

Wellsway School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109311
Local Authority	Bath and North East Somerset
Inspection number	309957
Inspection dates	5–6 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Caroline McKee

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	1322
6th form	253
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Trout
Headteacher	Andrea Arlidge
Date of previous school inspection	31 March 2003
School address	Chandag Road Keynsham Bristol BS31 1PH
Telephone number	01179 864751
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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

Wellsway School is a larger than average secondary school. It was designated as a specialist sports and science college in September 2007. It also holds the Sportsmark Gold Award, Investors in People, Financial Management in Schools Standard and Fairtrade School award. The attainment on entry of students to the school is above average. Fewer than average students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Almost all the students are of White British heritage.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Wellsway is a satisfactory school with many good features and strong leadership. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and she is supported well by the school leadership team. Senior leaders and governors know the school well and have put in place clearly thought out plans that identify the priorities for improvement and how these are to be achieved. This good leadership is beginning to bring about improvements across all areas of the school.

Standards in the school remain above national averages, although the school recognises that achievement at GCSE is not good enough. In the sixth form, students' standards are above average and they make good progress due to the good teaching they receive. Students have been set targets that are more challenging and progress is being tracked more rigorously in order to improve achievement. Students know their target grades but not all are sure of the best way to achieve them. The school has also put in place a programme of training to improve teaching and learning. This is beginning to bear fruit, although there is not enough consistently good teaching in Years 7 to 11 to ensure all students reach their full potential. Teachers' use of assessment data to inform their planning is not yet consistent and teaching activities do not always sufficiently challenge and involve students, particularly higher attainers. Learning is most effective when teachers effectively challenge and give feedback that indicates to students what they have to do to improve their work. This is not always the case. The school offers a good curriculum in all years although provision in Key Stage 4 is being developed to provide a wider vocational choice to help meet the needs of all students. The school provides good care, support and guidance for students in Years 7 to 11, which results in students' good personal development and well-being. The school works effectively with other partners and ensures that students are prepared well for their chosen pathway when they leave school. Attendance is good and robust systems are in place to improve this further. Behaviour is good. Students work well together and they move around the campus in a sensible, purposeful manner. A few parents and students expressed concerns about some minor misbehaviour during break times, Nevertheless, most students consider themselves safe and well cared for in school. Sixth form students are mature young people who take pride in their work. They have the qualities that enable them to contribute very effectively to the community and their personal development is excellent.

Students are increasingly consulted on school issues and the year and school councils are helping to bring about positive changes to school life. The school has sound systems in place to seek the views of parents but is aware that despite these efforts a few parents are not fully engaged in this process.

The sport and science specialist status, though new, is already starting to improve students' achievements, especially in those aspects of the curriculum involving sport. Students are aware of the need to stay healthy and many are actively involved in the sporting life of the school. Older students contest for the opportunity to participate in the Sports Leaders' awards and enjoy encouraging pupils from local primary schools to become actively involved in sport.

The school has made good improvements against all the issues identified in the last inspection. Leaders are beginning to change the school's ethos and are putting student learning at the heart of everything that it does. The school is in a good position to improve further.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Good leadership has made the sixth form a strength of the school and students are proud to be part of it. The drive by leaders for a 'culture of involvement' in and out of the school has been successful and resulted in students' personal development being outstanding. The vast majority of students choose to stay on at school to join the sixth form and nearly all successfully complete their chosen courses over two years. They relish the opportunities available and value the support and guidance provided by the staff. Their maturity and very good attitudes to learning contribute hugely to their success. Standards at GCE A level in 2007 were above average and represent continuing improvement when compared to previous years. Given their starting points, students make good progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teachers' use of assessment data so that planned learning expectations and activities are sufficiently challenging for all students and involve them in their own learning.
- Ensure that teachers' marking is sufficiently informative so that students are sure about what they need to do to improve and reach their targets.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Although standards at GCSE have been consistently above average in recent years, achievement has been significantly below average and declining. The school has worked successfully to address this decline and current standards in Year 11 show that students are making satisfactory progress based on their starting points and are on course to meet their GCSE targets for 2008. Whilst progress overall is now satisfactory, there are still some subjects where students' progress is too slow, such as modern foreign languages, philosophy and belief, and design and technology. In addition, some higher attaining students are not challenged sufficiently. English has seen the most significant improvement. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress throughout the school because of the support provided.

Results in the 2007 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3, although lower than in 2006, show improving trend over the last three years. Standards are consistently above the national average and are improving slightly faster than the national trend. Current Year 9 students are making good progress and are on track to meet their targets for 2008.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students enjoy coming to school and their attendance is good. A high proportion take part in the outstanding variety of extra-curricular activities offered. Students have good relationships with adults and value the support available. A few students and parents expressed concerns

