

# The Westgate School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110105
<b>Local Authority</b>	Slough
<b>Inspection number</b>	310211
<b>Inspection dates</b>	12–13 February 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Wiola Hola HMI

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>	Modern (non-selective)
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	824
6th form	96
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Peter Dale-Gough
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Roger Thomas
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	23 January 2004
<b>School address</b>	Cippenham Lane Slough SL1 5AH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01753 521320
<b>Fax number</b>	01753 521200

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<b>Age group</b>	11-18
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is a little smaller than average. About half of the students are from White British backgrounds and the rest are from a wide range of others, including many from Asian backgrounds. Very few students are at an early stage of learning English. The school has a resourced base for 12 physically impaired students, 7 currently attend. The proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities, wide-ranging in nature, is above average. The school has been a specialist school in business and enterprise since September 2005. The sixth form was introduced in 2005. It is small with 96 students and works in a federation with two nearby secondary schools.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school with many outstanding features. It has continued with great success on its journey of improvement since the last inspection. Standards have risen, markedly in some respects, and have moved to above average by the end of Year 11, although there are inconsistencies between subjects. The headteacher is exceptional and provides excellent leadership. He inspires and supports staff and students to get the best out of themselves and others. The school is not at all complacent and whilst celebrating existing strengths and successes, it knows exactly what to do further on its road to excellence.

Students' personal development is outstanding. Students grow tremendously in confidence, courtesy, respect for others, and in their appreciation of how they can contribute in the community and wider world. They generally achieve well not just because teaching, learning and the curriculum are good, but because they are encouraged to see their potential, aim high, work hard and recognise their own and others' success. Progress in English is excellent. In science in Years 7 to 9, however, it is not nearly as good. Students are proud of their school and enjoy it greatly. Most parents are complimentary about the school and support and value its work.

A striking feature is the very positive atmosphere in the school. Relationships are exceptionally strong. Staff are ambitious for the students, and fervent in their aim to get the best from each one, academically and personally. Every effort is made to ensure that all are included and supported as required. The statement in the last inspection report, 'The school works hard to maintain its excellent reputation for inclusion' is just as valid today. Teachers and support staff work very effectively to meet students' specific needs, and especially for those students with physical disabilities. Whilst many lessons are of good or even excellent quality, learning is occasionally slowed when teaching does not build on or identify students' existing skills or knowledge.

The relatively new system of three 'communities', and the well-established work of senior staff, heads of year and tutors, provide outstanding care, guidance and support for students, as well as encouraging them to show initiative across a range of activities. The school is about to celebrate its 50th anniversary and staff and students have already laid many plans for this occasion in a spirited way. The school's specialist status as a business and enterprise college is highly visible, permeates work in many areas of school life and contributes tangibly to students' good achievements.

Leadership and management, including governance, are outstanding overall even though there is some relatively minor variability in the quality of middle management in terms of getting the best possible examination results across subjects. The school's assertion that 'The emphasis on quality assurance is high' is entirely correct and senior staff are both supportive and uncompromising in their pursuit of outstanding provision and outcomes in all areas. The checking and adjusting of provision is excellent. An example of this is in relation to the new sixth form, just over two years old now, and growing well because its development is kept under constant review. The school improvement plan is entirely realistic, clear, succinct and measurable, whilst at the same time showing a richness in its aims for developing confident, skilled and successful young people.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 2

The sixth form, although small, is good and improving. It is a vibrant community of learners in which the academic progress and wider development of students is given the highest priority. Standards are rising and are now just below average overall and average in some subjects. The rate of students' progress has increased this year and the majority of students are now making good progress from their starting points, which were lower than average overall. Variations exist, however, in the progress made in different subjects. The school is acutely aware of this. It has taken appropriate steps to improve the quality of provision. Teaching is good overall. Frequent monitoring of teaching is improving its quality so that teachers know what steps to take to accelerate students' progress. The curriculum is good but with few vocational courses offered. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good.

Students' personal development is outstanding. The high retention rate reflects the enthusiasm and pride that students take in the school, and their enjoyment of it. 'I love it here and I don't want to leave', commented a student. Relationships are excellent. The mature way in which students are treated does much to foster their independence and initiative. Students cooperate well with each other and develop as highly confident, articulate individuals. They participate enthusiastically in the wide range of cultural and recreational activities on offer and in the excellent opportunities for them to take responsibility.

