

Weaverham High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111414
Local Authority	Cheshire
Inspection number	310590
Inspection dates	23–24 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Sue Harrison 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	1068
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Martin Barber
Headteacher	Mr David Charlton
Date of previous school inspection	28 February 2005
School address	Lime Avenue Weaverham Northwich Cheshire CW8 3HT
Telephone number	01606 852120
Fax number	01606 854033

Age group	11-16
Inspection dates	23–24 January 2008
Inspection number	310590

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

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

Description of the school

Weaverham High School serves a socially mixed catchment area. Overall, pupils enter the school with higher than average results from the Key Stage 2 tests. The school gained specialist technology status in 1997. It was recognised by the local authority as a school that provides extended services in October 2006. This includes a wide variety of activities including family learning, community access to facilities, enhanced pupil support and links with external agencies. The school has slightly fewer pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities than the national average. Almost all the pupils are White British.

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, where staff and pupils work hard to create a caring and purposeful ethos. The standard of pupils' work is good and they gain above average results in national tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations. Pupils generally make good progress against their starting points on joining the school. Where this is not the case, the school is clear about the reasons and is taking appropriate action. The targets set for pupils have not always been sufficiently challenging, particularly for the more able pupils. In 2007/08 departments are working to more challenging targets and the school plans further staff training on this issue.

Teaching and learning are good in the majority of lessons and there are systems in place to spread good practice. Assessment of pupils' work to help them improve further is very good in some subjects but not across the whole school. The curriculum is good, especially in Years 10 and 11. Attendance is good because most pupils enjoy coming to school and there is excellent participation in the wide range of activities offered outside lessons. Personal development is good. The majority of pupils behave very well; they are polite and considerate with staff and with each other. They are gaining skills in communication and teamwork that will help them in their future lives. Parents are very supportive of the school and particularly commend the enrichment opportunities, staff commitment and the care and support pupils receive. Pupils gain a good understanding of staying safe and being healthy. Promotion of equality of opportunity is good; there is an ethos of respect for the individual and a well developed sense of community.

Leadership and management are good. Self assessment is well developed; there is a clear understanding of what the school does well and where it needs to improve further. Actions taken to address weaknesses are generally effective, for example teaching and learning have improved. Senior leaders have a good understanding of the need to provide pupils with challenging targets but this is not yet sufficiently embedded across the school. Governors monitor the work of the school well. There is good partnership work with a wide range of external agencies. The school has used its specialist status well to improve resources and spread good practice throughout the school, for example in the use of information technology. The school's extended services are beginning to have an impact in terms of developing its work on family learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise aspirations throughout the school to meet more challenging targets and maximise achievement.
- Ensure marking of pupils' work consistently helps them to know what they must do to improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievements are good. They reach above average standards in their work. Results in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 and at GCSE are above average. In 2007, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at grade C or above, including English and mathematics, was good. By the end of Year 9 pupils make good progress against their starting points in English and science and satisfactory progress in mathematics. Pupils make good progress in most subjects in Years 10 and 11. Some pupils who left the school in 2007 did not do as well as expected in a few subjects. The school carefully analysed the reasons for this and took action,

which is proving effective. Inspectors observed students making good progress in lessons at both key stages. Inspectors also looked at documentary evidence, such as coursework, which demonstrated the majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are making good progress. The school is aware that targets set for pupils have not always been sufficiently challenging and action is being taken to address this, for example to ensure the most able pupils reach their full potential.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because staff are skilled at working with them and the school has good links with relevant external agencies. Achievement is good in the majority of the school's specialist subjects. In a few non-specialist subjects, such as business studies, achievement is satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good because pupils recognise and value the opportunities offered by the school and participate enthusiastically. Good behaviour, positive attitudes to learning and good relationships underpin this happy school. Most pupils work hard and are friendly and polite. Many are confident and express themselves clearly. Attendance is above the national average, which is a reflection of the pupils' enjoyment of school.

Pupils feel safe and report that bullying and racist incidents are rare. When they do occur, the school deals with issues effectively. The school council provides a satisfactory opportunity for pupils to express their ideas and opinions. Pupils care about those less fortunate than themselves and regularly raise funds to help them. There are several opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and show initiative. For example, older pupils mentor the youngest when the latter make the transition between primary and secondary school and some take the opportunity to gain the sports leadership award.

The high uptake of recreational sport as well as team sports reflects pupils' commitment to leading healthy lifestyles. Furthermore, they choose to eat healthily at lunchtime. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is well developed across the curriculum and through the excellent personal, social, health and citizenship programme. Assemblies, thought for the week and other enrichment activities further challenge pupils to reflect on complex issues such as social conscience. Pupils make good progress in developing the personal qualities that will help them in their working lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Most teaching has a significant number of strengths, but these are not present in all lessons. The school recognises this and invests considerable energy and resources in developing teaching and learning styles. This is having an increasingly positive impact on lessons. Lesson monitoring and review procedures are robust and used effectively to identify any areas for improvement. Arrangements are in place to share examples of good practice and these support teachers' professional development. The specialist technology status is enhancing learning with the ready access to information technology facilities, both in and out of school. A particular strength in lessons is the positive relationships between teachers and pupils. There is mutual respect so that most learning takes place in a harmonious atmosphere. Pupils make the greatest progress in lessons where the teacher involves them in

the development of ideas and requires them to think for themselves. In these lessons they are fully aware of what they are to learn and share in the assessment of their learning. A range of activities are used to stimulate and sustain interest and in outstanding lessons these features are enhanced by the teachers' infectious enthusiasm for the subject. In less effective lessons there is too much teacher talk and direction and pupils' learning is passive.

