

## Great Wyrley Performing Arts High School

Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124402
<b>Local Authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	314920
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Nada Trikic HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1150
6th form	135
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Derek Watson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Chris Leach
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 March 2003
<b>School address</b>	Hall Lane Great Wyrley Walsall WS6 6LQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01922 857030
<b>Fax number</b>	01922 857066

---

<b>Age group</b>	11-18
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 January 2008
<b>Inspection number</b>	314920

---

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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 four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Great Wyrley is a larger than average comprehensive school. It makes sixth form provision jointly with four other local schools and a further education college. The great majority of students are from White British backgrounds with few from other ethnic groups. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The number with a statement of special education need is just above average although the overall number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school achieved specialist status for performing arts in September 2006. In April 2007, the school became part of a Community and Learning Partnership.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Great Wyrley is a satisfactory and improving school. In 2007, there was an impressive improvement in performance in Key Stage 4 with a 17% increase in the proportion of students achieving five or more higher grades A\* to C. This brought the school's overall results to the national average, including the average which covers both English and mathematics. These results demonstrate satisfactory progress for students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The effective use of assessment data and tracking has supported the increase, alongside a more rigorous approach to the completion of coursework. The picture is stronger in Key Stage 3, where the school has placed greater emphasis.

The headteacher has provided strong strategic direction for raising standards and achievement during a period of high staff turnover and financial constraints. This has included changes to the satisfactory and improving curriculum, supported by the school's performing arts specialism. This is providing more opportunities in drama that students appreciate, improvements in facilities and further investment in information and communication technology (ICT), which is a strength of the school. Provision for the 14 to 19 age range is satisfactory, but is a weaker aspect as there is insufficient coherence and opportunity for progression.

Variation in standards and achievement remains across subjects and teachers as reflected in the quality of teaching and learning. This ranges from outstanding to inadequate and is satisfactory overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge and generally engage students actively in learning. Students are mostly willing to listen attentively and show positive attitudes to work. Although there are good systems in place for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning, they are not yet rigorous enough in directing support to achieve greater consistency across departments, and teachers.

Students' personal development and well-being are good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students are confident, articulate, polite young people who are supportive of the school and each other. They are accepting of others who have views and cultures different from their own. Students speak highly of the school and especially praise the staff and their fellow students as the best features of the school. However, many parents did not agree that the school seeks their views and takes account of suggestions and concerns, and would welcome greater involvement in the school's development.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Some aspects of leadership are good, but in some cases leaders have not taken steps to keep up to date with current government requirements. The school acknowledges inadequacies in leadership and management with respect to statutory safeguarding and child protection arrangements. Procedures and training are not adequately in place. Given the lack of compliance and understanding of safeguarding and child protection requirements, care, guidance and support are inadequate. The headteacher has taken immediate action to tackle these aspects. Other aspects of care and guidance are effective, for example pastoral and academic support.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 3

The effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory. Achievement is satisfactory and standards are broadly average but they have declined since the last inspection. New priorities are starting to take effect, particularly in the improved quality of academic guidance, which students value.

In addition, teachers now make better, more frequent use of data to monitor students' progress, set helpful targets and take early action where individuals do not achieve as well as they should. Sixth formers demonstrate mature attitudes and are eager to learn in class, and to work independently. Their views about the school are taken seriously and they have played a useful role in helping to plan facilities for a new sixth form centre. Teaching is satisfactory overall but inconsistent. Where it is good, teachers use strong subject knowledge and a variety of methods to engage students and capture their interest. Too many lessons are satisfactory and, in some, a lack of pace and challenge means students have to listen passively for too long, and the rate of learning is too slow. The curriculum serves the needs of the academically higher attaining students, but does not satisfy the needs of all who seek to further their studies in the school. A small number of students benefit from links with partner institutions, although there has been limited development of this aspect of provision.

