



Waseley Hills High School and Sixth Form Centre

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116951
Local Authority Worcestershire
Inspection number 290685
Inspection dates 24–25 January 2007
Reporting inspector Brian Cartwright HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	School Road
School category	Community		Rubery, Rednal
Age range of pupils	11–19		Birmingham B45 9EL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0121 4535211
Number on roll (school)	970	Fax number	0121 4578850
Number on roll (6th form)	123		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Eric Hogg
		Headteacher	David Thurbon
Date of previous school inspection	18 November 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–19	24–25 January 2007	290685

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

This is a specialist business and enterprise school of average size situated on the Worcestershire border with south west Birmingham. There is a lower than average proportion of students entitled to free school meals. It has a small number of students from minority ethnic heritage backgrounds. Very few students have English as an additional language. The total proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD) is lower than average, with an average proportion who have statements of special educational need. The school has specialist hearing impaired provision, and a specialist able autism base. The student population is stable, with almost all students starting in Year 7 continuing through to Year 11.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Waseley Hills High School is providing a satisfactory education. Overall achievement and standards are satisfactory as a result of sound teaching and learning. Students enjoy school and attend well, and show good interpersonal skills that are being further developed through recent moves to mixed aged tutor groups. Regular monitoring of student progress means both they, and staff, know their expected academic targets, but are less clear about the steps needed to reach them. Teachers are not consistently using the data available to plan lessons that match the learning needs of every student.

The curriculum on offer is good, and has been driven by a clear focus on improving vocational opportunities. This is a successful consequence of the specialist school status. The extra-curricular enrichment provision is good, with high participation rates and many positive outcomes for students. They are well prepared for their future economic well-being. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. A notable strength is the consideration, and kindness of staff towards students, resulting in good relationships and a pleasant learning ethos overall. Students are well informed of the various next steps in their education journey. Those with learning difficulties and disabilities enjoy good specialist provision, are fully included in lessons, and welcomed by other students.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school, but have not been consistently effective at using this information to drive up standards. This has led to relatively little improvement since 2002. School improvement planning identifies many useful ideas, but it is quite cumbersome. This makes it difficult for staff to concentrate on the most important steps needed. The school provides satisfactory value for money. Governors have an understanding of the school's performance but do not have much first hand knowledge of school life.

The impact of business and enterprise specialist status is clear in much improved information and communication technology (ICT) provision, and remodelled accommodation in the 'Enterprise Centre'. Performance targets at Key Stage 3 in specialist subjects have been partially met, but not at Key Stage 4. Supportive links have been established with primary and secondary schools. The main benefits have been in supporting students' personal development through a more engaging curriculum.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The sixth form is providing a satisfactory overall education, and students who complete their courses are successful in finding higher education or employment. Standards in 2006 were lower than average, but represent satisfactory progress for those students. Weaknesses of leadership and management did lead to underachievement last year, and recent changes have been made with the intention of resolving this. The curriculum

is good, and the mixed age tutor system ensures older students have ample opportunity to take responsibility.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure that teachers use information about students' achievements more effectively when planning lessons so that every student can be guided towards reaching challenging targets.
- Ensure that help is provided more speedily for those students who are falling behind in meeting their targets.
- Improve lesson consistency and quality in all subjects by using a common structure so students know precisely what to learn, have opportunities to discuss ideas and write up their thinking, and show what they have learned in the lesson.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory throughout the school. Attainment on entry is broadly average in most years. 2002 was the exception, with above average standards on entry in Year 7. Standards at Key Stage 3 are broadly in line with the national average. 2006 GCSE results show broadly average standards overall, with a welcome return to average standards in mathematics compared with 2005. A very high proportion of students gain at least five GCSE passes because of the inclusive provision for all. Students of all backgrounds make satisfactory progress, and students with learning difficulties and disabilities make slightly better progress than their peers. However, the proportion of students gaining five higher grades was just below the national average, and lower than the target set by the school. In particular, there was a wide gap in attainment between boys and girls. Nevertheless, achievement is satisfactory as most students make the progress expected. Measures for the current Year 11 show them on target for higher attainment, as expected given the higher ability of this year group.

Sixth form results in 2006 were disappointing to the school, and weaker than previous years, although representing satisfactory progress for the students concerned. Standards were lower than the national average but not exceptionally so. Results at AS level were weak in psychology, general studies and the sciences.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Students enjoy school and their attendance is good, thanks to well established systems to monitor attendance. Recent ICT management system failures have compromised this good practice. Students are friendly and welcoming to visitors; they feel safe in school and know to whom they

can turn for help. Some students and parents expressed a concern about bullying even though the school has recently improved procedures for dealing with this, resulting in a decrease in incidents. The school is working with local community police to deal with mobile phone and Internet offences originating beyond the school.

Behaviour is satisfactory overall. Students behave well most of the time but in too many lessons some students disrupt learning with poor behaviour. This is most obvious when they are expected to listen to the teacher for long periods of time without participation in discussion. As a result of mentoring, students are becoming more involved in monitoring their own progress but are not yet consistently enabled to take responsibility for their own learning and work independently.

