

Willingdon Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114592
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	311655
Inspection date	13 February 2008
Reporting inspector	David Butler HMI

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	934
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John White
Headteacher	Ian Jungius
Date of previous school inspection	18 May 2004
School address	Broad Road Lower Willingdon Eastbourne BN20 9QX
Telephone number	01323 485254
Fax number	01323 487779

Age group	11-16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues in detail: standards and achievement in Years 10 and 11; care, guidance and support for vulnerable students; attendance and behaviour; and the impact of managers in raising achievement. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation form (SEF); national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records; curriculum and planning documents; observation of the school at work; interviews with staff and students; and the parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Willingdon Community School draws its students mainly from Eastbourne and its surrounding towns and villages. It was designated as a specialist media and visual arts school in September 2004. There is a hearing support facility on the school's site. This is managed by the local authority but the seven students supported by the facility are on the roll of the school. Almost 90% of students are White British. There are 17 Traveller learners. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Willingdon Community School is a good school with several outstanding features. The school has a very strong focus on inclusion and provides excellent care, guidance and support for its students. The school is friendly and welcoming. Students get on well with each other and benefit from very positive relationships with their teachers. The great majority of students feel safe, enjoy their education and achieve well.

Students enter the school with slightly above-average standards, although this varies from year to year. They make good progress towards meeting challenging targets and achieve excellent examination results by the time they leave school. The proportion of students attaining five or more A* to C passes in GCSE, including English and mathematics, is well above average and 97% of students in 2007 attained five A* to G passes. Standards have risen significantly since the last inspection. Achievement is consistently good across subjects and is outstanding in mathematics and in art and design. Students with severe hearing impairment and other students with learning difficulties achieve well.

Students achieve well because teaching is good and they are very well supported in their learning. The school's extensive monitoring of the quality of teaching indicates that it is improving and that more teaching is now outstanding than at the time of the last inspection. The school's specialism has made an important contribution to this improvement through the provision of more technology to support teaching and learning and through the greater use of visual and media techniques to enhance lessons. The school has identified the need to encourage more independent learning and greater engagement of students in some lessons in order to make teaching even better. Lesson observations and discussions with students during the inspection confirmed this view.

Students are offered a very good range of courses in Years 10 and 11, including vocational and applied options, some of which are taken at the local college of further education. Higher-attaining students have the opportunity to take advanced GCE courses. The specialism has done a great deal to enrich the curriculum and there is a good take-up of media and visual arts courses. Although there are major strengths in the curriculum, it is satisfactory rather than better because there are some gaps. There is no provision for food technology in Years 7 to 9 because the school does not have any facilities to teach it. The time allocated for physical education for all students in Years 10 and 11 falls below recommended guidelines, although students can take it as an optional subject. The school has identified some shortcomings in the current provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship education in Years 7 to 9 and has taken the decision to introduce discrete lessons in these subjects from September 2008. There is a high take-up of the very good range of extra-curricular activities. These include sessions to support academic work, as well as sporting and recreational activities. The excellent care, guidance and support provided by the school also help students make good progress in their learning and contribute very positively to their well-being. Many parents praise the individual support that the school provides for their children, including for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Parents are also very complimentary about the speed with which their children settle into the school when they transfer from primary education or join from other secondary schools. Students who have severe hearing difficulties receive excellent support from the hearing impaired unit and are fully integrated into the school. Traveller learners are well supported by the school, working effectively in partnership with external agencies. A major strength is the school's very thorough system for tracking and monitoring students' progress

and providing extra support when there is evidence of underachievement. Students are well aware of their targets and know what they need to do to achieve them. Students are well prepared for life after they leave school. There is a strong provision of careers education and guidance throughout the school, including a very well-received programme of work experience. Excellent links with post-16 providers have helped ensure high staying-on rates to further education and training.

