

Oldbury Wells School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123583
Local Authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	302342
Inspection dates	16–17 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Marion Thompson

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	736
6th form	168
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	S White
Headteacher	Sarah Godden
Date of previous school inspection	9 September 2003
School address	Oldbury Wells Bridgnorth WV16 5JD
Telephone number	01746 765454
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Age group	11–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Oldbury Wells is an average sized secondary school, which gained specialist science college status in 2003. Most of the students are of a White British background and the majority travel to school by bus from outlying towns and villages. The socio-economic circumstances of the students are very mixed. On entry to the school, students and the sixth form students have broadly average standards. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is broadly average. The headteacher and a deputy headteacher were appointed from September 2006, following the retirement of two longstanding members of staff. The school is a listed building and is built on two sites, on opposite sides of a road.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Oldbury Wells is a good and improving school. The purposeful atmosphere and good curriculum encourages students to work hard and ensure that they enjoy their learning. Students are keen to contribute to the life of the school by taking on responsibilities. They participate enthusiastically in a wide range of after school activities, especially in sports. They love taking part in the high quality drama and musical productions promoted by the performing arts department. The satisfactory care, support and guidance the school provides help students to develop a keen understanding of how to develop a healthy lifestyle and how to keep safe. One parent wrote, 'My son has changed so much in his first year. It is astounding. He is taking part in team sports and is proud of his school. He is happy and has made many good friends.'

Students' good personal development and positive attitudes are supported by the improvement in attendance, which is now average. Standards in Year 11 are now above average. Students, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, achieve well. Teaching is good and occasionally outstanding. Students respond well to the lively, well planned lessons, which provide them with a good level of challenge and support. Closer monitoring of progress means that problems in learning are identified and rectified early and has led to higher standards, especially in English and mathematics for students in Years 10 and 11. However, whilst improving rapidly, the quality of teaching is inconsistent. In a small minority of lessons, students are not provided with enough guidance on how to improve their work, either in class or through marking. In the very small minority of lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory, low-level disruption slows the pace of learning. Teaching is unsatisfactory in information and communication technology (ICT), where students make less progress than they should.

Leadership and management are good. Recent improvements in standards and teaching are due to the very good leadership provided by the headteacher. Planning is based on a detailed and accurate evaluation of the work of the school and is followed by rapid and effective action. The school has good capacity to improve further. The headteacher is intent on ensuring that the good and sometimes very good leadership found in some subject areas is consistently promoted across the school, especially in relation to teaching and assessment of learning. She is supported well by a talented senior team, hard-working staff and committed governors. Specialist science college status has promoted higher standards and better achievement in science and mathematics, and has provided equipment for ICT which is used well to support learning in many areas of the school. Students' good academic progress and personal development prepare them well for the future.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Provision is satisfactory and improving. Standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. Students are making better progress because of recent changes to academic guidance. Clear advice is now provided on choice of courses. Students are given more detailed information on performance and what they need to do better. Students' attitudes are positive and their personal development is good. Teaching is satisfactory overall and good in a significant minority of lessons. However, teachers do not consistently provide enough opportunities for students to discuss their work in ways that develop their thinking. Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving. The curriculum is satisfactory, but offers too few vocational courses to meet the needs of all students. The school has plans in place to widen its provision and to

improve the organisation of the courses it runs in conjunction with another school for the next academic year.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards and achievement in ICT throughout the school by improving the quality of teaching.
- Improve achievement in the sixth form by providing more opportunities for students to engage in challenging discussion about their work and increase the range of vocational courses.
- Improve subject management in order to ensure that there is consistently good practice in teaching and assessment throughout the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

By the end of Year 11 standards are above average, representing good achievement from students' broadly average starting points. Most students reach or exceed challenging targets. Progress is particularly rapid in Years 7 to 9, especially for boys, because of recent improvements to teaching and closer monitoring of students' achievement. In Years 10 and 11 standards have risen sharply in English and mathematics, especially for students of middle ability. The strategies that have been successful with younger students are now being used effectively with older students. In addition, funding from specialist status has been used effectively to provide extra 'booster' classes in mathematics. Standards in science are above average, in part because specialist college status has provided the flexibility to offer a wide range of courses, well suited to students' diverse needs. However, standards and achievement in ICT are in need of improvement in all years, although it is often used well to support learning in other subjects. Good and sometimes outstanding progress in subjects such as geography, drama and modern foreign languages demonstrates the all-round nature of pupils' achievements. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress, because of well organised support.