### What the school should do to improve further

Within the context of a school that is already working successfully and where leadership and management are excellent, the following two points for improvement are given, so that standards in all subjects are as high as possible:

- Make greater use of existing expertise to ensure that more lessons are of the quality of the best, so that every lesson builds well on students' existing skills and knowledge.
- Ensure that all middle leaders are as successful as the best in making good use of assessment information to check students' progress, and to detect and address any potential underachievement.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

#### Grade for sixth form: 2

Standards have risen since the last inspection and they have risen greatly in some respects. Standards have gone up from significantly below average in recent years to average in 2007. Moreover, the percentage of students achieving five or more GCSE grades A\*-C including English and mathematics has risen markedly from 24% in 2005 to 55% in 2007 which is significantly higher than the national figure of 46%. GCSE results in 2007 for English language, English literature, mathematics, home economics and religious studies were also significantly above the national average; and this is from a cohort of students whose attainment on entry into Year 7 was a little below average, and in an area where selective schools exist nearby. In most other subjects, GCSE results were average. Results in the national Year 9 tests have been average, although in science they dipped to significantly below average in 2007. In the sixth form, A-level results in 2007 were slightly below average.

Test and examination results show the generally good progress students make over their time at the school. The 2007 results showed outstanding progress in English and very good progress in mathematics. Progress was not nearly so good in science in Years 7 to 9. Progress in the sixth form was broadly average, but has since speeded up and is now good. Students with physical disabilities, in particular, achieve well because of the good support they receive. Current work and records show that standards and achievement are expected to rise further to meet the school's own challenging targets. The improvements in both standards and achievement are a tribute to the determined work of staff and students.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

Pride and respect are hallmarks of students' outstanding personal development. These are reflected in their great enjoyment of learning, good attendance and punctuality, and their keen involvement in a wide range of activities. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding so that by Year 11 students are mature, considerate, self-assured, and responsible young adults. Students behave well and there has been only one permanent exclusion over the past seven years and a low level of temporary exclusion. They feel very safe saying very little bullying and few racist incidents occur. Relationships are outstanding. Students from a range of cultures work and play together in total harmony. They are proud members of their 'communities' and tell of how these promote a feeling of belonging and friendly competition. Older students are trained in first aid. Students develop an excellent awareness of healthy lifestyles. They love 'free fruit Friday' and value regular exercise. The experiences they gain from carrying out a wide range of enterprise activities such as 'Young Chamber' and 'Westgate Media Crew', and from raising monies for a wide range of charities, illustrate their excellent contribution to community life. Students are extremely well prepared for their future lives and careers.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. In the majority of lessons, teachers plan effectively, setting clear objectives, a good pace and providing a range of interesting activities. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. Lessons are characterised by excellent relationships underpinned by mutual respect, humour and warmth. Lessons start very briskly and students arrive to them well equipped and with positive attitudes. All students, whatever their learning needs, are fully included in the activities and this has a positive effect on achievement and personal development. Teaching assistants are very effective in their work. In the less effective lessons, teachers do not always plan adequately for the range of abilities in the class or build on students' prior knowledge. Students know the levels at which they are working and know how to improve. As one student said, 'We all know exactly where we are and how we are doing.' Marking is carried out diligently and teachers provide helpful, supportive written or verbal comments. Some students report inconsistencies in the setting of homework.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 3**

The curriculum is broad and balanced. All statutory requirements are met and literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology are embedded well across the curriculum. The curriculum has been enhanced in the last year or so with a basic skills course and enterprise and new business qualifications. The school is rightly seeking to increase further the range of vocational courses for students in Years 10 and 11 and for those in the sixth form. The school's business and enterprise status has had a positive effect on provision and students enjoy the various cross-curricular projects that exist. The excellent learning resources centre is used well and encourages students to pursue their own learning.

