

Warminster Kingdown

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126460
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	315559
Inspection date	12 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Wiola Hola 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	1407
6th form	192
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vacant Position
Headteacher	Sheelagh Brown
Date of previous school inspection	10 November 2003
School address	Woodcock Road Warminster BA12 9DR
Telephone number	01985 215551
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Introduction

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

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards; teaching and learning, predominantly in the main school; some aspects of the curriculum; care, guidance and support with a focus on academic guidance and safeguarding; and elements of leadership and management, particularly systems for self-review. Inspectors also checked briefly on students' personal development and well-being.

Evidence was gathered from: the school's self-evaluation form (SEF) and other review documents; nationally published assessment data and the school's own assessment records; observation of the school at work in lessons and at break times; discussions with staff, students and two members of the governing body; and the parents' questionnaires.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail. 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

The school is much larger than average. It is the only maintained secondary school in Warminster and serves the town and surrounding villages. The area is also served by independent and grammar schools. Attainment on entry is slightly below average overall and significantly below average in literacy. Military barracks are located in the town and roughly 13% of students are from forces families. The movement of forces children is the main reason for the above average mobility of students. The vast majority of students are White British with 3% from a range of other backgrounds. Very few students are at an early stage of speaking English. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well below average. The school is a specialist sports college and has a second specialism in vocational work. It also has a resource base for students with specific learning difficulties and six students currently attend.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The school is outstanding. All members of the school community do everything in their power to provide each and every student with the right learning experiences that lift aspirations, build confidence, bring tremendous enjoyment to learning and enable students to achieve well. Not only is students' achievement good and improving well, as seen in the rising standards, but the school's superb provision enables students to make outstanding progress in their personal qualities. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. She has built a team of highly motivated and effective staff working with a shared drive to ensure that students mature exceptionally well and are extremely well placed to contribute to society, making the best use of their individual skills, talents and enthusiasms.

Students and parents speak highly of the school, praising it for all it offers, and praising staff for their supportive relationships with them. They value greatly the vast range of extra opportunities the school provides beyond lessons in a full programme of clubs and activities, trips and visits. Students have an excellent understanding of how to lead healthy lives. They apply their knowledge of how to stay safe extremely well in science but, occasionally in other subjects, students' attention to safety slips and they must be reminded of it. Students' behaviour in lessons is excellent but a few students and parents mentioned some problems with behaviour, generally outside of lesson time. The school has trenchant but supportive methods of dealing with instances of less than perfect behaviour that do exist, and students say these are effective. It works with utmost persistence to keep students at school and designs tailor-made provision where necessary to engage sometimes troubled youngsters. The school is at the centre of the community, knows it so well and responds to its needs. In particular, forces children are extremely well received, made to feel welcome quickly and enabled to succeed.

Teaching and learning are outstanding not only because most lessons are good and some excellent. Excellent learning also takes place in the many ways students contribute to the life of the school and wider community, in highly acclaimed school productions, for example, and through the many valuable activities and interactions between students of all ages in the vertical tutor groups and house system. Fast track learning routes exist for the gifted and talented students, alongside a good range of vocational opportunities, and high quality support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, for those attending the special unit and for others. The school's specialist status as a sports and vocational college, and the drive and energy of senior leaders and governors, have been highly instrumental in extending the breadth of educational opportunities. The school is successfully nurturing and developing older students to act as role models to younger ones. Some students work with pupils in Year 6 in local primary schools both to develop their own leadership skills and to inspire them.

Standards are rising and are above average, but relative weaknesses exist in literacy for some students. In Years 7 to 9, students make outstanding progress in mathematics and science and good progress in English. In 2007, GCSE results were slightly above average showing the good progress students made from Year 7 to Year 11. Students did particularly well in art and design, business studies, French, general studies, geography and mathematics. Some students in that year group did not sit GCSE examinations but took other suitable courses that maintained their interest in learning and provided them with good skills for the future. Students' current work and school records of attainment indicate that standards are set to rise further this year. Students are fully aware of the targets teachers set for them, at two levels of challenge. They and parents are kept well informed of progress towards these targets. The school's systems for

keeping a close check on students' progress, by using data and in the mentoring arrangements, are outstanding. The school is highly effective in identifying and combating any underachievement.