Standards in the sixth form are average overall and achievement is satisfactory. Standards are improving, in part because of improved checking on students' progress, with pertinent guidance on how work can be improved.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Most students enjoy school, and want to learn. They behave well, paying good attention to safety, especially when crossing the road between sites. However, where pupil management is weak, learning is occasionally disrupted by the behaviour of a small minority of students. Occasionally older students are too boisterous in the playground, making younger students feel uncomfortable. Attendance is average, but is lower for students who travel to school on the bus. Students understand how to live a healthy life and an increasing number choose well balanced meals in the school canteen. This is especially true of younger students who have developed good habits in their primary schools. There is good participation in sports activities offered after school. Social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. The active student council makes a valuable contribution to the school community, and some sixth form students

support the learning of the younger ones. Students contribute to the wider community through fund-raising for charities. Spiritual development is satisfactory, but opportunities for spiritual reflection are limited. Cultural development is good, especially through the performing arts. By the time they leave school in Year 11 or 13, students' good skills in literacy and numeracy and highly developed social skills, prepare them well for the next stage of their lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Teaching is good in Years 7 to 11, and satisfactory in the sixth form. It is improving rapidly because most teachers are making better use of assessment information to plan interesting activities, which are well matched to students' learning needs. This is especially successful with boys in Years 7 to 9 who like to be active in lessons, and this is now also beginning to improve the achievement of older students. This good practice is, however, inconsistent across and within departments. In some lessons, for example in drama and geography, students are fully engaged by challenging and skilful teaching. By contrast, in the small minority of lessons, especially in ICT and citizenship, where activities are dull and behaviour is not well managed, students' interest flags and their behaviour deteriorates. Teachers are also beginning to provide students with useful information on how to improve their work, through guidance in class and marking, but this, too, is inconsistent. Occasionally, the purpose of the lesson is not shared effectively with the students and progress within the lesson is not evaluated. In a small number of lessons in the sixth form, not enough opportunities are provided to discuss ideas in depth. This does not help teachers and students to identify misunderstandings or to consolidate learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Provision for students in Years 7 to 11 is good. It is satisfactory for students in the sixth form. The curriculum for 14 to 16 year olds offers a wide variety of academic courses that meet the needs of more able students well. A good range of science options is offered, reflecting the school's specialist status. Provision for students with learning difficulties and disabilities is good. Firm plans are in place to improve provision further for less able students in Years 10 and 11 in the next academic year. However middle attaining students are not as well catered for in terms of providing a variety of courses in, for example, applied GCSE. Good careers guidance and a good variety of enrichment activities and visits enhance the formal curriculum, particularly in the performing arts and sport. Provision for enterprise education is more limited. Specialist college status has enabled many subject departments to use ICT well to enhance learning. It has also provided the funding for extra help for students in highly successful, small 'catch up' groups in mathematics in Years 10 and 11.

Whilst links with another local sixth form enhance the range of subject choices in Years 12 and 13, some organisational issues mean that students do not always find that courses run smoothly. Study and recreational areas are limited.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The quality of care, guidance and support provided by the school is satisfactory. Most procedures to secure students' health and safety are in place. However students frequently cross the road from one part of the school to the other unsupervised and there are no barriers in the bus park. The care shown for students' welfare is good, particularly for those who are vulnerable or are experiencing emotional or behavioural difficulties. The tracking of the academic progress of all students is satisfactory and improving, but despite some good and very good practice, its use is not always consistent. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported well. In the sixth form, guidance in making subject choices has not always ensured that students have the necessary skills to benefit fully from the courses chosen, especially in subjects like physics and psychology. This is now improving. The quality of support for careers and continuing education is good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The headteacher provides very clear direction for the school's improvement, supported well by the senior staff. The school knows what it needs to do to improve and the capacity for further improvement is good. Standards are rising, especially in English and mathematics, and students' personal development is good. The headteacher is working determinedly to ensure that the best practice found in some subject departments is implemented more consistently across the whole school in areas such as marking, lesson planning and academic guidance. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

Governance is good. Governors generally fulfil their legal obligations and provide good support and challenge for the school. The school consults students effectively, taking their concerns into account when planning improvements. Parents provide a high level of support for the work of the school. Links with outside agencies are effective in supporting students' well-being and the curriculum. Science specialist status has been instrumental in providing computers for the school and improving achievement in science and mathematics.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory and improving. There is a clear view of the areas that need improvement and students' achievement is getting better.

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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	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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	3
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	2	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?	3	3

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	3
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	3	
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

17 May 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Oldbury Wells School, Bridgnorth WV16 5JD

I very much enjoyed meeting with some of you during the recent inspection and hearing your views. Many of your parents and carers completed a questionnaire so I hope you will discuss the inspection report with them. We found the education provided by the school to be good and the sixth form satisfactory. Here are some of the good things we found:

- You make good progress in Years 7 to 11 and reach above average standards. Those of you with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve well.
- Standards throughout school are improving. This is largely because of good teaching, your positive attitudes to work and better monitoring of your progress.
- Good arrangements for personal development ensure you develop into confident and independent young adults. You make a good contribution to the school and wider community, especially in the sixth form.
- You benefit from an interesting curriculum in Years 7 to 11, which provides you with a wider range of opportunities.
- Teachers and other adults take good care of you, especially when you are troubled or upset.
- The headteacher and other staff are working hard to make sure the school continues to improve. They are supported well by governors.
- Science specialist status has enabled the school to help you do better in science and mathematics by providing funding for better provision. It has provided a lot of ICT equipment for you to use in different parts of the school.

We have asked the school to:

- improve standards in ICT
- improve standards in the sixth form by providing more opportunities to discuss your work in depth
- make sure that planned changes are made quickly and consistently across the school.

We hope you will continue to make progress and enjoy your learning.

Best wishes

Marion Thompson Lead inspector