

# Woodford County High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	102852
<b>Local Authority</b>	Redbridge
<b>Inspection number</b>	323703
<b>Inspection date</b>	25 March 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Anne Feltham 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>	Grammar (selective)
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	840
Sixth form	240
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr William Brock
<b>Headteacher</b>	Miss Helen Cleland
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 November 2005
<b>School address</b>	High Road Woodford Green IG8 9LA
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8504 0611
<b>Fax number</b>	020 8506 1880

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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: the progress of different groups of learners; improvements in information and communication technology (ICT); and the school's contribution to community cohesion. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation form, assessment data, parents' questionnaires, planning documents, observation of lessons, and interviews with staff and students. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but 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

This girls' grammar school is smaller than most secondary schools but has a larger than average sixth form. Students' attainment on entry to the school is much higher than average. A small proportion of students receive free school meals. Most students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, with the great majority of Asian British heritage. Many students are bilingual, and do not have English as their first language. Almost all students go on to higher education from the school sixth form.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Woodford County High School is an outstanding school, which offers its students an excellent all-round education. It was judged to be outstanding at the time of the previous inspection, and has not rested on its laurels: rapid progress has been made in the meantime on the issues identified in the last report. The school's excellent headteacher and her senior team have continued to pursue further improvement relentlessly. Students greatly enjoy school and make excellent progress as they move through the school, and attain very high results. They are selected for their academic ability; however, the school not only challenges them to aim ever higher in terms of qualifications, but also supports them as they develop into mature and confident young women. As one parent wrote, reflecting the views of many: 'My daughter loves going to school. Each day she seems to be stretched and challenged, but in a very affirming and supportive way'.

Students enter the school with attainment levels that are well above national averages. They make excellent progress and reach the highest levels at the end of Year 9. They also achieve early success at GCSE in their information and communication technology (ICT) short course examination, taken in that year. They make continuing rapid progress over Years 10 and 11, and this leads to outstanding GCSE results. A particularly strong feature of this success is the very high proportion of A\* or A grades achieved. This diverse school closely monitors the results of its different ethnic groups, and all students, irrespective of their background, do equally well overall. Many students in the school are bilingual, or even plurilingual. The school ensures that they achieve excellently and is, rightly, seeking ever more effective ways of developing their proficiency in advanced speaking and writing skills. While GCSE results in English are very strong, and some students gain accreditation in their home or heritage language, the school recognises that it could do more. It does not currently link students' existing language skills sufficiently closely to their literacy work and progress in other curriculum languages learnt in school.

Students' personal development and well-being are excellent. They are avid learners and enjoy school. They come from a range of diverse cultural heritages and their support for each other is exemplary. Younger students talk with enthusiasm and appreciation of the care given to them by sixth-formers, who are attached to their tutor groups. They feel that they can speak confidentially and openly to these older peers, and give many examples of how they have been helped to form friendships and develop good relationships with teachers in their early months in the school. The tutorial and house system builds cohesion into the school community. Students have many excellent opportunities to contribute to the life of the school. Learners of all ages come together for the annual house drama production and they talk of their delight in participating in this and other house events.

Students talk with great pride of their friendships within the school across ethnic and faith divides. They benefit from the strong culture of open debate and mutual respect fostered by the school. For example, students who are members of the school council described to inspectors their work in ensuring that the canteen offers a variety of vegetarian options to cater for all dietary needs. Students also develop a strong sense of social responsibility. They make decisions about which charities to support and show exceptionally mature commitment to this work. They develop positive attitudes to older people, and conduct voluntary visits and entertainment events in local residential care homes. They value opportunities to make links with other local schools and those abroad, including visits.

The overall quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. In the many good and often outstanding lessons teachers use stimulating and up-to-date resources which motivate students highly. They often plan group work which enables students from different backgrounds to work together for a shared purpose. Teachers challenge students with questions which help them to make links between different aspects of their knowledge. The school's focus on literacy has had a positive impact, and many teachers are now beginning to develop students' oral skills so that they can give extended answers to questions. For example, paired activities are used in the best classrooms to develop students' confidence and deepen their learning. While teachers mark students' work regularly and conscientiously, there is some variability in both the way errors are identified and in the quality of the written feedback. In some subjects, students receive feedback which is too general - for example, 'you must practise more' - and which does not identify specific targets for future improvement. In the best practice, students receive very full and helpful comments and this pushes them further and faster in their learning.

