



# Writhlington School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 109303  
**Local Authority** Bath and North East Somerset  
**Inspection number** 288347  
**Inspection date** 28 February 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Andrew Harrett HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Knobsbury Lane
<b>School category</b>	Community		Writhlington
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19		Radstock BA3 3NQ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01761 433581
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	1187	<b>Fax number</b>	01761 438567
<b>Number on roll (6th form)</b>	141	<b>Chair</b>	Keith Norton
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Headteacher</b>	Marie Getheridge
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 March 2002		

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## **Introduction**

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

## **Description of the school**

This larger-than-average school specialises in business and enterprise and has been recognised as the most enterprising school in England. It is an extended school. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than average. The school is popular and oversubscribed.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school with many outstanding features including its curriculum and sixth form. The school's specialist status in business and enterprise makes an excellent contribution to the personal and academic development of the students.

Standards throughout the school are rising and the achievement of the pupils is good overall. At Key Stages 3 and 4, standards are generally above average. In 2006, the proportion of pupils achieving five good GCSE passes rose significantly. However, the progress of pupils in mathematics at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory and the average proportion achieving five good passes at GCSE, including English and mathematics, shows satisfactory progress. In the excellent sixth form, standards are high and the progress made by the pupils is outstanding.

The curriculum is outstanding in every way. Detailed planning ensures that all students are provided with motivating and appropriate courses, with clear routes of progression for all students whatever their aptitudes and ability. The curriculum is enriched by an exemplary array of activities, provided within the school and in partnership with others nationally and internationally. This makes an excellent contribution to giving students a firm footing for success in their personal and working life beyond school.

The school's specialism in business and enterprise permeates all its work and makes an outstanding contribution to raising standards, promoting enjoyment and developing personal skills. Through the specialism the school provides an excellent range of courses. The unusually wide range of businesses run successfully by the students provides an excellent context in which students develop an understanding of global issues and the world of work. There are productive links with companies and organisations across the world.

The personal development and well-being of the students are good overall. They are outstanding in some respects, such as the contribution the students make to the life of the school and the wider community, and the provision for developing an understanding of the world of work for later life. However, standards in numeracy and literacy are at the national average and school attendance figures are average.

Care, guidance and support are good. Students feel safe throughout the school and are confident that there is always someone they can go to if they have problems.

Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are usually well paced and provide plenty of opportunities for pupils to get involved in their own learning. The school has a wealth of assessment data which is used well to develop long-term plans and to set targets for the pupils. However, day-to-day assessment in classrooms does not always give the pupils a clear idea of their progress in lessons and the pupils are not always sufficiently involved in the assessment process.

The leadership and management of the school are good. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent and provides the school with a clear vision for the future, linked to rigorous monitoring and systematic planning. She is ably assisted by a good senior team who provide challenge and support to middle leadership, which is good

overall. The school is rightly confident in its ability to make further improvements, the capacity for which is good.

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

### **Grade: 1**

The sixth form is outstanding. It is popular and numbers are rising. An excellent range of courses is available for all the students and the school works well with other providers to achieve this. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Standards are high. All students make at least good progress and the achievement of many is outstanding. Personal development and well-being are outstanding and care, guidance and support are good. Students are very willing to take on responsibility. They are committed to the school and the values it promotes.

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

- Improve progress in English and mathematics.
- Improve the overall quality of assessment in lessons and provide the pupils with more opportunities to evaluate their progress.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

Achievement and standards are good overall and outstanding in the sixth form. All groups of students make at least satisfactory progress. Students enter the school with broadly average standards and in recent years standards have been rising at Key Stages 3 and 4. In the national tests in 2006, standards at Key Stage 3 were above average overall. The students made satisfactory progress in mathematics and good progress in English and science. A particularly strong feature of the results was the increased proportion of pupils attaining Level 6 and above, which was above average in all three subjects. In the GCSE examinations in 2006, there was a significant rise in the proportion attaining five good passes, which was above average. The students made good progress from their starting points and pupils met the challenging targets set for them by the school. The proportion attaining five good passes, including English and mathematics, was average. Standards in the sixth form are above average. All the students here make at least good progress and in some cases progress is excellent.

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

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. The school provides a wealth of opportunities for developing

students' creativity and their individuality. Students embrace these opportunities wholeheartedly.

Relationships within the school are good and staff and students treat one another with respect. Students behave well in lessons and around the school. The school has put a number of measures in place to improve attendance, including the appointment of a family liaison officer to follow up persistent absentees. Despite considerable successes with individual students, the attendance rate remains average.

Students make an outstanding contribution to the life of the school and wider community. Older students support younger students with reading and arrange activities during the annual enterprise week. The school council organises a conference for other schools. Many young people are involved in drama and music productions. Through enterprise activities students have spread their involvement as far afield as Brazil.

Students understand how to keep healthy and they take advantage of the excellent facilities for sport. They are safety conscious around the school. They feel secure and are confident that any instances of bullying will be tackled firmly by staff. Students' social skills and their ability to work well independently are fostered outstandingly well through innovative enterprising activities; this is a truly exemplary aspect of the school's work which prepares them excellently for life after school. They make satisfactory progress in the development of basic skills in literacy and numeracy.