An extensive range of extra-curricular activities including sports, music and arts opportunities is provided and take up is high. These activities have a highly positive effect on students' personal development and well-being, especially the additional time given to physical education. Across all years, students are eager to take on positions of responsibility and are given many opportunities to do so. As one student put it, 'there are always things to get involved with at Westgate.' The curriculum, in its widest sense, enables students to become active, informed citizens.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

The value placed on each student, and the attention paid to meeting each one's individual needs, underpins the school's success in supporting and developing students' personal and academic achievements. This success ranges from the security, cleanliness and attractiveness of the whole learning environment, to the valuable help and guidance given to students to ensure they improve their work by tutors, heads of year or key stage and in the majority of lessons. Child protection procedures are secure and sensitive. Very thorough attention is paid to risk assessments especially in relation to trips out of school. Behaviour management systems are seen by students as fair and applied consistently.

Students know they have someone to talk to if they have a problem. They feel that their views are heard, valued and responded to. As one student said, 'Teachers help us. They are always there both for academic and pastoral issues. There is always a friendly face to help you.' The support provided for vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and disabilities is outstanding. Students value and praise the advice they are given in relation to choices of subjects and future careers. A Year 11 student said, 'We are encouraged to aim higher; this helps us to raise our aspirations, for example to go to University.' Students know their targets and, in the vast majority of lessons are given good guidance on how to improve their work.

## Leadership and management

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Leadership and management are outstanding. Many members of the school community speak with delight and admiration of how the school has improved over the last ten years or so since the appointment of the current headteacher. The school has grown in size and is oversubscribed. The headteacher provides strong and vigorous leadership and is supported by a highly effective senior team. He engenders loyalty amongst staff who work with clarity and enthusiasm in aiming to meet the school's high expectations for students' success. Decisions taken are based on the views of all stakeholders, and on a careful and reflective consideration of progress in all areas of school life. As a result, staff morale is strikingly high and the strong camaraderie at all levels contributes to the excellent relationships within the school. Staff have created a school in which students of all races and cultures get on very well together.

Subject leaders manage their areas well and their monitoring is leading to improving standards in most subjects. However, some middle leaders have not yet learned fully from the best practice of others in raising students' attainment. There are inconsistencies in the use of assessment information to identify and deal with potential underachievement.

Governance is outstanding. The governing body brings a wealth of relevant experience to its deliberations. Governors not only support leaders but also question them assiduously. The school's accommodation is excellent overall, and is appreciated greatly by students, but relative shortcomings exist for physical education.

The school has developed its work as a business and enterprise college outstandingly well under very able direction. The excellent ethos for learning and inspirational use of enterprise initiatives, such as the Year 9 'Dragon's Den', where students make bids to have their business ideas accepted, is permeating throughout the school and into the wider community.

There is a strong sense of teamwork and pride in what has already been achieved. The school has outstanding capacity for further improvement because performance in all areas of school life is evaluated accurately and because there is a determination from staff at all levels to sustain and build upon the many gains of recent years.

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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	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?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
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?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

<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>	1	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	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	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	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

03 March 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of The Westgate School, Slough, SL1 5AH

Thank you for your welcome when we visited your school recently. We appreciate the conversations we had with many of you, including some members of the school council. I would like to tell you about our findings.

Yours is a good school with many outstanding features. You and your parents feel positive about all that the school offers you. Your personal development is excellent. You develop into respectful, considerate, confident young people, extremely well prepared to take your place in the world. You speak with pride about the school and of how greatly you enjoy it. The 'communities' and the work on business and enterprise are just two of the ways in which the school enriches your good educational experiences. The buildings are very attractive and you use the excellent learning resource centre well. You work hard and make good progress in most subjects. Progress in English is outstanding. Standards have risen and are currently above average overall but this is not yet true in every subject.

Relationships in the school are excellent. You and the staff work with enthusiasm, determination, and aim high. Your headteacher is an outstanding leader. He, the other senior leaders and governors, as well as the staff, are highly effective in keeping a check on what works well and what needs to be improved further. Everyone makes sure that you are cared for, guided and supported extremely well.

Most lessons are good and some are outstanding. Sometimes, the pace of learning is a bit slow because the teacher has not identified clearly how much you already know. We have asked the school to make sure that more lessons are as good as the best so that every lesson enables you all to learn new things. We have also asked the most effective subject leaders to share their expertise with others in keeping a close check on your work and progress so that you do as well in all subjects as you do in English, mathematics, home economics and religious studies, for example, where standards are significantly above average.

I wish you all the very best for your time at school and in the future,

Yours faithfully,

Wiola Hola

Her Majesty's Inspector