

Wilnecote High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124420
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	314926
Inspection dates	28–29 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Philippa Francis 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1025
6th form	162
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Terry Dix
Headteacher	Stuart Tonks
Date of previous school inspection	7 February 2005
School address	Tinkers Green Road Wilnecote Tamworth B77 5LF
Telephone number	01827 475111
Fax number	01827 475114

Age group	11-18
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Wilnecote is a large school and has held specialist performing arts status since September 2001. Its catchment area is urban with a lower than average level of social and economic disadvantage. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is well below average, although over a third of students in the sixth form are eligible for educational maintenance allowances. Most students are from White British backgrounds. Students' prior attainment in the main school is broadly average but below average on entry to the sixth form. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly below average. The school has a designated resource base for students with hearing impairment and those with physical difficulties and/or disabilities. Students in Key Stage 4 attend the Torc Vocational Centre, operated through a collaborative partnership of local schools and a further education college, for vocational courses. Students in the sixth form take courses at other schools and the further education college through the Tamworth sixth form consortium. The local community uses the school's sport, recreation and performing arts facilities, and the library.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Wilnecote is a large school and has held specialist performing arts status since September 2001. Its catchment area is urban with a lower than average level of social and economic disadvantage. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is well below average, although over a third of students in the sixth form are eligible for educational maintenance allowances. Most students are from White British backgrounds. Students' prior attainment in the main school is broadly average but below average on entry to the sixth form. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly below average. The school has a designated resource base for students with hearing impairment and those with physical difficulties and/or disabilities. Students in Key Stage 4 attend the Torc Vocational Centre, operated through a collaborative partnership of local schools and a further education college, for vocational courses. Students in the sixth form take courses at other schools and the further education college through the Tamworth sixth form consortium. The local community uses the school's sport, recreation and performing arts facilities, and the library. Wilnecote High is a satisfactory and improving school, with some good features. The school is popular and a focal point in the community, which makes wide use of the school's facilities. Parents and carers are largely supportive and the school's reputation is improving. Results in examinations are generally above average in Year 11, broadly average in Year 9 and below average in the sixth form. In 2006/07, students completing Year 11 made good progress overall and over half stayed on into the sixth form. Progress made between Years 7 and 9 and in the sixth form was satisfactory. Personal development is good across the school. Students become more confident, improve their communication skills and broaden their outlook. Behaviour is satisfactory. Attitudes to learning are generally positive in older students but too variable in younger ones. The school raises their awareness of the importance of a healthy lifestyle effectively, although many students make unhealthy food choices. High priority is given to safety.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Good or better features in lessons are becoming more widespread because of effective staff development and a strong focus on sharing good practice. Assessment is satisfactory although the quality of marking varies and a minority is insufficiently helpful. Homework is insufficient and does not support learning well. The curriculum is broad and especially good at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. The school's specialist status has been used well to enhance the curriculum. Students are well cared for, including the most vulnerable, and individual support is very strong. This leads to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities making very good progress. Partnerships with external agencies are outstanding in ensuring this high level of support. Guidance has improved and students value the help teachers provide. Target setting and monitoring, an area of recent improvement, is mostly effective in ensuring that students reach or exceed expectations.

Leadership and management are good. A strong focus on raising achievement has resulted in the best results to date for Year 11 in 2006/07. Actions to bring about improvement in the quality of teaching and the use of assessment are proving effective and the number of lessons that are good or better is increasing. Governors are supportive of the school; however, a few aspects of compliance with equality and diversity legislation are incomplete. Financial management is good and the school provides good value for money.

The school has good capacity for improvement because leaders are skilled at accurate and rigorous self-evaluation and in action planning effectively for improvement. Staff have confidence in senior leaders, who have ensured a high level of consultation and developed a