The school's curriculum offers students outstanding opportunities throughout the school. Strong features include the range of choices available and the responsiveness to students' needs. Both the taught curriculum and the very wide range of extra-curricular opportunities, prepare students excellently for their future lives, academically and in all areas of their personal development. ICT, identified as a key issue in the previous inspection report, has developed significantly in recent years. Resources have expanded and staff expertise has been developed. All departments in the school now use ICT regularly to enhance learning, and this work is regularly tracked and monitored. The school has developed a virtual learning environment, which provides a range of materials for students. The school's excellent care and support for its students enable them to achieve highly and to develop into confident young women, aspiring to success. Since the previous inspection, a more sophisticated progress-tracking system has been introduced, and this means that academic guidance is now much stronger. Analyses of students' progress are shared with subject leaders and action is taken swiftly where any emerging underachievement is identified.

This consistency of high-quality education does not happen by chance. The headteacher's inspirational leadership and vision continue to drive the school forward. There are no signs of complacency since the previous inspection. The very effective senior leadership team monitors the work of the school closely and, as a result, self-evaluation is very rigorous, self-critical and accurate. Subject leaders and governors contribute fully to this high-quality leadership and management. The school's contribution to community cohesion is outstanding: all staff have been involved in auditing existing successful provision and planning future action to ensure that further developments are accurately targeted. The overwhelming majority of parents praise not only the overall work of the school in educating their daughters, but the way in which it communicates with them on a regular basis. As one parent wrote, expressing the view of many, 'We are very impressed with the efficient and humane management and leadership of the school. The headteacher is outstanding.'

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 1**

The sixth form continues to provide an outstanding education for older students, and provision has improved since the previous inspection. Students make very good progress and achieve extremely high results at advanced level. While the majority of sixth-formers progress from the main school, there are also new recruits post-16. Two parents whose daughters joined at the start of Year 12 expressed widely-held views; 'Teaching and pastoral care are excellent'; 'Teachers

and the school have been fantastic'. The inclusive ethos of the sixth form is demonstrated by the success of the small number of students with refugee and asylum-seeker backgrounds, who are very well cared for. Sixth-form students are excellent learners who analyse teachers' feedback conscientiously to identify how to improve, and set themselves very demanding goals. They are active and eager learners in class, and respond particularly well when teaching captures their interests and imagination. They receive outstanding guidance and support, with regular and frequent individual tutorials. Preparation for next steps is of a very high standard. As a result, almost all students go on to university, and the school is rightly proud of the fact that last year 30% of students were the first in their families to go on to higher education. Sixth-formers make a very full contribution to the life of the school. They take on a wide range of responsibilities for younger students, including peer support and mentoring for different subjects, and organising clubs and special events. Many younger students spoke movingly of their admiration for the work undertaken by sixth-formers in leading assemblies and leading house events. This was confirmed by parents: 'The sixth form girls nurture the younger ones in a commendable way'. All Year 12 students also undertake 25 hours of community service. Leadership and management of the sixth form are of an outstanding quality.

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

- Ensure a consistent quality of marking, with clear feedback to students on how to improve, in line with best practice and school policy.
- Build further on students' rich and diverse language 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	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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**Overall effectiveness**

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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**

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

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<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.



### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	1	
The extent to which 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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

### Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

20 April 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Woodford County High School, Woodford Green, IG8 9LA

During our recent visit to your school, my colleague and I enjoyed meeting many of you, listening to your views and seeing you at work with your teachers. Many of your parents and carers also took time to let us know how they feel about the school.

Yours is an outstanding school. You work hard and achieve a great deal, both in terms of examination outcomes and in experiences that prepare you for adult life. Your headteacher and her team know you all very well and they ensure that the school offers you courses which meet your needs and which enable you to learn and, importantly, to enjoy your learning. We were most impressed by the enthusiastic and confident way you talked about your work and the pride which you take in your school. You all benefit from the many ways in which older students help and support younger students. You have a very good understanding of each other's different cultural heritages, faiths and traditions, and form firm friendships across groups. You treat each other, your teachers and visitors with respect. You have many varied opportunities to contribute to your school community, and to the local community beyond. You also have very good active links with schools and organisations abroad.

We saw some exciting learning going on in classrooms and you told us about much of the excellent teaching you receive. Your teachers mark your work very carefully and regularly. However, we have asked your school to ensure that all teachers give you clear and specific feedback on what to do next to improve your work further. Many of you have the great advantage of speaking two or more languages when you come to the school. We have asked the school to find ways of developing these skills further as you progress through the school.

Thank you for your warm welcome to Woodford County. You were all great ambassadors for your school. We wish you the very best for your future lives, as you continue to aim high and help make the world a better place.

Yours faithfully

Anne Feltham

Her Majesty's Inspector