

# Wandle Valley School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	103026
<b>Local Authority</b>	Sutton
<b>Inspection number</b>	308201
<b>Inspection date</b>	4 February 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Greg Sorrell

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	67
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Diana Stern
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Doug Bone
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 March 2004
<b>School address</b>	Welbeck Road Carshalton SM5 1LW
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8648 1365
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8646 7840

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- standards and achievement
- teaching and learning, including the role of teaching assistants
- personal development and well-being
- aspects of the curriculum
- leadership and management.

Evidence was gathered from performance data, observations of teaching and the work produced by pupils. Parents' questionnaires were analysed and discussions were held with students, the chair and vice chair of governors and staff. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's 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 an average sized school of its type set in the residential area of Carshalton. All pupils have statements of special educational needs related to social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. A small number of pupils from other schools are educated for short periods on the school's site in separate accommodation. A high number of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The school has gained awards for its work in sport and in the protection of the environment through providing sustainable home to school transport. It is in the process of seeking specialist schools status.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Wandle Valley is a good school where students make good progress in their academic studies as well as their personal development. On arrival to the school most students' standards are well below average and by the time they leave standards have risen to below average which represents good achievement. For example, at the end of Key Stage 4, the vast majority of students left with up to 7 GCSE passes and most go on to further education, training or employment. In Key Stages 2 and 3, progress is also good. The school has identified the need to improve speaking and listening skills for all students. All students in Year 11 have additional support from specialist teachers to aid success in GCSE examinations. Students are particularly successful in practical subjects such as art and design technology.

The students eat healthily and sociably in the dining room and take advantage of the school's excellent facilities for sport and exercise. Several students have taken up the school's innovative 'bike challenge' where they ride to school on loaned bikes which, not only promotes health, but also independence. The students' behaviour is good overall and this, for the majority, represents outstanding progress. Occasionally, some students show silly behaviour and get involved in minor squabbles. This interferes with their learning, but the majority carry on with the task in hand and make good progress. Racial harmony is evident during breaks and lessons. The students respond well to reward systems for positive attitudes to work and towards other people. Their role in shaping their futures is developed by negotiating behavioural targets and membership of the school council. Assemblies celebrate achievement and students appreciate the value of awards. In discussion with students, it is clear that they recognise the impact the school has had on their behaviour and personal development. For example, 'The school really has made me improve my behaviour and the staff treat you with respect.' The vast majority of parents indicate they, too, are very satisfied with the school's effect upon their children. 'I was told my son wouldn't get GCSEs but this school has proved them wrong ... I wish other schools would take a leaf out Wandle Valley's book.'

The school goes the extra mile to encourage regular attendance and uses every means at its disposal to get students into school, sometimes using its own resources beyond those provided by the local authority. It is currently seeking to recruit a member of staff dedicated for this purpose. Despite these efforts, a minority of students, some of whom are placed by neighbouring authorities, remain difficult to engage and their attendance is poor. The school's strategies for managing behaviour are effective and keep exclusions to minimum.

The quality of teaching is good. Teachers use their specialist subject knowledge well and most are experienced in working with students with behavioural difficulties. Assessment in lessons is good and used to plan tasks that are pitched at the right level for the students. As a result of regular monitoring by senior management, teachers with less experience are supported by highly skilled teaching assistants. Their input throughout the school has a significant impact upon the students' academic success and personal well-being. Many have additional responsibilities that ensure the school runs well despite students' behavioural difficulties or staff shortages. The relationship between teachers and their assistants demonstrates the school's motto most effectively: 'Together, Everyone, Achieves, More.'

The good curriculum is responsive to the needs of students. There is a strong emphasis on key skills including literacy, numeracy, communication and working with others. In addition to all subjects of the National Curriculum, now that music has recently been added, there is a range

of vocational courses, including motor bike mechanics and the commercial bistro. These activities, including residential school journeys, work experience and attendance at local further education colleges prepare the students well for life after school. Meeting individual needs is given high priority and several students have personalised programmes to aid attendance and achievement.

The quality of care, guidance and support are good. Links with outside agencies and other professionals make a good contribution to students' well-being and achievement. Arrangements for safeguarding students are appropriate and careers education and guidance plays a key role in Key Stage 4. Academic guidance is good although some academic objectives and learning targets are not specific enough or easily measured to help the students understand each stage of their learning. The recent review of whole school achievement has improved the school's abilities to set increasingly challenging academic targets.

Good leadership and management ensure that the school runs effectively despite occasional staff absence and recruitment difficulties: the recent appointment of another deputy headteacher will ensure the good senior management team is complete. The headteacher spends significant time with the students in lessons and breaks. He demonstrates strong commitment and holds high expectations of staff and for students' academic work and personal well-being. The emphasis on relevant training is strong and he ensures the school is aware of recent developments in practice and is frequently involved in research projects to share good practice locally and nationally. The school deploys its own staff on request from local schools and the pupil referral unit to offer behaviour support off-site and on its own premises. These services are well regarded and this early intervention has the additional benefit of maintaining students in mainstream schools who may otherwise be excluded. The governing body provide satisfactory support for the work of the school. They offer good support in finance and personnel issues although their attention to students' achievement is less evident in minutes of meetings. The school provides good value for money and has made good improvement since the previous inspection. Wandle Valley's capacity to improve still further is also good.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that all academic targets for departments and students are specific, easily understood and measurable.
- Increase the role of governors in monitoring academic achievement.

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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 <sup>1</sup> 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?	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	3
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 the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	3
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	3
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 February 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Wandle Valley School, Carshalton, SM5 1LW

Thank you for helping me to see how well you do at school. I found that your school gives you a good education. One of the main strengths of the school is the good effect it has on your personal development and well-being. You are also able to leave with qualifications that will help you when you leave school.

The teachers have a good understanding of the subjects they teach and this helps you to achieve well. Many of them have also been at the school for several years so they know you well too. The teaching assistants work very well with the teachers and you to help when lessons are difficult. They are also there to help you sort out problems and help you to feel safe. I had the chance to speak to several students during the day and all said how much they enjoy most lessons, especially when doing practical things like food and design technology. The school's facilities for practical subjects are very good and I was very impressed by some of the work you produce, especially in the woodwork room. This coursework is very good and if the rest of your coursework was completed to these high standards you could achieve even better results in all subjects. A couple of other things could help you to improve would be to make sure your behaviour in lessons is always as good as it can be. You get on well with the staff and mostly do your best to see that everyone can get on and learn in class. Sometimes little squabbles get in the way of your learning but it was good to see that most of you can ignore this and do good work. You should also make sure you are in school as much as possible and I know that some of you have really good attendance but some don't do so well.

The school tries hard to give you the lessons you need. The teachers know that the use of English can be a problem and they want to do more to help you. This support will help you to make better progress in all your subjects. There are lots of enjoyable things for you to do, such as residential trips, sport and of course, the Bistro! The school works hard to keep you fit and healthy by opening the gym early in the mornings, breakfast clubs and lessons about the dangers from using harmful drugs.

In order to improve the school further, I am asking the headteacher to make sure that all you all know how you can improve your learning even more and for staff to include this in your targets and in all their plans. I'm also asking the governors to be more involved in knowing how well you are progressing in lessons.

Greg Sorrell

Lead Inspector