

Winterhill School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106950
Local Authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	324494
Inspection dates	14–15 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Bernard Campbell HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1642
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Anne Hinds
Headteacher	Mr Roger Burman
Date of previous school inspection	5 July 2006
School address	High Street Kimberworth Rotherham South Yorkshire S61 2BD
Telephone number	01709 740232
Fax number	01709 740403

Age group	11–16
Inspection dates	14–15 January 2009
Inspection number	324494

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: 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

Winterhill is a large 11-16 comprehensive school which was established in 2003 from the amalgamation of two secondary schools. It moved from temporary, split-site accommodation to a new building on one site in 2006. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is above average and the school serves an area of relatively high social deprivation. The school has a higher than average percentage of boys. The proportion of ethnic minority students who speak English as an additional language has increased in recent years but remains below the national average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. The school became a technology specialist college in 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all circumstances it could be reasonably expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to students' achievement and standards.

Achievement and standards are inadequate. Students enter the school with broadly average standards and leave with standards which are below average. This represents unsatisfactory progress. In 2008, the percentage who gained five or more good grades in their GCSE examinations, including English and mathematics, fell compared to the previous year and was below average. GCSE results have declined over three years, including in English and mathematics. GCSE results in science, one of the school's specialist subjects, are well below average and are weaker than in other subjects, as they were at the time of the last inspection. Boys who left the school last year underachieved. Students achieve relatively well in the school's specialist subject of technology as well as in computer studies, business studies and drama. At Key Stage 3, standards are broadly average and students make satisfactory progress.

Students' personal development and well-being are good due to the high quality of pastoral care, guidance and support they receive, such as the provision of the Student Support Centre and the Achievement Centre. The staff work effectively and cohesively to monitor and support students' welfare. This contributes to the positive school climate, and calm and cooperative relationships between students and with staff. Importantly, it has resulted in greatly improved attendance, significantly reduced persistent absence and far fewer exclusions.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Although inspectors observed both good and outstanding practice, the proportion of teaching that is satisfactory or inadequate is too high in the core subjects. In these subjects in particular, students make insufficient progress because not enough of the teaching is good. The school is developing its use of student assessment data to track academic progress. However, this information is not yet used consistently to set learning targets for individual students or to match learning activities in lessons to the range of academic needs.

The curriculum is satisfactory. In the past, lack of provision for accreditation and limited vocational options at Key Stage 4 contributed to low standards and achievement. These weaknesses in the curriculum have now been dealt with and students have better and appropriate opportunities to achieve. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is now making well targeted provision for students with low levels of literacy. Specialist status has enabled the school to develop information and communications technology (ICT) provision and students enjoy participating in a range of technology projects. The school has established good links with the communities it serves and has made good progress in developing its specialist school community programme. Primary and partner secondary schools, as well as groups of adult learners, are benefiting from the school's support in technology.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has implemented well-considered and appropriate strategies that have had some success in meeting the high challenge of developing an amalgamated school that has been established on one site for three years. The senior leadership team and staff have successfully established a positive school climate. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and where improvement is required. Actions taken to improve students' behaviour, the quality of pastoral care and support for vulnerable

students have resulted in higher attendance and reduced exclusions. However, they have not yet had sufficient impact on students' achievement and standards.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve progress at Key Stage 4, especially in English and science, and improve the progress of boys.
- Improve the use of assessment and tracking data to support academic learning so that all students know how well they are doing and how to improve.
- Increase the amount and consistency of good teaching so that support and challenge in lessons are matched to identified learning needs.
- Improve the rigour of quality assurance procedures at all levels of subject leadership and management, so that middle leaders have greater impact on improving students' achievement and standards.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

The standards achieved by learners at Key Stage 4 are below average and achievement is inadequate. Standards at GCSE have declined significantly over the last three years. Standards are well below average in English and science. There is a wide variation in performance between subjects. There are some promising signs of improved results from early entry GCSE in English in 2009. At Key Stage 3 standards are broadly average.