culture of striving for improvement with a focus on raising standards. Their actions are starting to show very positive signs of impact, particularly in achievement at Key Stage 4. Effective actions have improved areas identified as in need of improvement at the last inspection.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Progression into the sixth form is high, including a significant number of students from backgrounds with limited experience of further or higher education. The school manages this transition well, encourages high expectations, and offers a broad curriculum through the Tamworth post-16 consortium. Staying-on rates are high in Year 13 and improved in Year 12, from a satisfactory rate in 2006/07. Attendance is good. Students have lower than average starting points and below average results in external examinations reflect this. Over the last two years, there has been significant underperformance in a number of subjects. However, because of considerably improved management and much more effective tracking of progress, students in the current year are making satisfactory progress and their standard of work is satisfactory. Teaching is at least satisfactory and the best lessons promote independent learning well. Students' personal development is good because they gain considerable confidence, improve their ability to work independently and in teams, and develop useful communications skills. They are well guided and supported because of the introduction of realistic entry requirements and much closer monitoring of progress. Students move purposefully and successfully on from school into either employment or, for a growing number, higher education.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the number of good or better lessons to ensure consistently positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour.
- Improve teachers' use of assessment in lessons and the quality of marking in order to raise standards.
- Ensure homework is set and marked regularly to support learning.

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

Because of considerable improvement in attainment in Year 11 in 2006/07, standards at GCSE are above average. The percentage of students gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE improved from below to above average, and the school exceeded its statutory target. Pass rates in two of the school's three specialist subjects of dance and drama were particularly high and exceeded targets. However, results in music were below average and below target. Students attained well in vocational subjects. Attainment in mathematics and English is average. Almost all students gained at least one pass at GCSE or equivalent. Attainment in Year 9 is average. Results in mathematics have steadily improved and are just above average; however improvement in science is less marked and English results have slipped from a position of strength. The school did not reach its statutory targets in English and science. Attainment in the sixth form was below average in 2006/07 but standards of current students' work are average.

Students completing Year 11 in 2006/07 made good progress, especially during years 10 and 11, and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress throughout the school. Their progress in mathematics and English was satisfactory. Students who completed Year 9 in the same year made satisfactory progress, an improvement on below average progress in mathematics and science in 2005/06. Students in the sixth form made below average progress in 2006/07; however, monitoring shows that current students are making satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students from a wide range of backgrounds, many of whom have low aspirations, develop well personally and socially. They gain confidence and develop good communication skills. Specialist performing arts status supports this as it involves all students in creative work and provides many opportunities for cultural development. Spiritual development is satisfactory because it is limited in its integration into the curriculum. Attendance is good; most students enjoy school and the wide variety of extra-curricular activities that take place. They play sport and take part in theatrical productions enthusiastically. Students broaden their view of the wider world, including through opportunities for residential trips both nationally and internationally.

Behaviour is satisfactory and improving. Attitudes to learning vary from being mostly very good and productive in the sixth form and in Years 10 and 11, to satisfactory and sometimes poor in Years 7 to 9. Some younger students become distracted easily and engage in low-level disruption when lessons do not engage and challenge them fully. Students contribute extensively to their community through charitable events and initiatives including those linked to primary schools and senior citizens' homes. A much stronger vocational curriculum means students gain good workplace skills and they are well prepared for their future economic well-being. Students are developing healthy and safer lifestyles although many choose to eat unhealthy food.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Most teachers plan thoroughly using clear learning objectives and structure their lessons to include a wide variety of teaching techniques, making lessons enjoyable and interesting. The best lessons have a brisk pace with expert management of learning and behaviour, and good use of assessment. However, whilst almost all lessons are at least satisfactory, the proportion that is consistently good or better is not large enough. In many lessons, the level of individual challenge does not closely match the needs of each student and a minority are not fully engaged in all aspects of the lesson. Parents express concerns about continuity in learning in a few subjects where the school has had difficulty in recruiting teachers or has had a heavy reliance on supply teachers. The school is working hard to improve the quality of learning through its strong focus on staff development, and by ensuring teachers share good practice widely. It is making rapid headway, and improved teaching in Years 10 and 11 ensured that students made good progress in 2007, although progress in other key stages is satisfactory.

The quality of assessment is satisfactory and improving because there is now a drive to make it more effective in supporting learning. The quality of marking varies from highly effective

written feedback to very few useful comments on how to improve. Too little use is made of homework to help students make good progress, a matter of some concern for parents and a key priority for improvement identified by the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is broad, especially at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, and specialism in performing arts enhances it significantly. Effective integration of enterprise and careers education takes place from Year 7. However, extra literacy support in Years 7 to 9 is insufficient. The Key Stage 4 curriculum provides a rich choice of subjects, including nine vocational pathways and three science routes. In the sixth form, options available through the consortium enhance the good range of academic subjects. The school is reviewing the appropriateness of A-level provision in a few subjects, in favour of vocational qualifications, to make a better match to students' needs.

