

Wallington County Grammar School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103014
Local Authority	Sutton
Inspection number	308200
Inspection date	27 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Anne Feltham HMI

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School	897
6th form	274
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr R O'Neill
Headteacher	Dr J M Haworth
Date of previous school inspection	10 January 2005
School address	Croydon Road Wallington SM6 7PH
Telephone number	020 8647 2235
Fax number	020 8254 7921

Age group	11-18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: students' achievement, particularly in science and mathematics; aspects of students' personal development and well-being; and opportunities for students to participate more actively in their own learning. Evidence was gathered from: the school's own self-evaluation form (SEF); national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records; curriculum, planning and monitoring documents; observation of parts of lessons; discussions with staff and students; and from students' and parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

Wallington County Grammar School is a selective grammar school for boys, with a relatively large mixed sixth form. The school is situated in the London borough of Sutton, but draws its students from a wide area. The school has specialist science college status. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is very low indeed, and the school has very few students with specific learning difficulties or disabilities. Around half of the school's students come from a range of black and minority ethnic backgrounds and a higher than average number of students are bilingual and do not have English as a first language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Wallington County Grammar School is an effective school, which provides its students with a good education. As one parent wrote, reflecting the views of many, 'to be able to maintain good results within a caring, nurturing environment is something to be proud of'. The school seeks to combine the best elements of its traditional ethos, values and expectations, with a growing emphasis on meeting the needs of all its students in an evolving social and educational climate. Examination results are generally very high, particularly in the sixth form, but the school is not complacent and recognises that its students could, in some areas, do even better. Students work very hard and behave well. They are proud of their school and want to play a more active role in determining its future.

Students enter the school with very high levels of attainment. They generally make good progress as they move through the school and, by the end of Year 11, they gain GCSE results which are consistently well above national averages. Whilst results at A*-C are high, the school has identified some areas, such as mathematics and science, where students are not always reaching their full potential. Teachers are now focusing on how they can ensure the achievement of A*/A grades by a greater number of students. Evidence of students' current performance indicates that they are making at least good progress overall, and greater progress than in previous years in science and maths. Students perform exceptionally well, exceeding national expectations for boys, in subjects such as English, history, religious studies and French. The school is rightly seeking to identify reasons for success in these subjects and apply their effective teaching methods to other subjects where high levels of success for all have proved more elusive. Different groups of students in this multi-ethnic school all perform well, with no significant differences in outcomes overall. The school analyses the progress of different groups at subject level and identifies strategies to adapt future teaching where pockets of underachievement have been pin-pointed.

Students' personal development as they move through the school is good. They are mature, ambitious and keen to succeed. Their attendance, punctuality and behaviour in class and around the school are very good. They enjoy the many opportunities the school offers in terms of extra-curricular activities, for example in a wide range of sporting activities, but also in the arts, drama and music. The house system provides ways of encouraging older and younger students to develop together, and in some subjects such as French and English, older students help younger ones with their work. Initiatives such as these are valued by students, and the school is rightly looking to extend these opportunities more widely. Students have a great deal to offer the school, and school leaders have recognised that they need to find better ways of giving these bright and motivated students a stronger voice. Recent questionnaires of parents', carers' and students' views have, for example, led to the development of the school council, and demonstrate how the school is now more actively seeking the views of its students. There is, however, still a way to go.

Students talk in a mature and responsible way about the importance of mutual respect and they value each other's differences. For example, racist incidents are rare but, when they do occur, they are taken very seriously - 'stamped on', according to students - and as a result students almost always demonstrate respect in their dealings with each other. Many teachers in the school have a good understanding of equality and diversity issues and work hard to promote tolerance and harmony; students report that they generally succeed. Nevertheless,

some parents and carers feel that the school could do more to promote the diverse cultures represented within the school.

New teachers have brought an excitement to many areas of the curriculum, although staffing and recruitment difficulties are greater in science and mathematics. In order to support subjects such as these, where teaching is not always sufficiently stimulating, the school has identified curriculum areas where teaching quality and pupil motivation and achievement are high. These teachers then work alongside colleagues who are experiencing difficulties in the classroom, and this is raising the quality of classroom experience for more students. Further action is needed in these areas. Inspectors agree with the school's leaders that the quality of teaching in the main school is good overall, with some areas of outstanding teaching.

At the time of the previous inspection, teaching was found too often to be teacher-led, with few opportunities for students to develop their skills as independent learners and take an active role in their own learning and assessment. The school's focus in recent years on developing more active teaching styles is having an impact, for example in subjects such as history and religious studies, but these initiatives have not yet reached all classrooms. Students value opportunities in many subjects to work in pairs and groups, to take part in role-play and simulation activities and to go out on field-work and trips which bring subjects alive. The school has developed a new behaviour policy and students have a good understanding of sanctions systems, which are applied fairly by most teachers. Whilst minor misdemeanours are punished promptly and appropriately, opportunities for praise are not seized sufficiently on a day-to-day basis. Whilst the school has well-established reward systems for formal achievement - for example in sporting and other extra-curricular activities, and at specific points of the school year - students would value more frequent and regular feedback on their smaller-scale successes.