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

- Ensure that safeguarding and child protection arrangements meet government requirements.
- Improve the consistency of teaching and learning in line with the school's best practice to ensure that all students make good progress, especially in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.
- In collaboration with partners, develop more flexible post-16 provision to meet the needs of students to ensure effective 14 to 19 progression.
- Improve communication with parents to involve them more closely in the work of the school.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

On entry to the school, students' ability is broadly average. In 2007, standards reached were average and students made satisfactory progress by the end of Key Stage 4, an improvement on previous years. This resulted from rigorous target setting and monitoring which enabled the school to track progress more accurately.

In Key Stage 3, standards have remained average for the past three years. In 2007, there was a significant improvement especially in English and science. Standards were above average representing good progress through Years 7 to 9 for all groups of students. This has been assisted by greater stability in staffing, effective middle leadership and good quality training focusing on the use of assessment to tailor learning to students' needs.

Students are now more involved in assessment through planned target setting and review days. Underperformance is identified more swiftly with support and catch up strategies to keep students on track. Tracking has highlighted where there is variation across courses and where there are pockets of underperformance amongst girls and upper ability students. Effective steps are now taken more systematically in response to this analysis.

## Personal development and well-being

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students' personal development and well-being are good. One student commented, 'it's the best decision I have ever made to come to this school'. Students are well organised and punctual. They enjoy their lessons and achieve average attendance figures. They behave well, are respectful towards equipment and adopt safe practices in lessons. Students make healthy choices in the way they live their lives, for example by eating healthily at lunchtimes and participating in many extra activities in and out of school. Students are orderly around the school. Although they say they feel safe and there is no significant bullying, students report that there is too much 'name calling' in school. Many parents expressed concerns about student behaviour but, during the period of inspection, this was a good feature.

Students express sensible views and are keen to take on responsibility. They enjoy influencing improvements in school through the school council, such as the introduction of social areas and the availability of healthy eating choices. They are usually very tolerant and accepting when their ideas to improve things are not acted upon, but have continued to lobby for improvements in toilet facilities. The school is now addressing this issue. Many of these personal skills equip students well for the world of work and as valuable citizens.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In too many satisfactory lessons learning tasks are not pitched carefully enough to maximise progress, especially for more able students. There are too few opportunities for students to discuss their learning in pairs or groups to develop their understanding and use new vocabulary. Where lessons are good, there is a clear focus for learning with activities planned to take account of different ability levels. Challenging questions are used to develop students' thinking; they understand the progress they are making, and what they need to do to improve further. The better lessons end with an opportunity for students to share and celebrate achievements.

The school has developed an effective system for informing students about how well they are doing subject by subject. Although teachers prepare their lessons, the quality of planning is not consistent enough or specific about intended learning gains. In particular, lesson plans rarely identify with precision how the work will enable individual students, or groups of students, to progress further towards their target level. Good examples were observed such as in science and ICT but this is yet to spread effectively across the school.

### Curriculum and other activities

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum that meets statutory requirements. Gaining the specialism for the performing arts has enriched provision and improved community links and

participation, particularly in music and drama. Drama is a core element in Key Stage 3 and is popular with students. There is good provision for ICT and modern foreign languages across Key Stages 3 and 4. There has been recognition that some older learners are studying too many courses. This has led to revisions to the curriculum, and changes to examinations to meet better the needs of students. There is now an improved range of academic and vocational courses and links with colleges to provide relevant work related courses.

The sixth form provides a good range of academic courses but not enough courses at different levels to meet the needs of all students at the end of Year 11.

