

# Wetherby High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	108088
<b>Local Authority</b>	Leeds
<b>Inspection number</b>	324704
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 June 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Elaine Colquhoun

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>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	979
Sixth form	137
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Damian Murray
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms A Barnes
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 June 2006
<b>School address</b>	Hallfield Lane Wetherby West Yorkshire LS22 6JS
<b>Telephone number</b>	01937 522500
<b>Fax number</b>	01937 522504

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

Wetherby High School is an average-sized specialist technology college. Most students are of White British heritage and almost all speak English as their first language. The school serves a market and commuter town to the north of Leeds. A small minority of students attend the school from Leeds city. Most students live in areas where the levels of social and economic disadvantage are lower than the average in England. Students enter the school with above average attainment. The proportion of students receiving free school meals is lower than average. The number of students with learning difficulties/and or disabilities is below average. There are very few students who are looked after by the local authority.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Wetherby High School is a good school. It is led and managed well. Standards at GCSE have risen significantly over the last three years, under the leadership of the headteacher, and are now above average. Students make good progress in both their personal development and academically because they are taught well. The school has good capacity to continue improving and it gives good value for money.

Students' personal development is good. Students are confident, courteous and their behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. They enjoy school and the broad range of enrichment activities. A notable feature is the school's strong partnership with the Salvation Army in the development of students' personal skills. The on-site provision offers opportunities for students to mix socially at the café and the youth club. Individual students access mentoring sessions which are effective in helping those with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. This partnership has a positive impact in raising the students' confidence, self-esteem and enjoyment, particularly for those students who are vulnerable.

Students achieve well because teaching is good. Assessment of students' progress is rigorous and teachers use information from assessment well when planning work for their classes. Teachers have good subject knowledge and ensure a swift pace to lessons. However, the quality of the marking of students' work is inconsistent across the school and does not always guide students effectively on how to improve.

The curriculum is good. Provision for the students' personal development is good and there are effective opportunities for students to make progress in their subjects. Students benefit well from the wide range of additional activities, including sport, music, drama and residential visits.

The care, guidance and support for the individual needs of students are good and potential barriers to students' learning are tackled successfully. Monitoring of students' progress leads to targeted intervention. This intervention is provided by placing students in 'sets' for lessons in some subjects according to their ability. There is a good system of individual mentoring for those students experiencing personal difficulties. These strategies have a positive impact on improving rates of progress. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.

Promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. There are good links with a number of other schools and activities involving the local and wider community and a few students enjoyed an exchange visit with students from the Netherlands. However, opportunities for students to experience and understand other cultures are at an early stage of development.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 3

The effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory and improving. The largely academic curriculum offers satisfactory pathways for most students. Not all of the students leaving Year 11 attend the sixth form at Wetherby. Some students attend other provisions. Students enter the school's sixth form with standards that are slightly below the national average and make satisfactory progress to reach standards that are broadly similar to other students with similar abilities. Most students who enter Year 12 complete their courses and remain in school to pursue

A levels in Year 13. Students are well cared for, guided and supported during the time they are in the sixth form. The vast majority of students continue on to further education, employment or training.

The current leadership has introduced monitoring arrangements that review student progress on a more regular basis through the year. The resulting intervention is helping to secure better progress. The improved atmosphere of learning and progress is drawing greater numbers of students to choose the sixth form for their post-compulsory education. Students speak positively about experiences in lessons but these are not always challenging enough to secure good progress.

Teaching is satisfactory overall in the sixth form. In some lessons, there are more elements of good teaching as students are more actively engaged and challenged. A range of opportunities to take responsibility alongside enrichment activities, including speakers and visits, are contributing to the good personal development and well-being of students.

Leadership and management in the sixth form are satisfactory and improving, resulting in changes that are benefiting students. While some use of the data is resulting in effective intervention, it has yet to be fully analysed and used to have a more positive impact on standards. Evidence of successful intervention in the recent past confirms the good capacity for further improvement.

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

- Improve teaching and learning and further develop the curriculum to raise achievement and standards in the sixth form.
- Improve marking so that it better informs students about the next steps of their learning.
- Ensure that the governing body promotes community cohesion beyond the school and the local area.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement is good overall and standards are above average. Students' attainment on entry is usually above average. In the first three years students make good progress resulting in standards that are above average in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 9. Students continue to make this good progress across Years 10 and 11.

Standards have risen steadily for the past three years. In 2008, the proportion of students achieving five or more good grades, including English and mathematics, at GCSE was well above average. However, a number of students studying vocational courses in 2008 did not do as well as they should. They failed to achieve results that would reflect their ability and this contributed to satisfactory achievement for this group.

This issue has now been addressed and tracking data of the current Year 11 students shows that the vast majority are on their way to securing improved results. This was reflected in the lessons that inspectors observed and the work seen in classrooms. Progress is now good for all groups, including students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who make the same progress as their peers. In the overwhelming majority of subjects students reach standards that are above the national average at the end of Year 11.

In the specialist status subjects of design and technology, mathematics and science standards are above the national average.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

The personal development of students is good. Students demonstrate a positive attitude towards each other, visitors and staff. Students say they feel safe and secure in school, that their views are listened to and that they know who to go to for help and support. Bullying incidents are rare and, should they occur, there are good systems in place which ensure they are dealt with quickly and effectively.

