

# Wigmore High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	116953
<b>Local Authority</b>	Herefordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	312455
<b>Inspection date</b>	4 March 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ceri Morgan 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>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	450
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Anna Weaver
<b>Headteacher</b>	Andrew Shaw
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18 October 2004
<b>School address</b>	Ford Street Wigmore Leominster HR6 9UW
<b>Telephone number</b>	01568 770323
<b>Fax number</b>	01568 770917

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and the following issues: standards and achievement of students; personal development and well-being; the quality of provision, including teaching and the curriculum; care, guidance and support; and the quality of leadership and management. Evidence was gained from interviews with school staff, senior managers, governors and students in school; lesson observations, some in partnership with school staff; a sample of students' work; and various documents. The inspector also observed behaviour in school during the working day and an assembly. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

Wigmore High School is much smaller than most other secondary schools. The proportion of students who are eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The school serves a wide rural area and a largely settled community, so that nearly all pupils start at age 11 and continue until 16. The proportion of students who are at the early stages of learning English is minimal and all pupils are from White British backgrounds. In 2006 the school achieved specialist status for mathematics and computing. At the time of the inspection there was a slightly higher proportion of boys than girls. Wigmore has recently federated with the nearby primary school and is now one school, sharing leadership and a governing body. This inspection was of the provision for students aged between 11 and 16 only.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Wigmore High is an outstanding school with an almost tangible atmosphere of mutual respect and support, where students achieve exceptionally well. 'Schools don't get much better than this' was a comment from one parent, who was very appreciative of the care, guidance and support her child had received. This is an accurate view.

A particular strength of the school is the individual support and care available to students, which helps them make outstanding progress academically and personally from age 11 to 16. The school cares for its students extremely well. They appreciate this and greatly enjoy their time here, with attendance levels well above average. As a result, students reach exceptionally and consistently high standards in national tests. In 2007, for example, 93% of students achieved five or more A\* to C grade GCSEs and 89% managed to do so with English and mathematics included. The performance of key departments, such as English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT), is consistently outstanding. In these subjects, results have been well above both national and local authority levels for the last three years. Around 80% of students annually go on to further study full time after age 16.

The progress made by students is outstanding. The school has been in the top 1% of schools nationally in this respect twice since 2005 and never outside the top 5% since the last inspection. A particular feature of this success is the thoughtful and rapid response to support any students who have been identified as at risk of underachievement. This includes, for example, a rigorous and challenging target-setting process, which is closely monitored. The school consistently sets expectations well above what is expected by national and local bodies and routinely achieves them. Teaching assistants and other support staff also contribute well to this success in partnership with outstanding teaching. Although students make outstanding progress, girls slightly outperform boys and some of the more able pupils are not given enough opportunity to explore and research high-level challenging tasks.

Teaching is almost always good and more usually outstanding. Particular features of the high quality of teaching are the very positive relationships evident in classes, increasingly effective use of interactive technology to add sparkle to lessons and maintain high levels of enthusiasm, and good subject knowledge. Students respond well to this. As a result of the ethos evident in many lessons, students are not afraid to 'have a go' with good humour and resilience. In one example, students were asked to try their hand at 'speed dating' both in public and in French. They all enjoyed this and were able to correct and improve their sentence construction and pronunciation with careful guidance. This also indicates how students are increasingly involved in assessing their own performance. Most students can identify what is required of them to reach the next level, although there is scope for the marking of work to identify this more explicitly in some subjects.

The school has used its specialist status very effectively to improve provision, for example, by strengthening the subject specialism across the new federation. ICT use has increased considerably since the last inspection and the school is exploring innovative projects such as using the new school network to show recordings of lessons and subject-specific blogs. Links with other schools and the wider community, such as the police and health-care services, are well established and growing. They include links with other schools that serve areas with a broader range of ethnic groups to ensure Wigmore students are aware of the racial mix of the

society they will enter when leaving school. Students also benefit from a healthy range of international projects and cultural visits.

