

Woodbrook Vale High School

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	120293
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	302293
Inspection dates	12–13 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Ian Knight

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	429
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gary Page
Headteacher	Graham Bett
Date of previous school inspection	1 April 2003
School address	Grasmere Road Loughborough LE11 2ST
Telephone number	01509 557560
Fax number	01509 557562

Age group	11-14
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Amended Report Addendum

Report amended due to factual inaccuracy

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is slightly smaller than similar schools elsewhere. It serves a very mixed area. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is about average. Almost all pupils are White British, with very small numbers of African, Caribbean, Indian, Bangladeshi or those of mixed backgrounds. More pupils than the national average are identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities, although the number with a statement of special need is average. The school has received a number of awards: the Intermediate International Schools Award, the Healthy Schools Award, Investors in People, Sportsmark, the Football Association Football Award and the Financial Management in Schools Award. Standards vary on entry to the school and are improving, but they remain below average overall.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school where pupils achieve well and develop excellent personal qualities. It is rapidly improving to fulfil its motto, 'Caring for Success'. This is especially evident in the excellent care, guidance and support enjoyed by pupils that ensure that they thoroughly enjoy coming to school, feel very safe, secure and valued, behave well and grow in self-esteem. One pupil summed up the school's positive and supportive ethos: 'My form teacher is more like a friend than a teacher'. This particularly supports pupils' academic and social growth. As a result, pupils' personal development and well-being are excellent. The school also develops pupils' cultural awareness especially well. This is because it not only has a strong international dimension through its extensive links with schools across the globe, but also has close links with various cultures locally. Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to contribute to the community, to which they respond exceptionally well. This occurs both within the school, for example, as peer mediators or school council representatives, but also, most impressively, outside. For example, they assist at centres for people with physical and mental disabilities, socialising with them and helping to meet their needs. This is part of the innovative Curriculum Enhancement Programme in the school that sets aside time for pupils to pursue a wide variety of activities in addition to the more usual demands of the National Curriculum. The school knows its pupils and their needs exceptionally well and ensures that the excellent curriculum matches their needs very closely. The pupils reach standards that are about the national average, which represents good achievement when considered in the light of their standards on entry to the school. The good progress they make is driven by good teaching, founded on positive relationships. In many lessons, tasks are adapted well to meet the needs of all in the class. However, this is a weakness in some classes that slows down pupils' progress and is a factor in the slightly slower progress of some groups in the school. The school is acutely aware that its pupils move on to complete GCSEs elsewhere and has forged close links with partner schools to ensure that the move goes very smoothly. However, the school accepts that its partnership with parents is less effective because communication on broad school issues is not always frequent enough. Excellent leadership and management, especially that of the headteacher supported well by the governing body, is driving improvement. The school's exceptionally clear vision is subscribed to by staff. Prompt actions, supported by accurate and incisive self-evaluation, have resulted in continuing school improvement. For example, focused support ensured that test results in mathematics improved markedly in 2006 following a period when they were weaker than others in the school and in decline. School data indicates that this has been maintained this year. A very modest decline in science standards was quickly noted and nipped in the bud. These and other prompt and highly effective actions, together with the good improvement planning that stems from the school's extensive self-knowledge, indicate excellent capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Share the good practice already in the school to improve the progress that pupils make in lessons by ensuring that tasks are varied to match the needs of all pupils.
- Improve the quality and frequency of communications between school and home.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are at the national average and achievement is good. Following the last inspection, standards fell and in 2005 were significantly lower than average, especially in mathematics.