Students, especially the younger ones, benefit from improved relationships and guidance from other students in form groups. Students say that they are listened to and some of their suggestions have been acted on but the work of the school council is not as fully developed and well publicised as it could be. Senior sixth form students both sit on and report regularly to the governing body.

The students' understanding of spiritual, moral, cultural and social values is good. They demonstrate caring attitudes to each other, especially those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Work in food technology and clear displays in the canteen help students to make healthy choices. The school's specialist status for business and enterprise is being well used to improve preparation for the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Satisfactory teaching in all years enables students to achieve the standards expected of them. The specialist teaching in the able autistic support base is good. Teacher–student relationships are good and students are well supported by the class teacher and learning support staff. Consequently, students respond well to questioning and feel safe in their classrooms. They behave well in lessons that sustain interest but where this does not happen some students can disrupt the learning of others. Outstanding practice is evident where a wide range of teaching strategies is used to engage students and ongoing assessment is used rigorously to support learning. Overall, most students do not experience a consistent approach to teaching, do not always know exactly what is expected of them, and do not get a chance to demonstrate their understanding of the intended lesson content.

The majority of teachers show a clear understanding of students' prior attainments and students are aware of their expected target levels and grades. Work is generally pitched at an appropriate level for the group as a whole, but is not sufficiently challenging for some, or accessible to others. Teachers' use of day-to-day assessment is not used consistently to inform students of what to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum and other activities are good because they are well matched to students' needs in terms of aspirations and capabilities. In addition to academic courses there is a wide range of vocational options which develop confidence and self-esteem. They relate well to the development of life skills and preparation for the world of work; for example, the school runs its own Young Apprenticeship hospitality project. Physical education lessons are supplemented very well by extra sporting activities and contribute well to healthy lifestyles. The impressively wide range of accredited extended curricular activities, including sport, music and Duke of Edinburgh Award, involves a very high proportion of students.

The sixth form curriculum is good. A wide range of traditional subjects together with an increasing number of vocational subjects are on offer and support the needs of students well. All continue to employment or higher education from Year 13.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. The school takes all appropriate steps to safeguard students. A comprehensive system of student support ensures students develop good personal skills. This is particularly the case for those who have learning difficulties and disabilities, and for those in difficult circumstances. The mixed age tutor groups are valued by students for helping them mature and grow in confidence. The system for guiding students to reach high standards is satisfactory and improving. Challenging targets are set and students and parents are well and regularly informed of these. This is not yet translating into better achievement because the system to monitor and support those who are falling behind is not used consistently well by teachers and learning mentors. Students get good advice on what courses to take and are well prepared to make the right choices for their futures.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school has benefited from being a specialist business and enterprise school, and has used these resources in some areas of the school to improve the curriculum, ICT and accommodation. There has yet to be a significant gain in overall achievement. The clarity of vision held at senior leadership and governance levels is satisfactory. The school has identified many areas for development, but there are too many to make it simple and clear for staff to easily contribute to school improvement. In particular, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning has not been able to ensure

consistently good practice. This is, for example, evident in the inconsistent use teachers make of assessment information to plan for lessons that target learning matched to prior attainment. Some lessons do follow current successful practice in teaching, for example the national strategy guidance, and are effective as a result, but too many others do not.

The school works very well to include vulnerable learners in the life and learning of the school, albeit with some gaps, for example ongoing lack of wheelchair access to the sixth form common room. Parents have opportunities to contribute to school review through questionnaires and forums. About one in eight parents returned the inspection questionnaire; many of these expressed some concern over the quality of communications between school and home, and some worries over distracting behaviour in lessons. Both were issues at the previous inspection.

Standards are similar to those found at the previous inspection. Through its response to some underachievement in 2005 the school has demonstrated a satisfactory capacity to make further improvements. Governance is satisfactory, although is reliant on the school's own self-reporting of performance and does not have a structured system for links with faculties to see for itself day-to-day school life. It has a fair understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Financial management is sound and the school is delivering satisfactory value for money overall, with a reasonable explanation for the current high budget surplus.

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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>	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?	3	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?	3	3
The standards ¹ 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	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	2	
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	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
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	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
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?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for your friendly welcome and positive discussions during our visit to inspect your school. The school is providing all of you with a sound education and is making sure that you make the progress expected. The range of subjects and additional enrichment activities are particularly good. Together with very considerate teachers and support staff you are able to develop good personal skills and attitudes. These should serve you well in your future. We agree with you that in some lessons, poor behaviour of a few students can cause others to be distracted from learning. We think that in part this can arise if lessons appear to be dull. In the main, however, most of you are patient and committed to learn to the best of your ability.

The school, therefore, agrees with us that some important improvements in the quality of teaching are necessary if academic standards are to rise above the present average level. We have suggested three steps.

- Teachers should all be using the progress information they have from tests and marking to plan lessons that help you build on what you can do already.
- Teachers need to act on this information in time to help those of you who might be slipping behind in meeting your targets.
- Lessons would be better if they followed a common structure where possible, so you as students know precisely what to learn, get lots of opportunities to discuss ideas and write up your thinking, and also get a chance to show what have learned in the lesson.

Best wishes for your future success.