

Wanstead High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102851
Local Authority	Redbridge
Inspection number	308142
Inspection dates	11–12 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Roger Whittaker

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 (total)	1528
Sixth form	344
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Margaret Barr
Headteacher	Mr Christiaan Van Bussel
Date of previous school inspection	6 December 2004
School address	Redbridge Lane West Wanstead London E11 2JZ
Telephone number	020 8989 2791
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Age group	11–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Wanstead High School is a bigger than average school. It serves a community that is ethnically and socially diverse. Some 20% of students on entry live in neighbouring boroughs including Walthamstow. The percentage of students who have learning difficulties, which are mostly those who experience problems with literacy, is below national levels. The number of students from minority ethnic groups is well above the national average, with a third of these students having English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

One parent said of the school, 'They offer every opportunity for learning and the development of children's well-being and education.' This is a good school. It not only enables students to reach good academic standards but also to develop into mature, well-rounded young people prepared for the next stage of their education and life. Central to this is the strong sense of community and the good relationships amongst staff and students that contribute to their achievement and enjoyment of school. Students involve themselves enthusiastically in the life of the school and consequently they take a pride in their school and are keen to do well.

Standards are above average in all year groups. Throughout their time at Wanstead High School, students make good progress and their results in public examinations at the end of Years 9, 11 and 13 are above average. Mostly good teaching and the students' positive attitudes are significant factors in explaining the high academic standards. Many lessons contain interesting and challenging activities to which students respond well. However, in a few lessons students are not involved in activities which enable them to work independently or know what level they are working at and how to improve. Systems for tracking and monitoring students' academic progress and subsequent support are strong.

The curriculum is good at Key Stage 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. The school continues to strive to ensure that the courses offered meet the needs of all students. Performing Arts college status is having a significant impact across the school. All students now study music, art and drama and extra-curricular provision for performing arts has increased in both the number of activities and take up by students. The school is aware of the need to use their specialist status to drive improvements in teaching and learning across the school and is already supporting departments in developing more challenge in their teaching. There is a full range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities for the students and many of them get involved.

Care, guidance and support for students is good. Students feel well cared for and are treated as individuals. Teachers know the students well and there is a wide range of support systems in place. Students particularly appreciate their opinions being sought and are enthusiastic to be involved in the wide range of opportunities to put forward their suggestions.

The school is well led and managed. Staff are committed to getting the best from the students and team work is a key strength amongst all managers, teachers and support staff. The headteacher and school leaders have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have made many improvements since the last inspection. The school has very good systems for using assessment data to inform curriculum and lesson planning. However, the staff do not consistently use data to inform other areas of the school's work, for example students' personal development. The school is well placed to make further improvement. Wanstead High School enjoys a good reputation in the local community, especially through good partnerships with primary schools and other agencies. Parents are supportive of the school.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is good, providing an effective education for Wanstead students. Students achieve well and make good progress in their academic courses. In the sixth form standards are above average. In 2008 the GCE A-level pass rate was 94% with 65% of all examinations taken passed at grade A to C. An increasing number transfer from the main school to this expanding

and popular sixth form. Teaching is good and improving with many teachers providing a challenging learning environment where students are motivated to do their best. Improved systems for setting students' targets, analysing assessment data and monitoring their progress are leading to more consistent practice across departments.

Sixth formers contribute well to the life of the school and the community. Through the social contract scheme, they give up an hour a week to provide peer and in-class support for younger students and play an active role in serving the needs of the local community. Sixth formers enjoy their learning and appreciate the very positive relationships they have with staff and the good advice they receive when considering subject and career options. Attendance and punctuality in the sixth form has improved well since the last inspection as a result of structured intervention strategies. Regular one-to-one sessions are held with tutors to discuss the progress made against individual subject targets. Students' personal development is good as many are given chances to take part in a very broad range of enrichment activities that enhance a good and developing curriculum. Leadership and management of the sixth form are effective and self-evaluation is good. Plans for strengthening the provision are coherent and the sixth form has good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Enable students to be involved in learning by increasing the opportunities for them to work on their own or in groups and for them to know what level they are working at and how to improve.
- Build on the very good assessment systems data to inform teaching, learning and the curriculum when using data to develop other areas of the schools' work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students start with standards that are slightly above national average. They make good progress throughout Key Stage 3 and achieve well above average results in the national tests at the end of Year 9, particularly in mathematics and English.

Throughout Key Stage 4 students continue to make good progress and by the end of Year 11 consistently reach above average standards. In 2008, 60% of students achieved five or more A* to C grade GCSE passes and 54% achieved five or more A* to C passes including English and mathematics. These results are above the national average. Ensuring all students make maximum progress has been a high priority for the school. In particular, careful monitoring of any underachieving students leads to effective targeted support. Inspection evidence shows that currently most students in Years 10 and 11 are making good progress.

Focused support for the very small number of students with statements of special needs, behaviour and moderate learning difficulties means that these students achieve as well as others in the school. Students from ethnic minorities and with English as an additional language also achieve well.