The school noted this, analysed the reasons closely and took focused action. Senior leaders supported the mathematics department, with the result that standards improved considerably in 2006. Early indications are that this improvement has been consolidated this year through changes in schemes of work and teaching methods. Historically, the science department has always performed well, but a small decline was noted in their standards. This has also been halted with new schemes of work and a renewed focus on investigative and practical methods. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well and make good progress. However, some work remains to be done before achievement is outstanding. The school has identified some groups whose progress is not quite as rapid and has taken action to remedy that, for example, by setting up special classes for girls who are in danger of missing out on Level 5. One reason why some patchiness in progress remains is because tasks in lessons are not always matched closely enough to the needs of each individual in the class.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils respond exceptionally well to the school's positive ethos. They are clear that they really enjoy coming to school, and this is reflected in their good attendance. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Although it is not always explicitly planned for, pupils' spiritual development is first rate. One reason is the many opportunities that pupils have to reflect, for example, on the experiences of pupils in partner schools worldwide. Another is the way that teachers, through their caring example, enable pupils to grow in self-esteem and self-knowledge. The target-setting procedures in the school, whilst varying in format, help pupils to know their own potential and how to achieve it. Pupils gain an excellent understanding of many cultures through the school's international dimension and links closer to home. Clearly understood boundaries result in good behaviour, although on the few occasions when teaching is less inspiring, behaviour can deteriorate. Nevertheless, pupils have a good understanding of safe practices, for example, in specialist laboratories, and keep to them. Pupils greatly enjoy the range of sporting activities on offer and subscribe well to healthy lifestyles. Their good progress in the basic skills, understanding of citizenship through the personal, social and health education programme and their ability to work together harmoniously indicate that they are well prepared for the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching and learning is the foundation of the improving achievement in the school. Teachers' secure knowledge of both their specialist subjects and the needs of pupils of this age results in questioning that is focused and that promotes pupils' ability to think through problems. Planning usually addresses the needs of different groups in the class effectively to ensure that all groups make good progress. However, this is not consistent across the school and in some lessons all pupils attempt the same work with the effect that some groups' progress is slower because work is too easy or too hard. Positive relationships in lessons mean that discipline is low key and learning can proceed at a good pace, although pupils can become restless when teaching lacks sparkle. Marking and longer-term assessment lead to challenging targets for pupils to aspire to. In some subjects, their knowledge of their own learning is reinforced when they consider their own performance as compared to the expected outcomes of a lesson and their own targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Despite being a school catering for Years 7, 8 and 9 only, the continuity of pupils' experiences is maintained extremely well through outstanding liaison with partner schools. For example, pupils commence GCSE courses in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science after they complete National Curriculum tests in Year 9. They all take part in a series of visits to their next schools, where they have a threeday induction and the support of a 'transition mentor'. Those pupils who might benefit from a more vocational emphasis are given opportunities to experience this before transfer. The breadth of the curriculum is enhanced enormously through the 'Curriculum Enhancement Programme', through which pupils can experience a very wide range of activities. The school's programme for its gifted and talented pupils is also available to all, and is supported by the school's international dimension, for example, in the provision of Mandarin, which continues to be offered at the local colleges. The school provides an excellent range of extra-curricular activities, including, but not restricted to, extensive sporting and artistic opportunities, for which the take-up is also outstanding.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils' growth into mature young citizens is supported by the school's excellent pastoral care rooted in the vision for the school as a harmonious community and summed up by the motto, 'Caring for Success'. Pupils feel very safe and well cared for not only because the procedures to ensure their safety are rigorous and meet statutory requirements, but also because it really matters to staff that they enjoy school. Positive relationships based on mutual respect are evident in form tutorials and classrooms. Liaison with parents is effective when providing individuals with the support they need, but a number of parents rightly said that more routine communication is not organised well enough. Pupils also benefit from good academic guidance in the school. Although methods vary between subjects, pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are aware of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Challenging targets are set for all and are largely achieved. In some cases, pupils assess their own progress towards targets and set new ones.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The most notable strength of leadership and management in this school is the vision of the headteacher and his ability to realise this through the building of effective teams of senior and middle managers dedicated to providing the highest possible quality of education and care. As a result, the school as a whole is improving rapidly and currently provides a good education. The excellent curriculum has been designed with equality of access in mind. There is extensive provision, for example, for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school's performance, both in terms of pupils' progress and the quality of teaching and learning, is monitored extremely effectively. The outcomes of this are realised in the school's strategic planning that has resulted in the rapid improvements in provision over the last two years. However, the pace of improvement has been so rapid that not all areas of the school have been able to keep up, and this is why inconsistencies remain in teaching quality. Financial management is extremely secure, as shown by the award at the highest level for Financial Management in

Schools. The governing body is highly involved in the school's finances and in monitoring the school's progress towards the targets in the school improvement plan, improving the curriculum and school meals provision, and initiatives such as the travel plan.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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
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?	1

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?	1
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	1
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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

14 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Woodbrook Vale High School, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 2ST

Thank you for being so pleasant and polite when we visited your school. I'd like to extend our special thanks to those of you who gave up some of your lunchtime to speak to us. We were very interested in what you had to say about the school. I am writing now to tell you our findings.

You told us that this is a good school to which you enjoy coming, and we agree. You told us how friendly and approachable the staff are. Lots has changed in the last two or three years and you learn well because the teachers do a good job. In most lessons, they make sure that you all have just the right work to do, but in a few some of you find the work too easy or hard. We've asked the school to look at this to make sure that you are always working exactly hard enough for you. There are lots of really impressive things about the school. They include:

- the way the international dimension and the links you have with other schools are helping you to understand other cultures here and abroad
- the way the curriculum is designed, for example, the Curriculum Enhancement Programme that makes Friday afternoons more interesting, and the way that the school works with the local colleges to make sure that you can move on easily, for example, when teachers from the college come and teach you the beginnings of GCSE or vocational courses
- the way your teachers really care for and look after you in school so you can be safe and enjoy yourselves
- the way that the headteacher and other staff lead the school. They really know what the school does well and what needs to be worked on. The things they've already done are helping you all to really enjoy school and learn faster.

However, there is one other thing that we think the school could do better. Quite a few of your parents said that the school doesn't tell them enough about what's going on, for example, the school website doesn't have up-to-date news and the newsletter doesn't really get written often enough. We agree and we've asked the school to make this work better.

Yours sincerely

Ian Knight (Lead Inspector)