

Wakefield City High School - A Specialist Maths and Computing College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108272
Local Authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	309642
Inspection date	27 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Christopher Keeler HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	664
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Anderson
Headteacher	Mr Alan Yellup
Date of previous school inspection	14 March 2005
School address	Warmfield View Wakefield West Yorkshire WF1 4SF
Telephone number	01924 303755
Fax number	01924 303758

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. It focused on the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, the quality of teaching and learning, and the personal development of pupils. This was done by gathering evidence from observing lessons, scrutinising school documentation and questionnaires completed by parents, and by talking with pupils, parents, governors, staff and the headteacher.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but HMI found evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given its self-evaluation, were justified.

Description of the school

Wakefield City High School is a smaller than average mixed comprehensive school that has been awarded specialist mathematics and computing status. The school serves a socially and economically disadvantaged area. The number of students eligible for free school meals is high and considerably above the national average. The number of students speaking English as an additional language reflects a high proportion of the school population. The percentage of students with additional learning needs is also slightly above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Wakefield City High is an outstanding school which provides excellent value for money. The school has high expectations and actively promotes a 'can do' culture that successfully motivates and inspires students and staff. Achievement is outstanding. Students enter the school with well below average standards. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 indicate that standards are just below average. However, given their starting points, students make excellent progress and attain good standards by the time they leave. While students make excellent progress in English and mathematics, progress in science is not quite as rapid. Outstanding progress is maintained throughout Key Stage 4 and is evident in students' performance. The percentage of students gaining five or more GCSE grades at A* to C has risen continually over the past five years and standards are above local and national averages. The percentage of students gaining similar grades, including mathematics and English, has risen by over 30% in the last three years and is above the national average. Overall, the percentage of students gaining five or more grades at A to G is well above the national average. This represents outstanding achievement. Students do particularly well in English and mathematics and in 2006 the performance of students in most subjects matched the national average and in many other subjects, including religious education, art, design technology and music, it was above. There is no significant difference in attainment between girls and boys. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.

Teaching and learning are outstanding overall. Teachers plan their lessons well and make clear to the students precisely what they are expected to learn. Questioning is used to very good effect and every effort is made to include all students in discussion and debate. Teachers display excellent subject knowledge, evident through high quality explanations that enhance students' understanding. A consistent feature throughout the school is the good behaviour management demonstrated by staff which, together with excellent pupil/teacher relationships, is the major reason why pupils are focused on their work and, consequently, make such good progress. Teachers expect students to do their best and are positive about their ability to do so. This expectation is transmitted to the students and increases their levels of self-esteem and confidence. The school has made very good progress in setting up systems to monitor students' progress and the information is used effectively to set students' targets for improvement. Students are aware of what they should aspire to and are proud of their achievements to date. The school is currently refining the use of assessment in order to set even shorter-term individual pupil targets with the intention of accentuating progress further.

Students have benefited a great deal as a result of the school being awarded, specialist mathematics and computing status. This aspect of the school's work has not only raised students' standards in these two subjects, but has also been at the forefront in the development of successful teaching and learning strategies across departments. Two good examples of this are the use of new technologies, including interactive whiteboards and the introduction of 'family learning' evenings, to help parents better support their children in their learning. The curriculum is excellent and has been designed to meet the needs and raise aspirations of all learners. Students are taught a number of subjects through a themed-based approach in order to ease the transition from Year 6 and to equip students with good attitudes and appropriate skills and knowledge. The school is increasing the amount of literacy provision through intervention programmes relating to reading and writing and by developing pupils' basic skills through a range of subjects. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 comprises four pathways, designed to ensure

inclusiveness for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those identified as gifted and talented.

Students' personal development and well-being are good. They know what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and many, but not all, try to put the lessons learned into practice. Attendance is good and exclusion rates low and this is indicative of the fact that students enjoy school and feel safe. Bullying and racism are rare and students are confident that any such incident would be dealt with quickly and firmly. The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Standards of behaviour are good, particularly during lessons. This is mainly due to the teachers who adhere very well to the school code of conduct. The majority of students take responsibility for their own behaviour while others need closer supervision. This is particularly evident as students move around the school.

The quality of care, guidance and support provided to students is outstanding. Every pupil truly matters at this school and it is shown in the levels of support that they receive. Good intervention programmes are in place to support targeted groups and this helps them to make good progress. A child protection policy is in place, safeguarding procedures are rigorous and all staff receive regular training in respect of these. An impressive feature of the school is the work done in developing confidence and raising students' self-esteem. This work impacts positively on students' personal development and fosters the desire to achieve. Students report that they receive excellent academic and pastoral guidance.

The driving force behind this successful school is the headteacher. He provides inspirational leadership underpinned by a strong determination to give every pupil the opportunity to succeed, not just in school, but in life. However, the ethos that pervades the school is one where 'everyone matters', not just students, but all staff in any capacity. This evokes a strong sense of teamwork, ownership and loyalty and an overwhelming desire to wanting to do well for the common good. Management at all levels and particularly the senior management team work closely together and give excellent support to the headteacher. The governing body give good support and visit school on a regular basis. Leadership and management are therefore outstanding as is the capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve further, the standards in science at Key Stage 3 until they reflect those attained in English and mathematics.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
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	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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
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	2
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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Wakefield City High School - A Specialist Maths and Computing College, Wakefield, WF1 4SF.

As you know your school was recently inspected. Thank you for your warm welcome and especially the help that I received from students who showed me around the school. I am also indebted to the many students that I met during the course of the inspection. Your views were invaluable and enabled me to get a clear picture of the school.

I agree with you that Wakefield City High is an outstanding school. You told me how you enjoy attending school and how much you value the relationships that you have with your teachers. I was particularly impressed with your desire to succeed and how hard you work to achieve your goals. You are supported well by your teachers and I found the quality of teaching to be outstanding overall. These factors explain why you are attaining good standards and making excellent progress. Your behaviour is generally good, especially during lessons but care needs to be taken as you move along corridors from one room to another.

The school is exceptionally well led and managed. The headteacher provides inspirational leadership and together with all staff is determined to give you every opportunity to succeed in life. All you need to do is take advantage of the excellent provision on offer.

In order to improve the school, I have asked the headteacher to:

- improve further the standards in science at Key Stage 3 until they reflect those attained in English and mathematics.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all the best for the future.