about behaviour; however, both around the school and in lessons, students' behaviour is good. Students feel that their teachers and other staff deal with any incidents of bullying swiftly and effectively. They feel safe in school and are well prepared to deal with life beyond school.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They enjoy contributing to the life of the school and wider community. For example, many students work effectively with primary schools as sports leaders, arrange social activities for community groups and plant trees locally. They also enjoy raising funds for charity and are particularly successful in this. Many students take part in cultural events and experiences, for example, welcoming visiting writers and a visitor from a Nicaraguan coffee producer as part of their work on 'Fairtrade'. The students know how to live a healthy lifestyle and most appreciate the availability of healthy food. Students' basic skills of literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) are good and enable them to develop the skills needed to move into working life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school's recent identification of the need for teachers to increasingly use assessment data has made them more aware of what students are capable of achieving and because of this, teachers' expectations are rising. The range of teaching strategies used in lessons is broadening and teachers manage students' behaviour well. However, there is not enough good teaching to ensure that all students achieve as well as they can. Some teachers are not using assessment data effectively to inform their planning and construct lesson objectives as tasks to complete rather than focusing on what students are going to learn. Planned activities do not always meet the needs of all learners, in particular the higher attainers. There are increasing opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning. Where learning is most effective, teachers ensure that students of all abilities are challenged and are actively involved in the learning process. The marking informs the students of what it is they need to do to improve and meet their targets. In these instances, the students think about what they are learning and apply this new understanding to different situations. This is especially effective in the sixth form.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students enjoy the challenge of a well balanced curriculum, which meets statutory requirements and caters for the needs and capabilities of most learners. All students in Key Stage 3 are expected to study drama and dance. The provision in Key Stage 4 is developing with a broader range of courses planned for 2008. The sixth form curriculum is good and has a broad range of traditional academic courses, to which applied advanced level courses in art and design and ICT add breadth to the range of subjects offered.

An outstanding range of clubs, activities and visits enriches the curriculum for all students and adds greatly to their personal development. Students say that these very much help to develop their talents, interests and aptitudes outside of the classroom. The school has rightly achieved the Sportsmark Gold award, and drama and music are also strengths throughout the school.

The school's specialist status is beginning to have a positive impact on the curriculum, especially in physical education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care for students is a strong feature of the school, with most parents agreeing that their child is safe and making good progress in their personal development. Requirements for safeguarding and child protection are in place and regularly reviewed. The school promotes students' well-being effectively through its own provision and its good work with a broad range of outside agencies. The school has recently introduced a behaviour for learning policy and this is beginning to have a positive impact on further improving behaviour in lessons. The school is responding well to students' concerns about there being too few rewards to celebrate good behaviour.

The school provides students with good guidance on their choice of courses for GCSE and advanced level and for life outside of school. The guidance given to students to support them in making progress towards achieving their test and examination target levels and grades however varies too much across subjects. The school supports students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities effectively, enabling them to make good progress throughout school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The headteacher's vision, drive and strong leadership are focusing the school on sustainable improvement. Recent developments, such as academic tutoring, are changing the ethos of the school to ensure that student learning is at the centre of all that it does. The school development plan presents a clear picture of how the improvements are to be achieved and staff are aware of their role in this process. Senior leaders are committed to this vision and their leadership is beginning to bring about positive change. The school has an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses and actions needed to sustain improvement. Its good self-evaluation, led by the school leadership team, is based on a thorough approach to monitoring which has recently extended to the middle managers. The evaluation skills and action planning of middle managers varies considerably. Some have a clear grasp of the main priorities, whilst others are not sufficiently focused on raising attainment.

The school is setting challenging targets based on a realistic assessment of students' prior attainment, in order to improve their achievement. Many students are currently on track to meet their individual targets. Good training programmes, using external and internal expertise, are beginning to have an impact on improving teaching and learning. The school's specialist status, although less than a term old, is already having an impact in physical education, and there is a clear strategy as to how it will support broader improvements across the school.

The governors are very well informed about the school's priorities. They are committed to improvement and provide excellent challenge and support, holding the school to account for its performance.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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?	3	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?	3	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	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	1
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	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	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	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 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	1	
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

7 December 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Wellsway School, Keynsham, BS31 1PH

Thank you all very much for the way you welcomed the inspection team to your school. We enjoyed meeting you talking to you and hearing your views. This letter is to tell you of what we found.

Your school is providing you with a satisfactory and improving standard of education in Years 7 to 11 and a good standard of education in the sixth form. The senior staff provide good leadership and have a clear view of how the school can improve, and are putting strategies in place to achieve this. The standards you attain are above the national average in Year 9 and at GCSE. However, your progress has not been as high as it could be at GCSE. The school is addressing this and the current progress being made by students shows that this is having a positive impact. In the sixth form, your progress is good and you attain above average standards.

Your personal development is good in the main school and outstanding in the sixth form. Because of the school's good support and care, you are becoming mature and confident young people who are well prepared for future life. We were impressed with the special identity of the sixth form and how proud you are to be a part of it. A high number of you participate in the outstanding range of extra activities including drama, music and fund raising. You have a good understanding of how to stay healthy and safe. We noted that a few of you had concerns about bullying but that the school is quick to take steps to address them. It is also giving you increased opportunities to ensure that your views are heard.

- In order to improve achievement we have asked the school to:
- improve teaching by planning tasks that have more challenge for you all and involve you more actively in your learning
- ensure teachers give you clearer guidance when marking your work so you know what to do to improve and reach your targets.

We would like you to rise to the challenges set by taking more responsibility for your own learning and ensuring that you meet the targets being set by the school.

With best wishes for your future.

Caroline McKee Lead inspector

Annex B



7 December 2007

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Lead inspector