



Wrotham School

Inspection Report - Amended

Unique Reference Number 118881
Local Authority Kent
Inspection number 291278
Inspection dates 11–12 September 2006
Reporting inspector Sean Hanan 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	Borough Green Road
School category	Foundation		Wrotham
Age range of pupils	11–18		Sevenoaks TN15 7RD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01732 884207
Number on roll (school)	700	Fax number	01732 882178
Number on roll (6th form)	106		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mark Reeve
		Headteacher	David Day
Date of previous school inspection	12 November 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	11–12 September 2006	291278

Amended Report Addendum

Report updated to resolve formatting inconsistency

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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

Wrotham School is a small, semi-rural secondary modern school near Sevenoaks. The 11-plus system in Kent means that the top 25% of the ability range do not attend the school. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is very small. The number of students eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. The school gained specialist status for humanities in September 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Wrotham School is a vibrant learning community, in which students are valued as individuals, feel safe and achieve well. It is a good and improving school. A new headteacher was appointed in 2003. He has re-energised the school and has appointed leaders at all levels who share his commitment to improving teaching and learning. The result is that the percentage of Year 11 students who achieved at least five A* to C grades at GCSE rose by 25% to 78% in 2006. However, whilst teachers, students and their parents are clearly delighted, there is no sense of complacency. It was reassuring for inspectors that the school not only recognises the issues that remain, but that there are also clear strategies in place to address them. Primarily this will involve raising standards in a minority of subjects to the standards in the rest of the school and finding ways for students of all ages to take greater responsibility for their own learning.

Good teaching ensures that most students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress. Achievement is good and standards are broadly average. The curriculum has improved markedly since the last inspection. More choices, which include vocational subjects, have improved students' motivation and their success. Enrichment opportunities are varied and take-up is good. Guidance and support are good.

Most students enjoy school and behave well. Attendance is around the national average for secondary schools. Their personal development is good. Healthy eating and exercise are effectively encouraged and students respond well to good opportunities to contribute to the life of the school and to the local community.

The school provides good value for money. The buildings are old and in need of replacement. However, they are well maintained and teachers do their best to provide an attractive learning environment. Good leadership and robust quality assurance processes ensure that the school has an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. Governors are effective and very supportive of the school. The capacity for further improvement is outstanding because the school knows itself and there is a culture that refuses to settle for mediocrity.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Provision for students in the sixth form is satisfactory. Numbers in Year 12 have increased significantly and provisional A-level results for 2006 indicate a good pass rate and an improvement in the percentage of students gaining higher grades. Overall, students make satisfactory progress, taking into account their prior attainment at GCSE. Positive steps have been taken to improve the quality of guidance and support offered to students, many of whom come from backgrounds with little experience of higher education. Students' study skills and their approaches to independent learning are comparatively weak areas. Management structures are clear and appropriate action is being taken to improve standards.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in weaker subject areas to match those in the rest of the school.
- Improve independent learning and study skills throughout the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Standards at GCSE have been rising during the past three years and the provisional results for 2006 are the best ever for the school. 78% of students in Year 11 gained five or more A* to C grades, which is significantly above the national average. The school sets high expectations for its students and performance targets are challenging. Students often exceed these targets and make good and sometimes outstanding progress. Students with learning difficulties also achieve well and the school has a long-standing record of success in helping almost all of them to gain at least five GCSE passes. However, the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades that include mathematics and English is below the national average. Here, students' progress towards their targets, whilst satisfactory, is not as good as in other areas.

Test results at the end of Year 9 have been below national averages for the past few years. However, taking their starting points into account, students make satisfactory progress, reaching and sometimes exceeding the school targets for performance at Level 5. The school has rightly identified that performance at Level 6 is inconsistent and needs to improve.

In the sixth form, pass rates are good, but significantly fewer students gain grades A and B when compared to the national picture. Students are making satisfactory progress. Overall, they reach the target grades that would be expected based on their performance at GCSE.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Personal development and well-being are well developed by the school. They are strongly fostered by a deep commitment to ensuring that students are healthy, safe and achieve well. Students say that they enjoy school, especially in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form, where they are able to choose their courses. They are positive about their learning, behave well and attend school regularly. Students feel safe and value being able to turn to teachers for help. Bullying is rare and is dealt with effectively. Their personal development is well supported by clear guidance, activities such as the Enterprise Activities Week, citizenship lessons and increased opportunities to prepare for life in a multi-cultural society. Students appreciate opportunities to take responsibility and to contribute their views through the school council. They are

helped to adopt a healthy lifestyle by a wide range of sporting activities and the healthy options on school menus.