Students significantly underachieved at GCSE in 2007, and achievement was even lower in 2008. Boys and lower ability students underachieved in large numbers. This was partly due to weaknesses in some teaching, especially in the core subjects, and because a large number of students were placed on non-accredited courses. There were also, at that time, insufficient vocational options to engage learners.

Students make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3. The new and developing programme to improve the low literacy skills of Year 7 students is well planned and taught and evidence is emerging that increasing numbers of students are successfully improving their skills in reading and writing. In a significant number of lessons observed too many students made satisfactory rather than good progress. In these lessons, learning activities were not accurately matched to the range of needs in the class.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school is a harmonious environment in which students value each other and have a keen understanding of the cultures different to their own. Students enjoy their school and feel safe within it because, in their words, 'Our teachers look after us and help us to settle in.' Parents agree and add, 'The school picks out the positives in each child and raises their self-esteem as a result.'

Behaviour in classrooms and around the school site is good overall and students are courteous and welcoming to visitors. The school recognises that, on occasions, some low level misbehaviour disrupts a minority of lessons. Students are fully aware of what makes a healthy diet and speak positively also of the wide range of sporting activities, including BMX cycling and wall climbing

which builds their confidence and encourages them to keep fit. Attendance has improved markedly since the previous inspection and is now above average.

Students respond positively to the many opportunities they have to take responsibility in many areas of school life. Student responsibility posts, such as sports leaders, buddies and members of the newly established 'Advice 4 U' initiative, support other students and ensure that as many as possible can play a full part in everything the school has to offer. Moreover, students have played an active role in writing the anti-bullying policy, which had a profound impact in reducing the number of incidents. Students also do much to benefit the local area by leading sporting and other activities in neighbouring primary schools. Students are prepared satisfactorily for the next stage in education or employment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Whilst the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, the proportion that is good or better is not yet high enough to lead to good achievement in the core subjects.

Throughout the school, classroom relationships are positive and most students are well disposed to learning, especially when good quality teaching engages and challenges them. In the more successful lessons, effective planning leads to brisk pace, students actively engage in independent learning activities, and they assess work against criteria which they clearly understand. This was apparent in one outstanding drama lesson seen, where students' detailed assessment of others performances increased their own understanding of how they could improve their own work. In less successful lessons, teachers' planning does not take enough account of students' needs. In these lessons, students of both high and low ability are not appropriately challenged because tasks are either too easy or too difficult.

Assessment data are not used consistently to deliver lessons which are well-matched to students' abilities. Marking is inconsistent. In some subjects, teachers provide good written guidance that helps students to improve, but too many comments are general and vague.

The school has introduced appropriate whole-school procedures for planning and lesson objectives, but the quality is inconsistent. Some good teachers have been selected to coach staff with weaker teaching and their skilful work has begun to have a positive impact on improving teaching.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. Recent changes and innovations in the curriculum have greatly improved the provision for students' needs, aspirations and interests, including those of boys and minority ethnic students. These include a new and well-planned literacy programme in Year 7, the introduction of a wider range of vocational courses and the development of more personalised learning opportunities at Key Stage 4. For example, the certificate of personal effectiveness course provides valuable support for students' individual needs. Lessons seen indicate that these developments are beginning to have a positive impact on students' engagement and achievement.

The physical education curriculum makes a good contribution to students' healthy lifestyles. Students' engagement is also good because of the good range of arts and physical activities

after school and the wide range of revision sessions further develops their learning. Students are prepared for future work and training through effective careers and enterprise programmes. The programme for citizenship and personal and social education at Key Stage 4 has recently been moved from timetabled lessons to planned enrichment days so it is not possible to evaluate its effectiveness at present. Specialist technology college status has made a satisfactory contribution to the curriculum by promoting the use of ICT and technology applications but the contribution of science is too limited.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. As a result of significant improvements since the last inspection, pastoral care and the support for students' health, safety and welfare are major strengths of the school. Effective attendance strategies have significantly reduced the numbers of students who have been persistently absent and the school has had significant impact in reducing levels of exclusion.

