



Wollaston School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122059
Local Authority Northamptonshire
Inspection number 292309
Inspection dates 5–6 October 2006
Reporting inspector Champak Chauhan HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Irchester Road
School category	Community		Wollaston
Age range of pupils	11–19		Wellingborough NN29 7PH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01933 663501
Number on roll (school)	1189	Fax number	01933 665272
Number on roll (6th form)	183		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Anthony Cochrane
		Headteacher	M Browne
Date of previous school inspection	28 January 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–19	5–6 October 2006	292309

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Wollaston School has grown rapidly in the last five years because of over-subscription and is larger than other secondary schools nationally. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average, while that of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities is slightly above average. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. When pupils enter school at age 11, their attainment is broadly average. The school is recognised as an Investor in People, has Artsmark status and has been awarded the FA Charter Standard – Secondary Development School.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school's overall effectiveness is good. Pupils make generally good progress and at age 16 attain results in the GCSE examinations that are above average. The unvalidated results for 2006 were the best the school has ever had, with 66% of pupils gaining at least five grades A*-C. In the last two years, all pupils attained at least one grade A*-G, reflecting the school's commitment to social inclusion. The school has made a significant improvement in its performance at GCSE since it was last inspected. However, not enough pupils are gaining the higher grades in public examinations. Pupils' progress from ages 11 to 14 in English and mathematics in the recent past has been a source of concern. The school reports that this was because of difficulties in recruiting suitable staff and some unsatisfactory teaching. These issues have been successfully tackled by senior leaders and results in the two subjects have improved in 2006. The school is a well ordered community with excellent relationships. Pupils are generally well behaved and show positive attitudes to their learning. This is because the teaching and learning are good. Pupils enjoy their learning, their attendance is good and most participate in a good range of extra-curricular activities, for example the Duke of Edinburgh scheme. Most go on visits to places of interest.

Pupils are aware of what they need to do to stay safe and to aim for healthier lifestyles. They know about the dangers of, for example, smoking and drug abuse. Pupils are aware of eating more healthily and the governing body has ensured that the food available offers pupils a healthier choice. Pupils report that bullying is rare and when it occurs it is dealt with swiftly by the staff. A peer mentoring scheme has been established using sixth form students. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the community. They regularly raise significant sums of money for charities and participate in events such as Young Enterprise and the community sports leadership programme, which supports children in primary schools and is a significant strength of the school. Pupils participate enthusiastically in year and key stage councils. They feel their views are listened to and that they make a positive contribution to changes within the school. A large majority of pupils make good use of opportunities to prepare for their future economic well-being. Most gain recognised qualifications to enable them to continue into further education or to seek employment. Many subjects contribute to their skills in developing personal relationships and team building.

Lessons are characterised by good relationships, a brisk pace to the learning, effective questioning and the use of an imaginative range of strategies by the teachers. In the very few instances where there are weaknesses, the teacher does not properly manage the behaviour of some pupils, or the needs of higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently met. The school has an excellent range of data on the pupils' prior attainment but this is not properly used by some teachers in their day-to-day planning to maximise the pupils' progress. The curriculum is good, with particular strengths in the performing arts and physical education. The quality of care, guidance and support is good with some outstanding features, especially in relation to helping those pupils with behavioural or learning needs. The leadership and management of the school are good. Senior leaders provide clear leadership and direction to the work of the school. They

check regularly on the school's work and have a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. The school has a good capacity to improve. This is demonstrated by the successful actions taken recently to improve standards and pupils' progress in English and mathematics. Governors work hard on behalf of the school. They are aware of strengths and weaknesses in the school and challenge it when necessary.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are good. The good quality of teaching and learning enables the students to make good progress. A one-year vocational course is provided to help prepare less able students for future success in the workplace. Students who take vocational A-level courses attain high standards. Nearly all students achieve successful A-level results but the numbers who achieve the highest grades are inconsistent across subjects. A mentoring system has been established which is clearly focused on tracking students' progress but this has not yet had a marked impact on their achievement. Students show high levels of independence and have good relationships with others. They benefit from an excellent programme of personal development. The sixth form is effectively led by the head of sixth form and by the centre manager.

What the school should do to improve further

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- Ensure that all teachers consistently and effectively use the data on pupils' prior attainment to enhance their progress.
- Ensure that the needs of the more able are better met and that this leads to more pupils gaining higher level passes in national tests and examinations.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils' achievements and standards are good. Pupils make good progress and their unvalidated results in the GCSE examinations in 2006 are above national averages. Results at GCSE level have risen significantly since the time of the previous inspection, and 66% of pupils attained five or more A* to C grades in 2006. The school is particularly effective at ensuring that nearly all pupils attain at least five grades A* to G. This is due to the care and guidance given to pupils by teachers and other members of staff.

Detailed systems are in place to track the progress of pupils. These have ensured the good progress of pupils in Years 10 and 11 but the use of these systems is inconsistent in Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth form. The variable use of the tracking information means that the more able pupils do not always attain the highest grades.

Students in the sixth form successfully achieved recognised A-level passes in 2006. In some subjects they attained grades A and B but in others they did not. The school has accurately identified this issue and is beginning to address it through the more rigorous mentoring of students.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. They are courteous, work co-operatively and have a strong sense of right and wrong. However, behaviour is not as good in the lessons where activities are not sufficiently stimulating or appropriately matched to the abilities and needs of all pupils. Attendance rates are above the national average. Relationships between pupils and staff are excellent.

