

Woodrush Community High School

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	116937
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	312450
Inspection date	15 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Brian Cartwright 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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	994
6th form	112
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Sandbrook
Headteacher	Antony Morrison
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 2004
School address	Shawhurst Lane Hollywood Birmingham B47 5JW
Telephone number	08444 771 814
Fax number	08444 771 812

Age group	11-19
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Amended Report Addendum

Report amended due to administration error

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the quality of the curriculum, care, guidance and support, the sixth form, assessment, and achievement and standards, gathering evidence from observations, discussions with staff and students, public examination results, and responses to the parent questionnaire. 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, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This average-sized comprehensive school has a small but growing sixth form. The overall socio-economic indicators and proportions of students from minority ethnic backgrounds are broadly average but these mask some unusual features. These include disproportionately higher numbers from disadvantaged and privileged backgrounds, leaving fewer 'in the middle'. The academic attainment of pupils on entry is broadly in line with the national average, with slightly lower proportions of the most able due to the presence of local selective schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Woodrush Community High school is a good school. It is improving strongly and is effectively ensuring students of all abilities and backgrounds make good progress. All of the performance indicators for the school are climbing. As one parent put it, 'Our daughter is extremely happy, and our son starts in September and can't wait!'

Several factors are behind this positive picture, beginning with a determined focus on ensuring teaching and learning are constantly reviewed and improved. The headteacher has an infectious enthusiasm for ensuring students reach their potential. He is systematically and successfully 'picking off' key strategic aspects of the school one by one, with the next target being the sixth form. He has developed his leadership team very well, so that they share his attitude of relentless optimism. The monitoring and evaluation by the school's managers is effective in resolving weaknesses, and in promoting good practice. One particularly impressive feature is the quality of staff professional development; this is proactively supporting teachers in their career paths, and enabling wide access to expertise outside the school that is brought back to classrooms. Teachers said that the school was 'looking after their future careers'. Several parents had a concern over the number of classes whose regular teacher had changed, but inspection evidence indicated that the school had taken effective action to minimise the impact of some temporary absence. The proportion of permanent staff turnover is typical.

Students are very positive about school and enjoy learning here. They behave well, particularly in unstructured settings such as break and lunchtime, and staff report how much this has improved since the previous inspection. Students confirm that the school deals swiftly with any concerns and, as result, feel safe. The school has improved attendance significantly since the previous inspection and sharply reduced exclusions to low levels. All of the students inspectors met had enjoyed a trip, visit or participated in a production or sports event and at least half of them do some extra activity every week. They have every opportunity to eat healthily, and more of them are choosing to do so. Woodrush is preparing them well for their next steps in life. The school council is developing its role, with a clear agenda of what needs to be done to improve student life.

Teaching is good overall, thanks to the good subject knowledge of teachers and a dynamic blend of experienced and newly qualified staff who are all working to a common high level of expectations in their planning. At its best, students use the opportunities for independent action well, can self- and peer-assess their work, and participate enthusiastically in class discussion. Marking can be informative and diagnostic, although there are also examples where work has not been marked, or comments have been superficial. Sometimes, even where comments have been accurate, students have not always responded to these comments directly.

The curriculum is good with some outstanding features, in particular, the quality of transition between primary and secondary school. This has been effectively resourced by the specialist technology college status, and is leading to much better progress in Key Stage 3 than at the previous inspection. Key Stage 4 achievement is also good, because different curriculum pathways provide a growing range of qualifications. Emerging partnerships with other Worcestershire secondary schools are leading to greater vocational choice.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. This is in no small part because of the very effective use of heads of house. These staff, from a non-teaching background, have the time and experience to spend individually with students, monitoring and discussing their progress, and

directing intervention on their behalf if necessary. This relationship extends to close working with parents, and other agencies as required. Procedures for safeguarding students are fully in place.

The combination of good teaching, good and improving curriculum, and outstanding support for learners has ensured standards have risen sharply since the previous inspection. Now, students at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 attain above average standards and make good progress when compared to their marginally higher than average starting points in Year 7. There are minor variations in the relative performance of girls and boys but no discernable pattern is evident over time. Current measures of academic standards, compared to the same time last year, are higher still and consistent with the school's challenging targets. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make equally good progress and are very much part of full school life. Good support by classroom assistants is a key reason for their success, as is the drive and leadership of the school's Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO), who is part of the senior leadership team.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Students enjoy sixth form life, feeling part of a community and valuing the freedom to organise their own studies. They say that their subject teachers support them well and are always willing to give up their time to help them. Assessment procedures are helpful in enabling them to develop their work and their progress is effectively monitored. The satisfactory sixth form curriculum is developing and there are now a variety of pathways including vocational courses at all levels to meet the individual needs of students. The curriculum is enriched by a variety of trips and visits.

Sixth form achievement and standards are satisfactory. Students value the opportunity to take responsibility within the school, for example, organising house events and charity fundraising. However, sixth form students do not feel that they are yet given sufficient priority in the support they receive. 'We are an afterthought,' one student said. This is highlighted by the lack of adequate common room facilities and independent study resources such as effective computer workplaces. The school is well aware of these concerns and is actively engaged with the local Learning and Skills authority to develop and extend facilities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure the sixth form takes priority in the next stages of school development, building upon the successful improvements in the main school, including a distinctive sixth form identity, with good study and social resources.
- Ensure day-to-day marking consistently gives good feedback to students on how to improve their work, and students have time to act upon that advice.

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

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	3
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	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	3	
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

Dear Students

Inspection of Woodrush Community High School, Hollywood, B47 5JW

Thank you for your friendly welcome and positive discussions we enjoyed during our visit to your school. We agree with you, and parents, that Woodrush is a good and improving school. The results students gained in tests in 2007 were above average and the highest ever in the school's history. We were particularly impressed by the outstanding care, guidance and support you receive through the heads of house and their tutor teams. The subject choices on offer continue to widen, and the work done by the school with feeder primary schools is very good.

The school provides a wonderful range of trips, activities and clubs for your interest and enjoyment. This is a very strong testament to the dedication and enthusiasm of staff, and their commitment to giving you a very full all-round education. Your headteacher's optimism and drive have helped the school to raise standards; he knows that challenging targets can be met. Many staff and parents commented on how much better the general behaviour and ethos of the school seemed now. We agree with you that the school is a safe place to be, and that you are getting every support in developing a healthy lifestyle.

There are two main things we noted that the school is already working on in order to improve further. Firstly, although the sixth form is sound, we agree with many students that the independent study facilities you have could be much better. Results in exams are satisfactory, but they could be better, given the same attention to guidance and support you receive in the main school.

Secondly, the day-to-day marking of your work varies too much; some of it is excellent and gives you clear guidance on what to do next by way of improving your work. Sometimes, the helpful comments made by teachers are ignored by students, and sometimes the advice is not directly connected to improving your knowledge and understanding of the subject.

Best wishes for your future Brian Cartwright Her Majesty's Inspector