Students' personal development is good. Students have strong moral and social awareness and the school's specialism has done much to help enhance their cultural understanding. A recent survey conducted by an external agency showed that students have a good understanding of how to lead safe and healthy lives. A range of strategies to raise attendance is proving successful and the most recent data show that it has risen to above the national average. Incidents of bullying or other forms of harassment are rare and dealt with appropriately when they are brought to the notice of teachers. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. A significant minority of parents raised concerns about behaviour in lessons. There was no evidence of this during the inspection but the school accepts that a very small number of lessons are occasionally disrupted through poor behaviour. Some of this results from the need to use supply teachers. The school has also taken in a number of challenging students who were at risk of being excluded from other schools. Very few students are permanently excluded from the school and the number of fixed-term exclusions has fallen substantially, partly as a result of setting up a unit to support students with challenging behaviour.

The school gathers the views of parents through questionnaire surveys and meetings. Parents and the wider community are kept well informed about developments at the school through newsletters, the school's Internet site and a range of other means. There is regular reporting to parents on their children's progress and appropriate opportunities to meet with teachers and other staff. The majority of parents feel that sufficient account is taken of their views but a small number feel more could be done in this respect. Students have opportunities to be actively involved in the school, for example, as prefects and through taking part in a range of projects, several of which are linked to the school's specialism. Many students are involved in supporting charities. Students have the opportunity to make their views known through the school council but students, including representatives, feel that this should have a higher profile and be more pro-active in helping to bring about improvement.

The school has made very good progress since the last inspection because leadership and management throughout the school are good. The headteacher and senior managers provide excellent direction to the school. They are well supported by governors, who investigate and challenge aspects of the school's work through their scrutiny committees, for example, one considering the achievement of boys. Excellent use is made of robust data to set targets and monitor performance. Self-evaluation throughout the school is good. The school has successfully developed the skills of subject leaders in evaluating performance, for example, through using data effectively and accurately assessing the quality of teaching and learning. The school makes good use of its resources and has met the Financial Management Standards in Schools. The school works extremely effectively with other educational providers, external support agencies and the local community. The school is making good progress towards meeting its challenging targets, including those set for its specialism. Managers have demonstrated that they have good capacity to bring about further improvement in the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more opportunities for students to develop independent learning and to fully engage in lessons.
- Develop the provision for food technology in Years 7 to 9 and increase the time allocated to physical education for all students in Year 10 and 11.
- Develop a higher profile and more proactive role for the student council in bringing about improvement in the school.

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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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
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	3
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?	3
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?	2
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	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

14 February 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Willingdon Community School, Eastbourne BN20 9QX

We enjoyed our recent visit to your school and would like to thank you for helping us with the inspection and making us feel so welcome. I would like to share some of our findings with you.

Yours is a good and improving school with several outstanding features. Many of you told us that your school is friendly and caring and we agree with this view. The great majority of you enjoy your education and feel safe. We were impressed by the good relationships most of you have with one another and with your teachers. You make good progress in your work and achieve well. GCSE results are excellent and amongst the best in East Sussex. You achieve well because teaching is generally good and because you are given excellent care, guidance and support. Most of you attend well. Your behaviour in lessons and around the school during our visit was very good but the school agrees that a small number of lessons are occasionally disrupted through poor behaviour. Incidents of bullying and other forms of harassment are rare and are dealt with effectively when they are brought to the attention of staff. There was evidence to show that you know how to lead safe and healthy lives. You are provided with a very good choice of courses in Years 10 and 11 and many of you benefit from taking part in after-school activities. You are well prepared for life after school. Your school is well led and managed and the headteacher, governors and staff are very capable of making it even better in the future.

- We have made three suggestions for improvement:
- to make teaching even better, more should be done to help you learn independently, rather than being told everything by your teachers, and to engage you more actively in lessons
- food technology should be included in the curriculum for those of you in Years 7 to 9 and the amount of time for physical education in Years 10 and 11 for all students should be increased
- we feel that more importance should be attached to the role of the student council and it should be more actively involved in helping to bring about improvement.

We hope you will play your part in helping to bring about these improvements and wish you every success in the future.

David Butler Her Majesty's Inspector