



Woolmer Hill Technology College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 125251
Local Authority Surrey
Inspection number 293237
Inspection dates 5–6 December 2006
Reporting inspector Marcia Headon HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Woolmer Hill
School category	Community		Woolmer Hill Road
Age range of pupils	11–16		Haslemere GU27 1QB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01428 654055
Number on roll (school)	636	Fax number	01428 647061
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Susan Stathers
		Headteacher	Mrs Susan Bullen
Date of previous school inspection	10 September 2001		

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The school is a smaller than average secondary school serving a mainly advantaged area in Surrey. A high percentage of pupils from the area attend independent schools. The attainment of the majority of pupils on entry to the school is slightly above average. There are significantly more boys than girls in the school, especially in the lower years.

There is a slightly higher than normal number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. The majority of pupils come from a White British background. It has specialist technology college status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Woolmer Hill Technology College is an improving school. It provides a satisfactory standard of education and has some good features. Personal development is promoted well and the level of individual care is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and feel well cared for. One pupil commented, 'many of the teachers feel like a member of my family'. The school provides a wide variety of activities ranging from sporting clubs to drama productions and after school activities are well supported.

Links with the community are strong and pupils play an active role in fund-raising events and in supporting initiatives such as the 'silver surfers club' in the town. The school has benefited from its partnership with the Waverley Federation which has allowed increased curriculum opportunities for a range of pupils and more training for staff. A local confederation has also enhanced the links with neighbouring primary schools.

Standards are broadly average and, given their starting points, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. However, there is considerable variation from year to year and across subjects and boys perform better than girls. The school has worked hard over the past few years to raise pupils' attainment. Results in the national tests improved at the end of Year 9 in 2006 although in 2005 pupils did not make as much progress from Year 7 as might have been expected. The GCSE results rose in 2005 to above the national average but in 2006 suffered a dip, mainly as a result of the legacy of a high staff turnover in previous years. The school is determined to reverse this trend, has carried out an extensive analysis of the results and has focused its efforts on improving pupils' examination techniques. This is leading to improvements in progress.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. The school is taking effective steps to improve the quality of teaching through staff training and the use of consultants. Some teachers do not give sufficient guidance to pupils on how they might improve their work. The behaviour of the pupils is generally good. In a few lessons where teaching is less effective, there is some low level disruption from a small minority of pupils. The school recognises this and is tackling it.

The curriculum is good. Vocational choices are developing and there is a good range of provision for gifted and talented pupils. However, it does not meet statutory requirements for the provision of religious education in Year 11 but this is being rectified in 2007. The school's technology college status has been used well to develop master classes for its partner schools and to use technology effectively to further the learning of the pupils. However, results in technology GCSE are still below the national average.

The school has effectively addressed most of the issues for improvement from the last inspection. The curriculum has been reviewed; a revised staffing structure is in place; procedures for monitoring pupils' development have been introduced; the site has been remodelled and facilities upgraded and the school's partnership with parents has

improved. Most parents are supportive of the school although a few expressed concern over the instances of low-level disruption and the high level of staff changes.

The headteacher has set a clear direction for the school. She is assisted by an effective senior management team who respect and value her judgement. The middle managers are developing their roles with good support from the headteacher and senior managers. The governors are supportive of the school although they have not always held it to account sufficiently robustly. The school's self-evaluation processes are thorough with the exception of the school's judgement on the quality of teaching and learning which is too generous. Given the improvements already made, the capacity to improve is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good across the school.
- Improve the behaviour of the small minority of pupils who disrupt lessons.
- Ensure that all pupils are given more precise guidance on how to improve their work.
- Improve the attainment of girls.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The standards reached in the most recent national tests at the end of Year 9 are above average in English, mathematics and science although the school did not meet the challenging targets which it set itself. Standards in GCSE results have been inconsistent over a three year period. In 2005, the results rose to above the national average but in 2006 they were below. There are significant differences in departmental results. A large percentage of pupils in art and statistics obtain higher grades but the results in geography, dance and Spanish are unsatisfactory. These departments are being offered additional support and training.

In lessons observed, most pupils make satisfactory progress. Middle ability pupils make less progress than higher attainers. Boys make better progress than girls. The good quality support from the learning centre means that pupils with special educational needs and for whom English is a second language make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Most pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. Attendance is good and improving. Pupils are adamant that the school is an inclusive one in which racism or other forms of discrimination are rare, as one Year 11 girl said 'most people are mature about it here'.

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The provision for their personal, social and moral learning is good but there is less emphasis upon

their spiritual and cultural development. Pupils are well aware of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle and the high attendance at sporting activities proves they take notice of what they are taught. They know how to remain safe both within the community and on the internet. They are keen to take part in the life of the school and through the school council have been responsible for bringing about improvements to the school environment. They are also involved in community projects such as working with a local artist to create seats in Grayswood. Pupils are generally caring and have good social awareness as shown by their willingness to raise money for charities such as 'Walk for Africa'. Pupils are well prepared for the world of work, they demonstrate effective literacy and numeracy skills and are equipped to be economically successful in their future careers.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall but it varies from very good to unsatisfactory. In the best lessons, tasks are planned carefully to match pupils' prior attainment. In these lessons, teachers make good use of computer technology and of selected resources to deepen pupils' understanding and motivate them well. Challenging tasks encourage pupils to think for themselves. In other lessons, the way planning is translated into practice does not always provide enough support for some pupils and they do not make the progress they should.