Pupils are aware of their targets and generally know how well they are doing. However, there is some inconsistency in the quality of marking and assessment. This limits the extent to which pupils know what they have to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides its pupils with a good quality curriculum. It is continuously reviewed and adapted to meet changing needs. Effective collaborative arrangements with neighbouring institutions and providers help the school to tailor the curriculum to match individual needs, particularly in Years 10 and 11. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is satisfactory. At Key Stage 4 there is a good balance of academic, practical and vocational courses. The curriculum embraces work-related learning and enterprise, and makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development and well-being. The high proportion of pupils who continue with their education after leaving the school reflects well on the curriculum. The school's specialist status has broadened the range of technology subjects available to pupils. Flexible alternative arrangements are effective in meeting the needs of those pupils who might be at risk of disaffection. A high proportion of pupils take part in the outstanding range of extra-curricular activities. As a designated extended school, Weaverham offers some opportunities for family learning and this is an area for further development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Pupils and parents are very positive about the caring nature of the school and pupils appreciate the support they get. In the majority of cases pupils behave very well and there are positive relationships between staff and pupils and between the pupils themselves. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils' welfare and safety are effective. Pupils feel safe, enjoy school and are loyal to it. Teachers have a high profile around the site at break and lunchtimes and pupils feel that there is always someone to turn to if they have a problem. Good links with outside agencies ensure that all learners, including the most vulnerable, are well supported.

An effective induction programme and close links with the primary schools ensure that pupils' transition into Year 7 is a very positive experience. In addition, pupils value the support they get from older pupils during their first few weeks of secondary school. There is an appropriate guidance programme for Year 9 pupils and their parents to support them in making important option choices. Pupils are well prepared for life after school through a well-structured careers education programme which prepares them to make informed choices about their future.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management of the school are good. Effective professional development and training opportunities have been put in place for middle leaders since the last inspection. This has resulted in a rigorous self-evaluation process that is centred around thorough department reviews, which are monitored and moderated by senior leaders. Consequently, managers know the strengths and weaknesses within their areas of the school and are able to take appropriate action to improve aspects of underperformance. Much of this development has been led through the school's specialist technology departments.

Leaders are clear about what needs to be done to raise standards and achievement further. They recognise that the setting of more challenging targets, especially for the more able, is not yet sufficiently embedded throughout the school. Actions to address this are now in place and beginning to have a measurable impact. Sharing of the best practice that exists within the school is also helping to raise levels of achievement. Teaching and learning have improved as a result of targeted staff development.

Financial management is good and there is efficient deployment and use of resources. The technology specialism has contributed to improving facilities in information and communication technology throughout the school and this is well shared with partner schools and the wider community. Governance is good. Governors bring high levels of commitment and a range of expertise to the school. They operate well as a group and play an important role in the school's self-evaluation process, enabling them to both support and challenge its leaders. They also perform their strategic role of shaping policy, as exemplified by the current monitoring and updating of policies relating to equality and discrimination.

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
---	----------------

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 ¹ reached by learners	2
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	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?	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

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
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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you know, your school was recently inspected. Thank you for your warm welcome and your help in finding our way around and giving us your views about the school. We really enjoyed visiting your school and I am writing now to tell you about our findings.

We think Weaverham is a good school. You and the staff work hard and there is a good atmosphere of respect for individuals in the school. Most of you enjoy coming to school, attend well and behave in a polite and courteous manner. Teaching and learning are good in many lessons. You participate well in lessons where there are opportunities for you to be actively involved. You told us you feel safe in the school and the few instances of unacceptable behaviour are dealt with effectively. The standard of work you produce is good. Results in public examinations are above the national average and most of you make good progress against your starting points on joining the school. However, we think some of you could do even better! We have asked the school to ensure it sets challenging targets for all pupils to help everyone reach their full potential. We also noticed that marking and helping you to assess your own progress is very good in some departments and we have asked the headteacher to spread this good practice across the school.

The range of subjects you can study at the school is good, especially in Years 10 and 11. As well as gaining qualifications at Weaverham, you are developing a range of interests and skills that will be of great help when you leave school. You and your parents told us about the excellent range of activities after school and we saw how well many of you are developing skills such as teamwork. Weaverham is a caring school, with good systems to support its pupils. The school is well led and managed. Resources from the school's specialist status are being well used, for example to improve the way information technology can help learning. Leaders and managers know what the school does well and what it needs to do to improve further.