Members of the inclusion team, including learning mentors, behaviour for learning managers and learning support assistants successfully encourage students to do their best and they monitor students' personal development closely and effectively. The Student Support Centre provides a wide range of opportunities for students to work in small groups or on a one-to-one basis in order to raise their self-esteem. Students speak highly of this initiative, as they do of the Achievement Centre, which, they say comprise 'A lot of helpful people who help us to build up our confidence.' Vulnerable students are identified rapidly and with accuracy and the impressive support for them is complemented by very effective liaison with outside agencies. The school places considerable emphasis on liaison with parents and is justifiably proud of the Year 7 Parents' Forum, which fosters good links between parents and the teachers of their children. Child protection and safeguarding systems are in place and fully meet national guidelines.

The quality of advice and guidance in relation to students' academic development is inconsistent across the school. Students are not always aware of their current performance levels, their targets, or of what they need to do to reach them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides strong leadership with a clear educational direction. Effective action to improve pastoral provision and school climate has led to pupils' good personal development and well-being. In addition, effective action has led to significant improvements in attendance and decreasing exclusions. The school promotes community cohesion well, through, for instance, working with the community to help better meet the needs of Pakistani boys.

The senior leadership team has established clear expectations of all those in leadership positions and for other staff about the quality of teaching and learning. Systems of accountability have led to some improvements, but quality assurance procedures are not sufficiently rigorous. The tracking of students' academic progress is insufficiently developed. Furthermore, there is inconsistent use of challenging learning targets to promote the achievement of individual students.

Inconsistencies in the quality of subject leadership have generally been tackled effectively. Recent actions to provide new strategic leadership in English and science have not yet had time to impact on academic outcomes, as the new post-holders are not yet in place. Senior leaders recognise that some decisions taken in the past about the curriculum and examination entries, have contributed to underachievement. More recent decisions about the curriculum have significantly improved provision for students at both key stages. The results from early entry GCSE English examinations for 2009 provide positive signs of improving achievement at Key Stage 4, and demonstrate the impact of decisions taken by senior leaders.

The school's leaders and managers have established appropriate monitoring and evaluation systems. Senior leaders have accurately identified strengths and weaknesses and have a correct understanding of where improvements are necessary. The judgements the school makes about itself, including the judgements on the quality of lessons, are mainly accurate. The governing body has a sound knowledge of the school and draws on appropriate data to ask questions of it, but recognises that there is work to do to improve matters further. The school has satisfactory capacity to improve but value for money is inadequate.

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
---	----------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4
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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	4

¹Grade 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

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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?	Yes

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

Following our visit to your school, I would like to thank you all for your welcome. I particularly want to thank those of you who spoke to members of the inspection team in meetings, around the school and in lessons.

You had many good things to say about your school. You were complimentary about the support you receive from teaching and support staff and you value the activities in arts, sports and physical activities after school. The inspectors agreed with much of what you said. However, we concluded that the school needs a 'notice to improve' because the achievement of too many students is inadequate. This means that the school will be inspected again in about one year's time and an inspector will visit before then to check on the progress being made.

At Winterhill, most of you enjoy and make a positive contribution to the life of the school. Behaviour is generally good, and there has been a great improvement in your attendance and a big reduction in the number of students who are excluded. However, at Key Stage 4, the GCSE results have gone down in the last 3 years and too many students have not achieved as well as they could. Not all of you know your targets or what you need to do to improve in each subject. Although most lessons are satisfactory more could be good, and consequently too many of you are not making the progress you could in lessons.

These are the improvements we have asked the headteacher and governors to make:

- Raise standards and improve progress at Key Stage 4, especially in English and science, and improve the progress of boys.
- Improve the use of assessment and tracking data to support academic learning so that all students know their levels and how to improve.
- Increase the amount and consistency of good teaching so that support and challenge in lessons meets identified learning needs.
- Improve the rigour of quality assurance procedures at all levels of subject leadership and management.

We know that your headteacher, governors and all the staff at the school have your best interests at heart and we wish you every success in the future.