

Worthing High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126090
Local Authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	315426
Inspection dates	16–17 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Christine Jones 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	12–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	903
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony Cohen
Headteacher	Alison Beer
Date of previous school inspection	11 November 2004
School address	South Farm Road Worthing BN14 7AR
Telephone number	01903 237864
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Age group	12-16
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Worthing High School is of average size. There are fewer girls than boys in the school. Students start in Year 8 from local middle schools. Few students come from minority ethnic groups or are learning English as an additional language. More students have statements of special educational need than in most other schools although overall the number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is in line with that found nationally.

The school has gained the following: Investors in People; Investors in Careers; Healthy Schools and Healthy Workplace Award 2007; Artsmark 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'I love getting up in the morning and coming to school as I enjoy my lessons so much!' The view of this Year 8 student illustrates the positive attitudes and outstanding enjoyment of learning held by most students in this good school. Students know they are expected to behave and learn in the positive learning atmosphere the school creates and, as a result, the quality of education is improving. Examination results in 2007 rose significantly and the school enjoyed its best ever GCSE results. The vast majority of students make good progress from their starting points on entry to the school.

Students appreciate the opportunities available to them. They are maturing as responsible citizens with a commitment to the school community. This is reflected in good relationships and attitudes to learning. Students are fully aware of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and are eager participants in the extra sporting activities now available. The school takes very good care of its students and, along with outstanding liaison with a range of agencies, is effective in reducing and minimising exclusions, improving behaviour and raising self-esteem. Attendance is satisfactory overall and monitoring is robust. However, some parents do not challenge persistent absence sufficiently and their children are missing too much school to the detriment of their learning.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive outstanding support from the learning support department. The school makes excellent provision for these and other vulnerable students who need more support in school through the near-school-provision (NSP) centre that delivers in-depth multi-agency support. These students benefit from effective mentoring that draws together both their academic progress and personal development. This is not yet available to all other students.

The school's aim that 'learning should be fun and fulfilling' is certainly being achieved through the creation of a culture of good teaching and learning. This makes for lessons that challenge and stimulate students of all abilities as teachers are encouraged to develop their skills creatively and deliver lessons that are engaging and interesting. Improved assessment strategies are now in use across all subjects and are effective in tracking students' progress, setting appropriate targets and informing them how to raise the standard of their work. The good curriculum offers students appropriate courses that have been extended to provide greater flexibility and choice. This is helping to motivate students and provide pathways to further education, training and employment. Excellent links with local businesses support the provision for courses in business and enterprise. A major key to the success of the school is the good leadership and management of the headteacher and senior team supported by high quality middle management. The headteacher puts considerable effort into developing the leadership and management skills of staff at both senior and middle levels. As a result, the quality of leadership throughout the school is improving and driving the development of teaching and learning and the consequent rise in achievement. This improvement is evident to parents. As one commented, 'During the last few years the hard work of teachers at Worthing High School has resulted in the whole ethos of the school changing. The improvements made...are colossal.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve attendance by working closely with persistent absentees and their families.
- Ensure appropriate mentoring opportunities are extended to all students.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students join the school with standards slightly below average and, because of good teaching, their achievement is good in Key Stage 3. In English, mathematics and science, standards are average in the national tests at the end of Year 9 and students make good progress.

Attainment in Key Stage 4 has risen strongly in recent years. In 2007 the proportion of students gaining five grades A*–C was in line with the national average and above average when English and mathematics are included. This represents outstanding progress in English and good progress in mathematics. The school is determined that all students achieve as well as they can and this means that virtually all students gain five GCSE grades A*–G, well above the national average. There are, however, significant variations between subjects. As well as English and mathematics, business communication is also an area of strength whereas modern foreign languages remain weak.

Inspection evidence shows that current Year 11 students are making good progress and are on track to achieve their challenging targets for 2008. All different groups of students, including looked after children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students are very enthusiastic about their school. The vast majority attend regularly, throw themselves whole-heartedly into a wide range of activities and clearly enjoy their learning. They are articulate, reflective, loyal and appreciative of the facilities on offer. Spiritual, social and cultural development are satisfactory overall. Moral development is good because there is a wide range of opportunities for the discussion of controversial issues such as race equality or medical ethics. Students are increasingly adopting healthy lifestyles as food quality in the canteen improves and opportunities for an ever wider range of physical activities catch their imagination. They are more likely to keep themselves safe because of good specialist advice about issues such as alcohol, drugs and positive relationships. Despite the school's best efforts, attendance levels for a minority of pupils are unsatisfactory.

Students have a very strong voice in the school and staff and governors value their views. Students are keen to contribute through their school council, questionnaires and other discussions. In particular, they value the opportunities the school gives for them to comment on lessons and influence learning styles. As part of their positive contribution to the wider community, they bring music and art to local elderly people and raise impressive amounts of money for charity. Within school, they operate a very effective 'buddy' system with their peers. Students are developing secure basic skills that are good preparation for life ahead. Their readiness and preparation for working life are fostered through the good advice given to help them make the right decisions about their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Good teaching and learning are promoted successfully throughout the school and, as a result, the quality of lessons has improved since the last inspection. The school carries out careful

monitoring of teaching and is constantly striving to raise the quality of teaching and learning to the highest standard. Students are very involved in this process through their enthusiastic participation in the 'Taking Learning Further' initiative where they observe lessons. They spoke enthusiastically about the opportunity to be involved in evaluation and development of their learning. Teachers are eager to embrace new ideas and share them with colleagues. Through targeted professional development they are continually encouraged to use innovative approaches to develop classroom practice. Students learn particularly well when teachers encourage them to think for themselves and they have opportunities to both work in groups and to learn independently within well structured lessons. They thrive on a variety of activities that capture and keep their interest. They learn less well when teachers talk too much and provide them with little opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning. In a very few lessons where teachers are not sufficiently in control of the class, students do not make appropriate progress. Students are keen to do well and take pride in what they achieve. Relationships are good and there is a real sense of enjoyment in learning. Learning Support Assistants (LSAs) are highly effective in helping students with differing needs. They are thoroughly trained and skilled in supporting teachers and learning.