Pupils feel safe and secure, and the school ensures that all have access to an adult in whom they can confide. Pupils' views, channelled through the highly effective school councils, are listened to and acted upon if appropriate. Most participate enthusiastically in the many extra-curricular sports on offer. Pupils enjoy the responsibilities offered to them. They treat the many and varied displays around the school with respect and appreciate the rich variety of cultures represented. An awareness of the world of work has been developed in pupils by the well organised work experience programme and the many contacts with local businesses.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The good quality teaching contributes to the improved standards achieved and the good attitudes that most pupils have to their work. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because of the well organised provision and the good support they receive from teachers and other staff.

Teachers generally use their specialist subject knowledge skilfully. Work is planned imaginatively and carefully. Consequently, learning is challenging and fun, and the work set closely matches the needs of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Work is presented clearly, and all pupils respond to the challenging tasks and the skilful use of questioning by the teacher. Tasks are usually matched well to pupils' abilities, ensuring that all pupils make at least good progress. On occasion, low-level disruption is not well managed and planning does not always meet the needs of all pupils, particularly the higher attainers. A few teachers lack secure subject knowledge.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good. It is broad and generally well balanced, enabling most pupils to achieve well. Provision in the performing arts and in physical education is a particular strength. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported and can access the curriculum well. Gifted and talented students have the opportunity to specialise in two languages and in two option areas in Years 10 and 11.

Activities and learning experiences are well planned to help pupils gain the confidence and knowledge necessary to achieve appropriate qualifications. The school provides good vocational training and there are good links with local colleges. Most pupils undertake external visits and the school invites a good range of visitors to extend pupils' learning.

The school places a strong emphasis on providing a balanced education through the organisation of appropriate enrichment activities, for example residential visits to Wales and to Bude. From Year 9 onwards, pupils can take part in the successfully organised Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme gaining bronze, silver and gold awards.

The Sports Mark gold status reflects the very good contribution sport makes to the curriculum. There is a very good level of participation in the numerous clubs and activities on offer which develop the pupils' confidence and social skills. They also successfully participate in many school productions.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good with some outstanding features. Support for those pupils with learning and behavioural needs is excellent, enabling them to make at least good progress. Pupils and their parents appreciate the good support and guidance offered by the school, including the use of learning mentors. Parents also appreciate the many opportunities to learn about and to actively participate in their children's education. Pupils' progress is regularly monitored at whole school level and the school can readily identify those who may be in danger of underachieving. However, the use of data to inform teaching and to provide appropriate and targeted learning opportunities for pupils of all abilities has not yet been consistently applied across all subjects.

The number of fixed-term exclusions remains relatively high but the use of the new Social Inclusion Centre for academic and emotional support and counselling is providing a means to reduce this. Tutors and heads of year work cohesively to implement the school's support systems and to deal with inappropriate behaviour. The well planned discrete programme of personal, social and health education ensures pupils receive good advice about career choices, how to become an informed and caring citizen and to further appreciate what it means to be a responsible young adult.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The headteacher provides clear leadership and direction to the work of the school. He is ably supported by a senior leadership team that works well together. This team is hardworking, reflects on its own performance and promotes a culture of openness and the honest appraisal of the strengths and weaknesses in the school. A central method by which they do this is through the implementation of a rigorous cycle of checking on the school's work. This involves the periodic review of the work of faculties, an evaluation of the teaching and learning, and the improvement of provision for all pupils.

The school has managed to solve its staffing problems and has in the recent past appointed middle managers in all the areas where they have been required. It has been successful in, for example, recruiting permanent heads of faculty for English and science. Heads of faculty are consistent in their approach to school improvement. Heads of year have been required to become more involved in regularly monitoring the pupils' academic performance and their roles, whilst not yet fully effective, are gradually developing in this respect. Middle managers understand what is expected of them and they are made accountable for the performance in their areas of responsibility.

The governing body provides a clear framework within which the school operates. It discharges its duties well and holds the school to account for its performance. The parents who responded through the parents' questionnaires were overwhelmingly supportive of the school.

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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	2
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	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

7 October 2006

The Pupils

Wollaston School, Irchester Road, Wollaston, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, NN29 7PH

Thank you for welcoming us to your school recently. I would like to summarise below what we thought about Wollaston School. Please do try to read the whole report if you have the time to do so.

- Strengths of the school
- You make good progress from Year 7 to Year 11 and achieve well in examinations. The results at GCSE in 2006 are the best in the school's history and are above those achieved by other secondary schools nationally.
- Students in the sixth form make good progress and achieve well at A-level and in the other courses they study.
- The school is a well ordered community with excellent relationships. Behaviour is good, and adults and pupils work well with each other. You enjoy your learning and your overall attendance rate is good.
- You make good use of the wide range of extra-curricular activities that are organised for you. You enjoy participating in these.
- You make an excellent contribution to your local community and raise significant sums of money for charity.
- Your teachers teach you well and you want to learn as a result. You are cared for, guided and supported well by the adults in the school.
- Mr Browne and other senior staff know the school well and know what needs to be done to make it even better. Governors work well with the school so that together they can make things even better for you.
- What needs to be improved
- All your teachers need to use the information they already have about your abilities to make sure that the work they set for you improves your progress. Please ask your teachers to regularly give you work that you find more challenging.
- Your teachers need to ensure that more of you get the higher levels and grades in the SATs and in public examinations.

I wish all of you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr C Chauhan Her Majesty's Inspector