There is a range of popular extra-curricular activities especially in sport, music and drama, which extend student experiences and contribute to personal development. The extended curriculum for the sixth form is good, including a thriving Duke of Edinburgh Award programme and a valuable higher education residential experience for most students.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 4**

**Grade for sixth form: 4**

Although there are good features within the school's systems of care, there are also significant weaknesses and so overall care, guidance and support of students is inadequate. The school's systems for ensuring staff are suitable to work with young people do not meet current government requirements, and child protection arrangements, including staff guidance and records, lack rigour. Student–staff relationships are good and so students can ask for help when they need to. Regular visitors, such as representatives from the church, together with high quality and relevant assemblies all add well to students' personal development and skills. The school's system for tracking progress is thorough and ensures students increasingly receive helpful and timely guidance on how to improve further. Changes within the guidance system have provided a stronger emphasis on achievement and progress with tutors equipped well with the necessary assessment information to monitor progress thoroughly.

Good quality and healthy snacks and meals are provided. There is good promotion of safe and healthy living in lessons, and through the citizenship and personal learning and tutor programmes.

The school has reduced the number of exclusions as a result of the introduction of a student support unit. The role of learning mentors is developing well to increase the school's capacity to support students with additional needs.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Senior leaders are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. A particular strength has been in establishing a more effective whole-school assessment and tracking system, which has been instrumental in raising standards. The target-setting culture has raised expectations and senior leaders can now identify where intervention is required. Confidence is growing in the use of assessment information and this has been supported by training. There has been less success in shaping a vision for progression from 14 to 19 and in tailoring the sixth form

curriculum to the needs, interests and aspirations of students. This is now viewed as a priority for the school in order to raise standards and achievement further.

School and department improvement plans identify appropriate priorities for development. However, these plans do not always focus sufficiently on the precise steps needed to make improvement or detail the ways progress will be measured and evaluated. A good department review programme undertaken by senior leaders is helping to standardise practice. There are good systems in place for middle leaders to carry out activities to check the quality of their work, although this is yet to secure consistent practice.

Governors have not held the school to account for inadequacies linked to safeguarding and child protection procedures. In other respects, they are generally well informed about aspects of the school's work. The school is effectively managing a deficit budget in accordance with local authority guidelines. Issues from the last inspection have been tackled satisfactorily and this has brought about improvement, especially with assessment and the role of middle leaders. The school has satisfactory capacity to improve. Although there is a trend of improvement in Key Stage 3 and 4, other important aspects of the school's work have not developed as securely, including sixth form provision, the use of classroom observation to target intervention, and statutory requirements for safeguarding and child protection.



**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](http://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	16-19
---	----------------	-------

### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	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?	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

### 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	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
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?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	4	4

<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>	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	No	No
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

18 January 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Great Wyrley High School, Walsall, WS6 6LQ

Thank you for being so welcoming and friendly when we came to inspect your school recently. We very much enjoyed talking to you, and hearing your views about the school.

We were impressed with your positive attitudes and good behaviour in lessons and around the school. You very much value the support and care you receive from staff. Most of you were supportive of the school council but thought it could be given more responsibility for improving the school further, for example the toilets. This is now a priority for the school.

Great Wyrley is a satisfactory and improving school. The headteacher has led the school to raise standards by setting you challenging targets. You told us that you felt better informed about your achievements through the target-setting day, and were helped to keep on track. Last year there was a big improvement in results in Key Stages 3 and 4. We decided that the sixth form was satisfactory and was beginning to improve now that there are better systems to check on progress. Sixth formers told us that they particularly enjoyed having a say in the development of the new sixth form area.

A few areas of the school's provision need improving to make it even more successful. We have asked senior staff to check on the quality of lessons so that good ideas can be shared across the school to help you all make good progress. We have also asked the school to plan the curriculum in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form to provide courses that meet your interests and needs from age 14 to 19. Although the school works hard to keep you safe, some checks and procedures do not meet government requirements and need to be sorted out quickly. Most of your parents are supportive of the school and the improvements that have taken place. Others felt that the school did not always seek their views or act on concerns or suggestions. We have suggested that the school improves communication with parents/carers so they can be more involved in the work of the school.

You, too, can help the school to improve further by attending every day; thinking more about what you are learning in the classroom, and what you need to do to improve.

Our very best wishes for the future.

Nada Trikić, Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools