information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance learning and prepare students well for tests and examinations. Teachers also provide a model of courteous and respectful behaviour towards their students and the warmth of their relationships are a strength much valued by the students. Students concentrate well because they are fully engaged by the teaching. The outstanding lessons offer greater opportunities for students to assess their own and each other's work in pairs and groups. This builds students' confidence in speaking and listening. There is some variation in the quality of marking. Students generally know their current levels and targets but feedback from teachers does not always inform them of exactly how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. It meets all statutory requirements and a particular feature of the Key Stage 3 curriculum is the opportunity to gain extra GCSE qualifications in Year 9 in some subjects. Literacy, numeracy and ICT are well embedded through subjects at both key stages. Curriculum developments are constantly reviewed to ensure that they remain extremely well matched to students' individual needs. The curriculum is underpinned by the school's specialist technology and vocational status, of which students say that they are very proud. Enterprise and work related education is a strength of the school. The many links with partner schools, local colleges and businesses enhance learning and career opportunities not only for Wellacre students but for students from other local schools. There is good provision for gifted and talented students through a rich programme of activities such as Aim Higher events and alternative provision for more vulnerable students. All students appreciate the very wide range of extra-curricular activities including sports, performing arts and an extensive programme of visits in this country and abroad.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Child protection procedures are securely in place and risk assessments are very comprehensive. Students say that racist incidents and bullying are rare but dealt with very rigorously when they occur. The care for the most vulnerable students is a real strength of the school. The school's very thorough systems for setting targets and monitoring progress lead to the exceptional achievement of these students. Students benefit from half-termly progress meetings and from the close communication between the staff who teach them and those who provide their support. All students say that they are treated as individuals and feel very well known by their teachers. One student commented: 'they push you to your potential'. Students appreciate the high quality of advice that they receive about options for future study and careers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher and senior leadership team set a very clear direction for the school, firmly focused on students' achievement. The school sets very high expectations of itself and exceeds these ambitious targets. Senior leaders are very accessible to other staff and staff and students' morale is very high. Leaders at all levels are extremely capable and work very collaboratively together to move the school forward. The line management system is very effective in supporting and holding middle managers to account and supporting them. Self-evaluation is excellent. A very robust review cycle gives senior leaders a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and of individual departments. Monitoring is rigorously carried out and leaders are not afraid to give challenging feedback and take hard decisions when necessary. The school's inclusive ethos permeates its provision and gives all students and staff the opportunity to reach their potential. The school's specialist technology and now also vocational status is very well managed to contribute to improved life chances for students and therefore to the outstanding value for money which the school provides. Governors are very actively involved in the life of the school and the decisions which affect it. They offer strong support and challenge to the school.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
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	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

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

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Wellacre Technology and Vocational College, Flixton, Manchester, M41 6AP

Following our visit to inspect your school we would like to tell you about the things we found out. We enjoyed talking with you because you were very much at ease with us and spoke so confidently. We were also impressed by your sense of responsibility, especially towards younger students and the local community. It was good to learn how proud you are of your school and especially of learning in a Technology and Vocational Specialist College, where everyone can study courses that interest them and prepare them well for their future.

You told us how much you enjoy coming to school because it is an outstanding school where you make excellent progress and feel happy and safe. We were pleased to hear from your parents that they are also delighted with the school. We saw the excellent relationships that you have with your teachers and each other. We know you appreciate very much how easy it is to talk to them and other members of staff when you need advice. It is clear that the excellent support from the school helps you to make such good progress.

Teaching is good and your teachers know a great deal about their subjects. We saw how helpful you find lessons where you get chances to work together and discuss your work and that of other students. However, we found that in some subjects marking does not always help you to understand exactly what to do in order to improve your work.

You have an excellent range of out of school activities to choose from, whether you are keen on sport, music, drama or some of the other options. It is also good that you can visit so many places here and abroad with the school. You are clearly very enthusiastic about receiving visitors from other cultures. For example, we were interested to hear about your AfriTwin partnership which allows you and your teachers to go on exchanges to a South African school.

Your teachers have worked very hard to improve the school since the last inspection. As a result of improvements in teaching more of you are now getting the higher GCSE grades. The school is planning to become even better, for example by providing some newly built engineering and construction bases and a sixth form centre. We think that this will help you to enjoy school even more. There is one main improvement that is needed now; marking in some subjects needs to give you more precise information on how you can improve.

Thank you once again to those of you who talked with us. I would also like to wish you all every success for your future at Wellacre Technology and Vocational College.