The school's major thrust to develop teachers' skills in using information on student performance is having an increasingly positive effect. Marking is regular and thorough, written work is regularly assessed and many good examples of informative feedback and self-evaluation can be seen in students' assessment folders and progress charts. This ensures that students know the level they are working at and what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum has developed considerably in recent years with a number of features that serve students well and provide good flexibility in meeting the needs of individuals. For younger students, the 'Learning to Learn' programme helps them make good progress in Key Stage 3 when they enter the school in Year 8. Additionally, all students in this key stage study two modern foreign languages and the more able linguists can follow accelerated courses with early GCSE examinations followed by more advanced studies.

The good curriculum in place for Key Stage 4 is also flexible in meeting students' needs. Three curriculum pathways include an appropriate range of academic and vocational options in school together with individual workplace options at a local college. Good work-related learning includes an effective work experience programme although the school sometimes finds it difficult to encourage students to broaden their horizons when choosing placements. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from targeted and clearly structured learning support lessons.

Regular enrichment days are effective in promoting the benefits of healthy living and sport, developing business and enterprise awareness and skills, and broadening students' horizons through external visits. Students and parents appreciate the range of extra-curricular activities, particularly for sport and music, and the booster classes available at lunchtimes and after school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school puts considerable effort into making the transition to high school from middle schools as easy as possible for the new students. Parents appreciate this work and describe the

transition as 'smooth'. Students feel valued and respected because the school takes good care of them. The safe and supportive environment enables students to flourish. As one parent said, 'My son is seen as an individual and is made to feel that he counts.' Students have justifiable confidence that their problems will be listened to and that action will be taken as necessary. This has helped reduce bullying to negligible levels and enabled students to share sensitive issues. There are good arrangements for safeguarding students in lessons and around the school. Child protection arrangements and health and safety checks meet requirements. Exemplary work with a range of agencies, the effectiveness of the NSP project and school initiatives, along with a broader curriculum, have had a positive impact on potentially disaffected learners.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well due to the outstanding provision, such as sensitive withdrawal sessions, support in lessons from highly effective LSAs and modified timetables. As one parent commented, 'The additional support and supported studies have been invaluable in keeping them stress free and contributed to improved grades.' Provision of similar quality ensures inclusion for minority groups such as looked after children and new arrivals to the country.

Students receive clear advice on how to improve their work through good academic and personal target setting. Tracking of their progress is in place but not always used to full advantage. Students in targeted groups receive effective mentoring that helps them develop both personally and academically but this is not available to all.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher clearly knows her school and makes perceptive judgements about what the school must do to continue improving. She is supported in her work by an effective senior leadership team and a dedicated governing body. There is a strong sense of common purpose among staff and good collaborative working relationships. Honest self-evaluation gives an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. The school has high expectations of its staff and believes in giving them the opportunity to develop, supported by an appropriately tailored programme of training.

The school strives to support and promote equality of opportunity for all its students and is having considerable success, especially with vulnerable students and those needing extra guidance. The development of the NSP centre is particularly successful in this area. Financial management is very good; resources are well managed and focused in areas where they will have the most impact on learning, for example in the excellent newly refurbished learning resource centre.

The governors are strong supporters of the school and have a clear understanding of their responsibilities for challenging the school to continue to improve its performance. They are also keen to involve students in their work through the 'student issue advisory group' where students are given opportunities to meet with governors face-to-face and air current issues.

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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	3
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	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
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
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?	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
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
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

After our visit to Worthing High, we would like to share our findings with you and thank you for your friendly welcome and for taking time to talk to us. You tell us that the school is 'great' and we agree with you. Worthing High is a good school. We are very pleased that you enjoy it so much and make the most of the wide opportunities available to you. You are very appreciative of not only the good teaching but also the sporting opportunities, music and wide range of clubs.

The school takes very good care of you. You tell us that you feel safe and that there is always someone to turn to when you need help. You speak highly of your teachers' readiness to assist you. Many of you make a difference through the school council and buddy systems and your work in the wider community such as raising funds for charity. Because of the hard work of your headteacher, of the governors, and of your many very committed teachers, you make good progress. Most of you come to school regularly and on time but a few people are not making the progress they could because they do not come to school enough.

Because you co-operate so well with what your school is trying to do for you, we are convinced that you will continue to support your teachers' efforts and go from strength to strength in developing your personal skills as well as your academic prowess. You can help in this by:

- asking your parents to help you in coming to school as regularly as you can
- taking full advantage of the good mentoring system that some of you already use; we have asked the school to make sure it is available to everyone.

Everyone wants Worthing High School to keep on improving. We think if you keep working and learning together, you will do just that.

With very best wishes for the future