Teachers are developing a greater consistency of approach to marking, and the best teachers give students clear feedback and curriculum targets, with guidance on how to take next steps to improve. This practice is still variable, however, both across and within teaching teams. Care and support for students are consistently good and guidance on improvement is becoming increasingly effective as pupil-tracking measures and target-setting become consistent throughout the school.

The school's curriculum is good and subjects offered are regularly reviewed to ensure that students' needs are met. The new two-year Key Stage 3 courses, allowing three years to GCSE, have required changes in teaching and learning which are generally improving challenge and motivation in many areas. This relatively new initiative is being further refined for the future. Design and technology, an area of weakness at the time of the last inspection, is now developing fast and new facilities provide learning opportunities directly linked to the world of work beyond the school. Science specialist status has enabled the school to work with the wider community, for example, offering taster events for primary pupils which smooth the transition experience for students as they embark on Year 7. Exciting science experiments awaken their curiosity for the subject and the school is now developing ways of ensuring that this passion for the subject is nurtured and maintained throughout the school. Specialist status has also benefited other departments in the school, for example, in developing the use of new technologies to enliven teaching and learning in a range of subjects.

The school is well led by a senior leadership team which combines experience and innovation, and includes colleagues who have demonstrated recent excellent teaching and middle leadership skills. This extended team is working to achieve the school's aims of improving students' achievement whilst maintaining the high quality experiences for which the school has gained

its solid reputation. This is enabling the school to improve the overall quality of teaching and learning. New accountability chains, with senior leaders supporting and challenging heads of subjects, is bringing about a greater consistency of practice in leading and managing subjects. This work has not yet reached all parts of all teaching teams, but good strategies are in place and have the potential to bring about the necessary improvements required. More frequent and regular monitoring of classroom work and assessment practice by senior and middle leaders is now underway. The senior team knows the school very well and evaluates its performance accurately. Improving teaching and learning, to enable all the schools' highly able and talented students to develop to their full potential in all subjects, is the school's priority and it has good capacity to bring about these improvements.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The school has a large sixth form, representing a relatively high proportion of students in the school. Girls are welcomed to the sixth form and their presence adds an important dimension to students' experience and development. The sixth form is effective and highly successful. In respect to students' attainment when they enter the sixth form, their progress and achievement are outstanding and they attain above average standards. This progress was reflected in lessons and in written work seen. Students benefit from a wide choice of academic subjects, and seize all opportunities for extra-curricular experience. Sixth-formers get involved with a good range of charitable initiatives, as well as opportunities to help younger students in some areas of the school. They would, however, welcome more such opportunities to contribute to the work of the school. They have much to offer and do not currently exert as fully as they might their influence on the future direction of the school. Teaching in the sixth form is consistently good, and sometimes outstanding. During the inspection, an expertly organised 'market-place' activity enabled sixth-formers to research and share information with a very high level of interchange and learning. These techniques and activities are challenging and very motivating, and the best teachers use them also with their younger students. The sixth form is well led and managed.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that leaders of subject departments, particularly science and mathematics, develop a greater consistency of good practice across their teaching teams.
- Develop more opportunities for students to contribute actively to their own learning and, more generally, to school improvement.

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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	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	1
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
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	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

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	2
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 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 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	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

08 April 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Wallington County Grammar School, Wallington, SM6 7PH

During our recent visit to your school my colleague and I enjoyed meeting many of you, seeing you at work and listening to your views. Many of your parents and carers also completed a questionnaire to let us know how they felt about the school.

Wallington is a good school. Your school leaders know you and your teachers very well. Your teachers create a caring and orderly atmosphere for working, which enables you to work hard and achieve well. Whilst most of you gain very high results at both GCSE and in the sixth form, there are areas where you could do even better. The school knows it needs to work hard to ensure that teachers make lessons in all your subjects as stimulating and rewarding as the best ones.

We were most impressed by your maturity, sensitivity and readiness to talk openly about your experiences. You are mostly very proud of your school. You feel you could contribute more, both to your own learning and to the future development of the school, and we have asked your school to explore further ways of doing this. You have a strong sense of right and wrong; you talked with passion of the keen mutual respect felt between different groups of students and the way that most of your teachers support and encourage this. Some of your parents and carers feel that the school could do even more to celebrate its rich cultural diversity.

Your school offers you many opportunities to develop beyond the classroom and your achievements in a range of spheres are impressive. Older students help younger ones to become confident learners and this helps you all to become better learners and better people.

Thank you for your warm welcome to the school. We wish you all the very best in your future lives.

Yours sincerely,

Anne Feltham

Her Majesty's Inspector