The personal development of the students in the sixth form is outstanding. They enjoy their courses and are well motivated to succeed. The maturity of students and their very good attitude contribute hugely to their success.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Teaching and learning are good and this enables students to make good progress. Typically, lessons are well planned to meet students' learning needs, with the emphasis on pace and challenge to motivate the students. Good relationships and high expectations for behaviour mean students feel confident and well supported. In the best lessons, teachers take every opportunity to provide engaging activities for students that meet the needs of learners of all abilities. However, in some lessons, students are not given enough opportunity to be involved. In these cases, their attention wanders and occasionally their behaviour deteriorates. Teachers usually make good use of assessment to plan their lessons and organise their groups so that students get work at the right level. This is not always the case and occasionally the work is either too hard or too easy. Students are generally clear about their targets and have a good idea of what they need to do to improve. However, this is inconsistent across the school and in some cases assessment does not provide sufficient information about what has been achieved and how work could be improved. In the best lessons, students are given opportunities to assess their own and others' work, which helps them to

understand what they need to do to improve, but students are not always sufficiently involved in these important assessment activities.

Teaching and learning are outstanding in the sixth form. Students are given the independence to pursue their own learning. They are well supported to do this and respond very positively. Student learning is also well supported by on-line resources and activities that students can access both in school and at home.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

The quality of the curriculum and related activities is outstanding in every respect. Thoughtful and meticulous planning, driven by the needs of the students, securely underpins the innovative and imaginative curriculum. There is a broad and flexible range of pathways, with appropriate accreditation, set within an impressive range of subjects. This gives the students a wealth of opportunities, whatever their background and ability. There has been a significant increase in the proportion of students electing to continue their education beyond the age of sixteen, and better retention on courses. The school has developed excellent links with other local providers in the private and public sectors, including universities. An outstanding range of activities linked to the specialist status in business and enterprise enriches the curriculum which the students enjoy. The school has established very productive links with such bodies as the Royal Horticultural Society and Kew Gardens, and the international flavour of much of the school's work is impressive. An excellent programme of opportunities in the performing and visual arts, physical education and enterprise provides popular and appropriate enrichment which contributes outstandingly to preparing the students for life beyond school. The school has well-conceived plans to modify the Key Stage 3 curriculum and to provide courses beyond Advanced Level in conjunction with higher education providers.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Child protection and vetting procedures are robust and this means that vulnerable students are well supported. Any instances of bullying are handled quickly and effectively. Academic guidance for students is good. There are effective systems for the assessment, tracking and monitoring of students' progress, and students know their targets for improvement. Students feel that they are given good guidance in choosing their options for GCSE and sixth form study. Students with learning difficulties are well supported in class and in their withdrawal groups. Care, guidance and support for sixth form students are good. All-embracing pastoral care and good academic guidance provide students with the foundations on which to grow and flourish in their studies. They are very positive about the advice they receive to plan their future path and the structured programme of support which accompanies this.

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## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

#### Grade for sixth form: 1

The quality of leadership and management is good, with some outstanding features. The excellent headteacher provides vigorous and determined leadership. Her strong vision sets a clear direction for the future development of the school. Leadership and management focus sharply on valuing the differences between students and ensuring that their various talents and needs are celebrated and addressed. Strategic planning is ambitious and always puts the students first. The outstanding quality of the curriculum and the school's specialist status reflect this clearly. The headteacher is well supported by a senior team who have a thorough knowledge of the school and work together convincingly to improve provision. Good monitoring and evaluation are detailed, rigorous and accurate and ensure that the school knows itself clearly and plans well for the future. The quality of middle management is good overall and strong links have been established with senior leaders, who challenge and support them effectively. The leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding. The governing body is good and provides strong support. Financial management is excellent and the school provides good value for money. The school has successfully addressed most of the areas for improvement in the last inspection report and there is good capacity to improve.



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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>	2	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	1
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	1
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	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	1
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1	1
<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 to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

### Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	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	2	
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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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?	No	

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

Thank you for the help that you gave us when we recently inspected your school. It was a pleasure to meet such confident young people who were clearly proud of their school.

Writhlington is a good school with some outstanding features. Results in examinations are improving and you make good progress in your learning. However, some of you could achieve better results in English and mathematics. Sixth form results are excellent and it was good to see that more of you are staying in school after the end of Year 11. The school uses the specialism in business and enterprise outstandingly well. It provides a superb range of activities for you and we were particularly impressed with the fantastic opportunities in art, music, sport and the businesses that you run so successfully. All these activities and the superb range of courses on offer give you a really good foundation for life after school. The school looks after you well and cares about each and every one of you. Teaching in the school is good, but sometimes you could be given more help to understand how to improve your work and more chances to get involved in your learning. This does happen, but not in every lesson. We were also really impressed by the way that you take part in the life of the school and how your School Council and Year Councils contribute to the school's development. You have a lot of respect for your headteacher and rightly recognise that she leads the school well to make sure that you get a good education.

We have asked the school to improve progress in English and mathematics. We have also asked the school to make sure that assessment shows you how to improve your work and that you are involved in the process. We are confident that the school is able to do this.