Extra-curricular activities are broad and strongly linked to artistic activities. Choirs and bands gain enthusiastic support and a notable percentage of students have tuition in a musical instrument. Residential trips are popular and include international visits, supported by long-standing links with a school in Germany and more recently in Russia.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Measures for ensuring students' safety are robust with effective safeguarding procedures. Students are confident in approaching staff for help if they have any problems, and they speak highly of support arrangements in the school. The use of data to monitor progress, including through target setting, has improved considerably, especially in Years 10 and 11. Leaders track individual students' progress closely and the use of data by teachers to raise achievement is good in Years 10 and 11 and is becoming considerably more consistent in Years 7 to 9. Most students know their academic targets, but a minority are unsure as to how to achieve them.

The pastoral support structure, including its liaison with external agencies, is highly effective in ensuring that students receive outstanding care and support throughout their school career. Support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and for those in the care of the local authority, is comprehensive and they make good progress. In the sixth form, students value the commitment of their teachers and appreciate the support given in deciding future pathways.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Good leadership and management ensure a clear focus on raising achievement and promoting students' personal development. The impact of this focus is clear in the considerably improved results for students completing Key Stage 4 in 2006/07 but the impact on outcomes in other key stages within the school is not yet evident. The headteacher sets high professional standards

for all and ensures a strong sense of common purpose. A very positive ethos of working together in an environment of mutual trust, respect and inclusivity permeates the school. The new leadership structure has clearly defined roles that focus closely on improving students' learning and achievement. Self-evaluation works very well in evaluating the school's performance accurately and identifying what needs to be improved. The improvement plan is comprehensive. Monitoring and evaluation of actions are rigorous and thorough. Leadership initiatives, such as improvements in the use of assessment procedures, are well thought out and beginning to bear fruit. Financial management is good. Resources are used effectively and judiciously to achieve good value for money.

Leaders keep a very close check on the quality of teaching and learning, which is improving. Wider and more confident use of the effective system for target setting and monitoring of progress is evident. Information from tests and assessments is analysed carefully and productively. Good guidance and support for all staff, including newly qualified teachers, are in place with a clear focus on meeting their individual professional development needs.

The governing body is strongly committed to the school's continuing improvement and the governors have a good awareness of the strengths and areas for improvement in the school. Policies that cover the school's work are in place. However, publishing of several equality and diversity policies and progress with implementation of linked action plans to parents and carers is not complete.

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	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?	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?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ 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	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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2	2
The attendance of learners	2	2
The behaviour of learners	3	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	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?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	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	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	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

Thank you for your contribution to the recent inspection of your school. The inspectors enjoyed meeting you and found your comments helpful. The exhibition of your artwork in the school's reception was especially impressive.

We judged your school to be satisfactory with some good features. The results you gain in external examinations are broadly average and above average at GCSE. You make at least satisfactory progress in all years during your time at school, and progress made by students who completed Year 11 last year was good. Teaching and learning are satisfactory but improving, and many lessons now have good or outstanding features. Your teachers are working very hard to help you to learn. We have asked them to ensure that assessment is used consistently to help you improve, and to increase the use of homework to reinforce your learning in all subjects.

Your behaviour is satisfactory overall, and in older students it is often good. However, some younger ones amongst you are easily distracted and lose concentration, especially when lessons are less interesting and engaging. We have asked your teachers to make sure more lessons are good or even better, but you must help them by developing a good attitude to your work and paying close attention to what they ask you to do. You develop well personally and socially and make good use of the opportunities available to widen your horizons. The school cares for you well and guides you effectively through school. Monitoring of your progress is much closer now, meaning that if you slip behind teachers know very quickly and take prompt action.

The curriculum is broad and interesting. You told us how you enjoy the range of subjects, especially those in creative arts and vocational areas. Your involvement in extra-curricular activities is high, especially in sports and theatrical productions. Your school is well led and managed. The headteacher, senior staff and governors know the school well and they have made many improvements in a short time. You contribute well to the school's role in the local community. Your work in local primary schools and with senior citizens is creditable and we were impressed by the level of charitable fund raising that you undertake. Well done!



30 November 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Wilnecote High School, Tamworth, B77 5LF

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Yours sincerely
Philippa Francis
Her Majesty's Inspector