There are good opportunities for students to explore social, moral, cultural and spiritual issues through lessons and involvement in raising funds for charity, for example, the Grace project in Africa and Oxfam Unwrapped. Vibrant displays in classrooms and corridors make a valuable contribution to the students' developing understanding of wider social issues. The school council is well developed and effective. The council effected positive change within the school, such as the outside classroom and picnic benches.

Students are aware of how to live healthily and enjoy the healthy food options on offer in the canteen. They gain an understanding about healthy lifestyles through lessons in food technology, science, personal health education and physical education. The school's sports programme is well supported and offers a variety of sports opportunities both during and after school. The school provides lunchtime drop-in sessions in an informal setting where students can find out about and discuss health issues, including drug and alcohol abuse and sexual health.

Students are well prepared for their future economic well-being. All students receive careers guidance during their time in school and in Key Stage 4 have good opportunities for work experience. Typical comments from students included, 'We get good careers advice and lessons encourage you to discuss what you've learned and increase your confidence.' The school has achieved the Leeds Careers Standard.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good and has improved since the last inspection. The leadership team have put in place a range of effective strategies across Key Stages 3 and 4 to raise standards. In lessons that are good or better students know their targets and have a good understanding of how to improve their work. Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge, plan well and lessons progress at a lively pace. This engages the interest of students and promotes good learning and behaviour.

Teachers are generally skilled in question and answer sessions which challenge and extend the students learning and thinking skills, resulting in students making good progress. However, in a few lessons, questions did not always challenge or extend students' thinking and activities did not always match their abilities. In these lessons, the pace did not consistently engage the students.

Students learn most effectively in lessons where they are encouraged to be independent and are involved actively in assessing their own learning or that of their peers. In lessons where students make the best progress, the marking gives clear instructions on how the students can improve their work. However, this is not consistent across the whole school.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good and it meets all the statutory requirements. The vision for the curriculum promotes personal development well. There are many opportunities for students to develop self confidence through, for example, outreach work in primary schools or becoming technology ambassadors. The curriculum is resourced well. The school's specialist status enables resources to be well targeted, particularly those for information and communication technology. The curriculum supports the academic subjects well and examination results have risen.

Enrichment of the curriculum provides good learning experiences. This further promotes the students' experience and enjoyment of school. There is an extensive range of after-school activities, including sports, drama and music clubs. Students especially value the football. Outdoor experiences and education about health and safety are promoted well through the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. There are good opportunities for students to work as a team through drama. Performances such as the recent Buggy enable students to work collaboratively, raising their confidence and self-esteem.

Residential experiences provide an opportunity to develop self-reliance as well as enjoyment. The vocational curriculum is still developing in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form and there are plans to extend it further.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Care, guidance and support are good. Staff are highly committed to providing individual care and support for students. Key stage managers and learning mentors are approachable and work flexibly to meet the needs of students and their families as fully as possible.

Most students reach challenging targets as staff track their progress closely. Teachers ensure that students receive good information regularly about their progress enabling them to achieve well. Students have a good understanding of how well they are getting on, both in their school subjects and in their personal development. Any students at risk of underachieving are identified early and good arrangements are made to provide additional support to meet their needs.

Rigorous processes for safeguarding students' welfare and assessing risk are in place. Attendance is satisfactory. The school recognises this and has put in place a number of strategies for improvement and, as a result, attendance is beginning to improve.

The arrangements for transition between key stages are good. Students are well informed about the next steps in their education and can make appropriate choices.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher has successfully developed an innovative leadership structure which is designed to focus upon raising standards and the school profile within the local community.

She is well supported by the leadership team who take an active part in leading the school through a structure of five strategic areas with good impact. The new management structure has been effective in raising the achievement for all groups in the school. Standards have risen

continuously over the last three years in Key Stages 3 and 4. Students' progress is tracked well through good assessment systems and the progress the students make is now good.

The school's specialist status has been effective in targeting resources. This has had a positive impact on teaching and learning and the development of the curriculum. Community cohesion is satisfactory overall. There are some very good opportunities for students to mix with others through the excellent partnership between the school and the local community. This has a good impact on the students' personal development and well-being. However, opportunities for students to develop a greater understanding of other cultures, both within other areas of the UK and abroad are at an early stage of development. The governors support the school well and are very focused on its strategic development. They give effective challenge to the school and hold its leaders to account.



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

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2	

<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>	2	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	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	3
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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3	
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	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**

Inspection of Wetherby High School, Wetherby, LS22 6JS

On behalf of the inspection team, I would very much like to thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited the school. We enjoyed talking to you in class.

Wetherby High School is a good school. The leadership team, governors and senior managers are working hard together and have made improvements. The inspectors found that:

- the curriculum is improving and offers a good range of courses and extra activities
- the teaching and learning is good
- you behave well in lessons and around the school
- the staff care and support you well
- the school has been active in promoting healthy lifestyles. Many of you enjoy the healthier food options available at the school's canteen and take part in the wide range of sports on offer at the school.

The headteacher and staff want to improve the school further. To assist them, I have asked them to:

- make improvements in the sixth form in the teaching and the curriculum in order that the sixth form students can make better progress and attain higher standards
- improve the marking of your work so that it better informs you on how to move your learning on
- give you more opportunities to develop your understanding of other cultures and communities both in the UK and beyond.

You can help them by looking closely at the marking in the books and the advice that it gives so that you know how to improve and continue to make the most of all the opportunities the school provides.

Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly. I wish you every success.