Students make a good contribution to the community through a growing number of projects, which include charity work. They are well prepared for their future through work experience and helpful guidance to make choices for careers and further education. Effective provision ensures that students' social, moral, cultural and spiritual development is good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Teaching and learning are good in the school and satisfactory in the sixth form. Most students make good progress in lessons that are well suited to their learning needs. Teachers have developed a variety of activities to interest the students and help them to learn to the best of their ability. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson, students wrote fluent, colourful pieces about the attack on the World Trade Centre in response to television footage. They wrote with great empathy as journalists, police and firemen, and relatives of those who died. Most lessons are lively, with frequent changes of activity and opportunities for students to improve their work. Students' progress is assessed regularly and this information is used to help teachers to plan effective lessons and set appropriate targets. Teaching assistants are used well to support students with learning difficulties. High quality individual education plans make sure that all their teachers are well informed about their requirements and have guidance about strategies that will help them to learn.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum is good and meets the needs of the students effectively. Learning opportunities are well matched to individual interests and abilities in Years 10 and 11, through work-related courses, links with a local college and accelerated learning for the most able. The effectiveness of programmes is kept under constant review and plans are in place to further enhance the opportunities available. Good provision is made for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school's specialist status for humanities is used to good effect to reflect local needs, improve learning across subjects, and to help students to be well prepared for their future through new courses designed to support communication, ICT and personal skills. Students appreciate being able to choose courses which interest them, and enjoy taking part in the wide range of clubs and enrichment activities. Courses that are available in the sixth form have been extended through a partnership arrangement with other local schools. However, few students take advantage of this opportunity.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care, guidance and support for students are good. They feel safe at the school and feel that they can talk openly to their form tutor or head of year if there is a problem. Support in lessons is good and teachers give of their time freely during the day and during holidays to support students who need additional help. The school sets clear guidelines for behaviour and incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively. Strategies to improve the behaviour of students have improved. As a result, the number of excluded students has fallen. Healthy eating and exercise are promoted and there is very good provision for PE and physical exercise at lunchtimes and after school. Information about careers and further education is readily available and there is careful planning to help students to manage the transition at the end of Year 11. Child protection procedures are robust and staff are aware of their responsibilities. CRB checks are undertaken for all staff. There are effective links with other professionals who provide support for the students. For example, the school nurse runs a weekly 'drop-in' session for students worried about health issues. A Family Liaison Officer ensures good communication with parents.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good. Highly effective leadership by the headteacher, supported by other school leaders, has been a key component in the improvements in students' achievement over the past three years. Equal opportunities are central to the delivery of a shared vision. Governors work effectively as a 'critical friend' and are very supportive of the school. Leadership throughout the school is sharply focused on teaching and learning. Meetings include professional development for the participants and the sharing of good practice.

The processes for monitoring and improving quality are robust and effective. Inspectors agreed with almost all the judgements in the school's self-evaluation. Teachers are observed regularly and the information collected is well used. In addition to an annual cycle of monitoring, six departments each year are reviewed by the senior leadership team. This review includes lesson observations and surveys of students and their parents. It culminates in an action plan to improve teaching and learning.

Staffing and resources are used effectively. Since the previous inspection, the school has successfully tackled the issues that were identified, has raised achievement and improved provision. It is very well placed to continue improving.

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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?	2	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	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

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	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	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?	2	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

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?	2	2
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 taking part in the inspection by talking to us about your work and your life in school.

- We believe your school is a good and improving school.
- The headteacher and the other people in the school with responsibility make decisions with your best interests at heart. Through the school council, you play your part in improving the school.
- Nearly all of you attend regularly, behave yourselves well and make good progress.
- You are all valued as individuals and you are well supported by your teachers and tutors.
- If you have a learning difficulty or disability, you are generally well looked after.
- You contribute very well to the life of the school and many of you help in the local community.

Your school needs to:

- Improve standards in a small number of subjects where you don't make as much progress as you do in other subjects.
- Encourage you to do more yourselves to improve the results you get.