Pupils know how well they are achieving and some teachers set out clearly what pupils need to do to reach a higher level. This practice is not consistent across all subjects and pupils are not always aware of ways of achieving these levels because marking does not always show clearly what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Curriculum provision across the school is good. There is a wide range of academic subjects on offer in Years 10 and 11 and more able pupils take additional GCSEs such as statistics. The schools' partnerships, federation and links with local colleges provide pupils effectively with a good range of vocational options. However, study support sessions for the pupils who attend college for their vocational studies are not always used well enough to help these pupils catch up on the work they have missed while they are out of school.

All pupils undertake work experience in Year 10 which is well organised and evaluated and provides good preparation for the world of work. A strength of the curriculum is the good range of extra-curricular activities provided, which are well attended and contribute effectively to pupils' learning. These include after-school clubs, visits and visitors to the school. A well focused half-termly enrichment day for each year group helps pupils to develop socially and academically.

The organisation of teaching groups meets the differing needs of pupils well. Challenging activities are offered to more able pupils both in and out of school. The school has specialist status as a technology college although this is not immediately obvious around the school. Technology status has been used successfully to enhance the overall provision for design and technology and information communication technology. Digital projectors and interactive whiteboards are now used well across the school to enhance the quality of the teaching but technology status has not yet had an impact on improving GCSE results.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good overall. Pupils know that there are a range of support systems in place if they have an academic or personal problem; they appreciate the willingness of staff to make time available for them and feel able to talk to staff if they have a problem. Arrangements for child protection are rigorous and comprehensive. The school carries out risk assessments thoroughly. A professional pupil counsellor backed by effective pastoral support is also readily available. Pupils who have special educational needs are well supported. Their individual education plans are thorough, regularly reviewed and monitored and the school has an inclusive ethos. Pupils comment on how safe they feel in school and told inspectors that when bullying did take place it was always dealt with promptly.

The academic guidance for pupils on how to improve their work is satisfactory. There are adequate systems in place to assess how well pupils are progressing: pupils know the standards at which they are working but are less certain on how they can better their performance. Guidance on how to improve is not sufficiently sharp.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders and governors have correctly identified that a key priority for the school is to raise the achievement of all of its pupils. The school is now fully staffed following a period of considerable difficulty recruiting appropriately qualified staff; this has hindered its development. The headteacher provides a clear direction for further improvement and the strategic development plan provides an effective way forward. The headteacher has established positive working relationships within the school and as a result the staff work well together; she is well supported by her senior team. Middle managers vary in both their experience and their understanding of what needs to be done. Good systems for monitoring and evaluating performance are in place although the school's observations on the quality of the teaching and learning in lessons focus on the teaching and there is insufficient recorded comment on the gains in learning pupils make. The leadership team has set rigorous targets for underachieving departments and are supporting and monitoring them closely. The school is willing to work with others in its drive to improve and is using external consultants effectively to work with the different subject areas.

Governors are supportive but collectively do not provide sufficient challenge. Although they have been successful in resolving a deficit budget they have not yet ensured that religious education is taught to all pupils.

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Inspection judgements

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
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	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
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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?	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	2
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
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

The Ofsted inspection team would like to thank you all for welcoming us in to your school recently. We enjoyed speaking to you in classes and meeting with some of you at break times, at lunchtimes and in the school council. It is clear that you enjoy coming to school and feel safe there. The support which the school gives you is one of its strengths. You recognise this and appreciate the fact that your teachers listen to you and support you well. You know where you can seek help and guidance should you need it.

The curriculum which the school provides is wide ranging and as well as the variety of lessons on offer in the upper school there are many other activities on offer to extend your learning. We like the idea of you helping in the town museum and with the silver surfers club. The school also provides many out of school activities and we hope you continue to take part in these.

The results which Year 9 achieved in their SATs last year were good and the school is determined to raise the academic standards further. After a really good year in 2005, this year's GCSE results were not so good. The inspection team thinks there is some inconsistency in the quality of teaching you receive and you are not always given clear enough guidance on how to improve your work. Although behaviour around the school is generally good, in a small number of lessons there is some disruption.

In order to make your school even better we have asked your teachers to:

- ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is more consistent across the school
- focus upon the small number of lessons where the learning is disrupted by the poor behaviour of pupils; you have a major role to play in helping to address this
- ensure that you are given more precise guidance on how to improve your work
- consider how the achievement of girls can be improved.

We wish you success in the future and hope that your production of *My Fair Lady* was a huge success.

Marcia Headon HMI