

Wright Robinson Sports College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105564
Local Authority	Manchester
Inspection number	301968
Inspection date	9 January 2008
Reporting inspector	John Ashton

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1758
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Colin Brierley
Headteacher	Mr N Beischer
Date of previous school inspection	28 April 2003
School address	Abbey Hey Lane Gorton Manchester Lancashire M18 8RL
Telephone number	0161 3705121
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the college and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards; why some students' attendance levels are so poor; the quality of the teaching and learning and of the leadership and management, and the impact of the college's specialisms upon the rest of the curriculum. Evidence was gathered from the college's self-evaluation, its own assessment records and from national assessment data. Reports to governors were examined, along with a range of students' written work. There were interviews with senior members of staff, students, governors and an officer from the local authority. A sample of lessons was visited and parents' questionnaire returns were analysed. Other aspects of the college's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that its own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a much larger than average comprehensive school. It serves the eastern edge of Manchester, a district with some areas of social and economic disadvantage. The majority of the students are boys. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, the proportion eligible for free school meals is well above average. The school is a long standing specialist sports college (having held the status since 1997) and was redesignated as a High Performing Specialist Sports and Arts College in April 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

A sparkling new building, surrounded by acres of contractors' machines still working on the remains of the footprint of the old building, are the first impressions the visitor currently receives when arriving at the college. Its interior is an oasis, a safe haven of quiet learning during lesson time and a fever of productive activity during breaks and lunchtimes. The magnificent sports and computer facilities are used to excellent effect by students in their own leisure time.

Wright Robinson College provides a good overall level of education for its students. Among its strengths are the outstanding curriculum it offers, both academic and extra-curricular, the good quality teaching and learning it gives its students and the effectiveness of its senior leadership and management team.

From a well below average starting point on entry to Year 7, most students make good progress by the time they leave Year 11. The exceptions are the one in ten students whose attendance is so poor that they miss out on too much of their learning. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2007 improved on previous years but are still well below the national average overall. In Years 10 and 11, students achieve particularly well, especially in the two specialist subjects of physical education (PE) and art and design. In 2007, a much improved proportion of students (33%) achieved at least five GCSE grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, compared to the national figure of 46%. Previously, the college figure for this achievement had been around 20%. All in all this represents good progress from the students' starting points on entry to the college and is the result of energetic and well focused teaching and very good leadership and management.

The impact of the college's specialist status is very well established, not just in PE and art and design, but also across the rest of the college. For example, the improvements to teaching and learning and the raising of students' self-esteem owe a great deal to initiatives developed initially as part of the work of the specialist subjects, which are rightly recognised as models of good practice.

Continual improvement of the quality of teaching and learning is a constant feature of the work of the college. Much of the teaching is good with a significant amount outstanding and this is a tribute to the professionalism of hard-working staff, determined to bring the best out of every single student. It is also as a result of the effectiveness of the senior colleagues responsible for monitoring teaching and learning in bringing about such consistency of approach, a notable feature of most of the teaching. Lesson planning is good and aimed specifically at the range of students' needs in any particular class. The good use of information and communication technology is effectively enlivening lessons. Especially notable is the mutual respect between staff and students and among students themselves in the classrooms, workshops and sports halls. The drive to make teaching class sizes even smaller is another reason for the increasingly individual attention students receive. These are just some of the reasons why the students speak so well of their teachers, and make such good progress before they leave. However, there is inconsistency in the quality of marking of students' work. At its best it gives praise where it is due, explains why the work is good, and points out what the students need to do to improve. But much of it falls short of this standard.

Students say that they feel safe. They praise the CCTV cameras for this and initiatives such as the 'students helping students' system. They are thrilled with the college's exceptionally good

equipment and facilities and the excellent range of activities it provides, at lunchtimes as well as during lessons. They think the food at lunchtime is healthier than it was and many students now eat the healthier options. Students' preparation for the next stage of their education is good in lots of ways. For example, the college boosts their self-confidence and inducts many of them into the benefits of all kinds of healthy exercise. However, too many students (6% in 2007 and 8% in 2006) still leave the college with no GCSE qualification and this is unsatisfactory. Relationships are excellent throughout the school. Students' behaviour is good and their attitudes to learning are very positive. Their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. Attendance, though slowly improving, is still unsatisfactory. Students' contributions to the college and surrounding communities are good.

The vast majority of parents are very happy with the college, although a few have found difficulty communicating with particular members of staff and would like more information on a more regular basis from the college. Typical positive comments are that, 'The teachers and other staff are always enthusiastic, the discipline is good, the college is very well built, very well led and its facilities are superb.'

The college's excellent curriculum has richness and breadth and is very carefully adapted to suit the wide range of abilities and talents of students. Recent changes in how students are grouped for lessons are improving provision in Years 7 to 9. Changes in option choice systems have led to students receiving more personalised guidance on choices available to them, which in turn has had a positive impact on achievement. Students are very well cared for. Safeguarding checks fulfil government guidelines. All students are aware of their current levels of working and their targets.

The good quality leadership and management of the school are pivotal reasons for the college's success. Governors are shrewd and experienced and fulfil well their roles of both supporting and challenging the college leadership. Finances are healthy and surpluses are being spent wisely, for example in helping to cut class sizes down even further. College development plans focus clearly on the right priorities, those aimed at improving standards and students' personal development and well-being. The college gives good value for money and has a good capacity to improve further. Its self-evaluation is accurate and realistic.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise students' attainment further, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- Improve attendance, particularly for the group of students whose attendance is particularly poor, to at least average levels.
- Improve the consistency of the marking of students' written work across the college in order to raise achievement further.

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Annex A

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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
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 making my colleague and me feel so welcome on our recent visit to inspect your college.

A very special thank you should go to the lively groups of students who gave up part of their lunchtime to tell us why they enjoy attending this college.

I can see why you are so proud of it. The college provides you with a good education. It is very well equipped and there are many activities and a very wide variety of courses for you to follow. The sports facilities, in particular, are amazing. You are very well cared for, well taught and the college is well led and managed. Relationships are very good and everyone works very well together.

The three areas for improvement we are leaving the college with are to raise attainment further, especially in Years 7, 8 and 9; to bring attendance up to at least average levels, particularly for those students whose attendance is poor and to make sure that when teachers mark your work they all tell you more often how well you are doing and how to improve further.

You can play your part by continuing to be positive about your education and making sure that more of you attend school every single day. It is a shame that so many of you are missing out on a good education and on making use of what must be the best sporting and ICT facilities in the area, while you still have the chance.

We wish you all continued success in the future.