The good progress is consistent throughout the whole school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attendance has improved because very good strategies are in place to encourage students to attend. Students behave well and are polite and friendly. Students who find traditional education difficult improve their attitudes and attainment through an effective range of intervention, often involving external agencies. Students said that bullying and racist incidents are rare and dealt with swiftly and effectively. The school council take their responsibilities seriously. They have initiated the development of healthier meals and the revising of the school behaviour policy.

Students understand well about how to lead healthy lives. High numbers of students take part in sports activities, choose healthy food and explore their feelings through good personal social and health education lessons. They behave well and act safely in response to outstanding safety procedures as seen, for example, in all practical subjects.

Students are aware of living in a multi-cultural society. They are considerate of each other and build good relationships with each other. Many pupils have the opportunity for community involvement through opportunities to work in local primary schools. Work experience, enterprise activities, such as the creativity festival, and good academic standards prepare students well for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Students' enthusiasm for learning makes a significant contribution to the good teaching and learning. Strong relationships between teachers and students create the right conditions for learning so that students achieve well.

Students are not afraid to make mistakes because they know that teachers will help them to refine their ideas and, hence, correct their thinking. Good planning ensures work is well pitched to students' needs and often provides a high level of challenge. Learning objectives are clearly identified so students and teachers are clear about the purpose of the lesson. In the best lessons, students are very actively engaged through tasks that are exciting and enable them to be adventurous and creative in their thinking.

However, some lessons are too directed by teachers with limited opportunities for students to work on their own or in groups. Students do not always know what level they are working at and how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school curriculum is good and designed to meet the needs of all students. It offers a broad and balanced experience. The school's performing arts specialist status has been well developed and its impact on all areas of the curriculum has been good. The specialism has been used not only to improve accommodation and resources but also to develop more active learning styles using role play skills developed in drama. This is adding to students' enjoyment of learning.

The personal social health and citizenship education programme, supported by well developed topics in different subjects, helps students to understand and respect each other and the world around them. This is reflected in the harmonious atmosphere around the school.

All students receive careers guidance, undertake work experience and other work related activities. This prepares them well for further study and the world of work. Improved information and communication technology facilities are adding to students' good basic skills.

The wide range of extracurricular activities offered by the school is enjoyed and much appreciated by many students. Students also enjoy participation in a comprehensive performing arts programme that operates throughout the year and a range of educational trips.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff are fully committed to the care of students. Emphasis is placed on good relationships. Guidance systems for early identification of learning difficulties help the smooth transition of students from their schools. Health and safety systems are secure. Procedures for safeguarding students meet government requirements. Good support for vulnerable students is systematically tracked and appropriate support provided. Effective learning support assistants work well with students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and English as an additional language. An effective audit of able, gifted and talented students has helped teachers to target these students when planning lessons.

Personal target setting is developing through academic target days and an after school mentoring system. However, students highlighted some inconsistencies in the system. This results in some students not fully understanding what they need to do in order to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Wanstead High School is led by the very effective headteacher who is well supported by the leadership team. All staff have a shared commitment to high academic standards and the promotion of students' personal development. They particularly appreciate the opportunities to be consulted and involved in any changes that are put in place.

Rigorous and robust systems are in place to monitor the work of the school including the quality of teaching and learning. This leads to a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development by school leaders. Such knowledge has ensured some significant improvements since the last inspection. Subject leaders are now using lesson observations to increase the consistency of lessons and this has been very effective. In addition, actions are in many cases accompanied by measurable success criteria that allow senior leaders and governors to evaluate the impact of any changes over time. However, there are some cases where the school does not fully analyse data in order to ensure consistency in all aspects of the school's work.

This is an inclusive school and a variety of well-established systems exist to support all students. Links with the community are good and specialist school status is well led and is having a positive impact on the school. Professional development activities are increasingly effective in developing the capacity of all staff. In particular, this has improved the quality of work of middle leaders who now play a pivotal role in developing and evaluating provision including teaching and learning and the monitoring of students' progress.

The governing body knows the school well and provides the headteacher with good support whilst offering suitable challenge.

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

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/or disabilities make progress	2	

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
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	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

24 September 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Wanstead High School, London, E11 2JZ

Following our visit to Wanstead High School, we would like to share our findings with you. We thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us and for the helpful way you talked to us about your school and your work. We can now report to you that Wanstead High School is providing you with a good standard of education. We are pleased that you enjoy school and the many opportunities it provides, particularly the after-school activities. We are equally pleased that you are respectful to staff and other students. Standards in national tests and examinations are above the national average. Sixth form students also achieve well. Progress continues to improve and is good.

The school is a very happy and friendly community where everyone is valued equally. Your teachers are very committed to helping you and they look after you well. We are pleased that you have outstanding awareness of how to be safe around the school. Your headteacher is working very hard with the rest of the staff to give you even more opportunities to learn as well as you can.

We have asked your headteacher and staff to focus on planning lessons which provide more opportunities for you to be more actively involved in your learning. We have also asked that all data is effectively used in order to accurately plan for further improvements at the school.

Yours sincerely

Roger Whittaker

Lead Inspector