Exceptionally effective systems for keeping the school's work under review, including robust self-evaluations conducted by middle managers as well as senior staff and governors, are just one example of excellence in leadership and management. The drive for constant improvement, with full cooperation and enthusiasm from staff, are hallmarks of this school. This is possible because staff, as well as pupils, are so well cared for and encouraged. Professional development of staff is highly effective and central to the school's success. Work on increasing further teachers' skills in assessing the extent of students' learning, for example, is clearly visible in most lessons. Whilst most teachers have highly developed questioning skills, just occasionally, these are rather limited and senior staff are aware that this is an area for further development. The school is fully aware of the fact that all staff play a part in the efforts to boost levels of literacy and is rightly seeking to increase the impetus and effectiveness of work in this area. The school has created some excellent and innovative facilities for learning, and whilst the general environment is well cared for and very pleasant, some parts of the building are old, worn and in need of renewal.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The excellent educational provision of the main school continues into this outstanding sixth form. Highly effective systems for keeping students' progress under review pertain here as well, as do the school's constant efforts to match courses of study to each student's needs and abilities. Roughly, 60% of Year 11 students stay on into this open-access sixth form and achieve well on a wide range of courses, including A-levels and vocational courses in many subjects. Students' standards are broadly average when they enter the sixth form and are above average at the end of their courses. Course completion rates are high. Students' personal development is outstanding because of all the opportunities provided for it to flourish. As in the main school, special study days and an extensive enrichment programme with some compulsory elements for sixth form students, greatly enhance their skills and prepare them extremely well for the future. All students take the sports leaders course and most gain the accreditation. Students' contribution to the lives and well-being of younger students, through the vertical tutor group and house system, is valued and very significant. Sixth form students are indeed 'heroes' as the school intends.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen the contribution all staff make to developing students' literacy skills, thereby raising standards in English.
- Within the context of many existing strengths in the quality of teaching, develop, where necessary, teachers' questioning skills.

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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?	1	1
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	1	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	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?	1	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	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
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	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

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?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	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	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

14 March 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Warminster Kingdown, Warminster, BA12 9DR

Thank you for your welcome when I visited the school recently with another inspector. We much appreciated the conversations we had with you. I write to let you know of our findings.

Your school is outstanding. It enables you to achieve increasingly well in your academic work. It also enables you to develop extremely well into confident, considerate young people, ready to take your places in society and to make outstanding contributions to it and your own future lives. It is clear that you enjoy school greatly. Your behaviour in lessons is excellent. Whilst less than perfect behaviour does occasionally occur, you feel that the school deals with this very well.

The range of learning experiences that the school provides, in Years 7 to 11 and in the sixth form, is outstanding. Most lessons are good and some are excellent. It is because of these lessons and other activities that your learning in all aspects of development is of such high quality. You are extremely well cared for. Those of you who join the school other than in Year 7, and particularly those from armed forces families, are welcomed warmly and supported to make good progress. You are given excellent guidance about your work and how to reach your targets. You value greatly the way that the vertical tutor group and house system enable you to mix with, learn from and support students of different ages.

Your headteacher provides excellent leadership and the school is extremely well led and managed. Staff and governors do everything in their power to provide you with the best possible chances to succeed at school and in the future. The school building is a pleasant place to work in even though some parts of it are showing signs of age. Leaders constantly strive to improve the school, often in very creative ways. We agree with them about the key actions for the future and highlight the need to work further on improving the literacy skills for some of you. You should do all that you can for yourselves to keep developing these skills, by reading for pleasure and taking care to do your best writing in every subject, for example. Teachers generally have excellent skills in questioning you about how well you understand your work, and to deepen your thinking. This is not so in all cases and so we have asked the school to develop these teaching skills so that they are always as good as the existing best.

We wish you all the very best for the future.

Wiola Hola Her Majesty's Inspector