A recent review of the curriculum highlighted some considerable strengths and some aspects requiring further development. The strengths are the wide range of subjects available for such a small school and a detailed enrichment programme of clubs, visits and visitors. Despite the rural problems associated with transport links, these are popular and well attended. They include sports and expressive arts but also other themes such as mathematics and 'imagineering' designed to stimulate design and engineering work. A carefully planned programme of work placements alongside high numeracy, literacy and ICT skills ensures students are exceptionally well placed for their future economic well-being. However, the school is aware that the provision of religious education (RE) at Key Stage 4 and some wider vocational opportunities are not yet fully developed. Despite this, the school also adopts an innovative approach to the curriculum, such as offering Polish-speaking students the opportunity to take a GCSE in their first language and teaching citizenship through other subjects.

The school has had considerable success in recent years with award-bearing schemes covering a range of aspects such as Healthy School, Artsmark and Careers Quality Mark. This rich variety of awards is a testimony to the quality of provision. The students feel extremely safe, know in detail about healthy lifestyles and sustainability issues, and hugely enjoy their studies. Behaviour is excellent, with students showing considerable maturity and self-confidence alongside politeness and respect for each other. This was exemplified by a letter, celebrated in assembly, which had been received by the school from a centre the students had visited, congratulating the students for being 'courteous, hardworking, good humoured and polite'. The overwhelming majority are. The students themselves say that bullying is almost non-existent and is dealt with briskly when it does occur. They appreciate the opportunities to take on responsibilities, such as becoming a prefect or joining the school council. Many more would like the opportunity to do these things. They are aware that they attend an outstanding school and describe one of the best aspects of it as 'the teachers'. Their only grumbles were about the occasional lateness of the buses as this 'stopped them learning' and a desire for the more able amongst them to be stretched academically even more.

Parental questionnaires show that the majority of parents are very supportive and appreciative of this high quality of education. They particularly appreciate the good induction for students joining in Year 7 and support for students at times when they need it. A few parents, however, commented that they would appreciate more effective communication with the school.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher has secured the confidence of the whole-school community, shows a considerable clarity of vision and expects the best of colleagues and students alike. A particular strength is a desire to develop both a breadth and depth of educational provision. This is exemplified by ambitious future plans and an excellent approach to target setting where only the best will do. He is supported well in this by a strong and experienced senior leadership team, although there is some variation in the level of detail of the various departmental plans and monitoring, with occasional examples of less urgent timescales for actions. Similarly, governors are highly committed and challenge school leaders where appropriate. They too have ambition and are frustrated by the limitations put on the school by ageing and cramped premises. Although funding is tight, the school offers excellent value for money and shows an outstanding capacity to continue to improve.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Develop the curriculum through improved provision for RE, vocational courses and an innovative use of ICT.
- Offer greater challenge to gifted and talented students through a mix of open questioning by teachers and wider research opportunities.

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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?	1
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	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	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	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	1
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?	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
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
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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

5 March 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Wigmore High School, Leominster, Herefordshire HR6 9UW

I am writing to thank you for your help with the recent inspection of your school and to let you know of the main findings.

There is no doubt that you all enjoy your time at school. This is because you attend an outstanding school that genuinely cares about your well-being and academic progress. As a result of this, the progress made by many of you is amongst the best nationally. This is partly due to the high quality teaching you get but also because the leadership shown by those who manage the school is also so successful.

Those in charge of the school will also acknowledge that one of the best things about Wigmore, however, is the students themselves. Your behaviour and attitudes do you credit. This is helping you to achieve results that are exceptionally high.

As with any school, even an outstanding one, there are always some aspects that could be improved. I have suggested two.

- Use the ICT available to find ways of making the curriculum fresh and up to date in all subjects, including RE.
- Ensure that the more able students are offered challenges to stretch them.

Thank you once again for your help with the inspection and I would like to wish you all well with your future studies.

Kind regards

Ceri Morgan Her Majesty's Inspector

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Ceri Morgan  
Her Majesty's Inspector