

Worle Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109313
Local Authority	North Somerset
Inspection number	324945
Inspection dates	11–12 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Sheila Browning

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1487
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Wright
Headteacher	Trevor Bailey
Date of previous school inspection	19–20 October 2005
School address	Redwing Drive Mead Vale Weston-super-Mare North Somerset BS22 8XX
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 39 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and representatives from the local community. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation about student attainment and achievement, management, planning, safeguarding of students, teaching and the curriculum. Inspectors also analysed 178 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the overall rates of progress being made by all students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, since the previous inspection
- how well teachers convey high expectations, provide quality guidance in marking and use assessment data to inform their teaching
- the impact leadership and management at all levels have in improving students' achievement.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average comprehensive school. The majority of students are White British and almost all speak English as their first language. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than the national average. The majority of these have behavioural, emotional and social, and specific learning difficulties. The proportion of students who are eligible for free school meals is below average. Attainment on entry is average, although a significant minority of students who join have weak literacy skills, as indicated by the school's own tests on entry. The school is a specialist Media Arts College with a rural dimension. It is formally federated with other schools in the area and provides some A-level courses of study in partnership with a local college. The school is a Trust School Pathfinder and achieved trust status in 2008. The focus of the trust is the improvement of students' standards and their well-being. In recognition of its work the school has gained several awards, including Artsmark Gold and Silver eco-awards.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Worle provides high quality support, guidance and care for its students. One student's comment, typical of many students and parents, was, 'The school wants you to be at your best'.

Leaders' ambition and outstanding drive for improvement have led to some cutting edge curriculum developments. The rich learning opportunities derived from the school's specialist status and the exceptional partnerships with other providers have significantly contributed to students' good achievement and enjoyment.

The school has successfully tackled students' weaker literacy skills on entry and this has reduced the numbers requiring additional support. This has enabled students to access the curriculum more easily. However, students remain too reliant on teachers to direct them and are not good at taking responsibility for their own learning or using problem solving skills.

Rigorous checks on student progress and new courses better suited to students' learning styles are significant factors in rising attainment and standards being generally above average. Improvements in teaching and learning have led to the vast majority of lessons being good or better. There are particular strengths in the specialism subjects. Teachers know the different learning needs of students and generally have high expectations of them, although lesson planning does not always make sure all students are provided with precise guidance about what they are expected to achieve.

Senior and middle leaders have an accurate view of the strengths of the school and what should be improved. This, recent improvements and the rigorous processes in place to support self-evaluation, as well as the significant contribution of governors to continued school improvement, ensure a good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop learners' abilities to work independently by
 - planning more opportunities for students to take greater responsibility for their own learning

- encouraging learners to find out more for themselves using their research and problem solving skills.
- Develop robust systems to plan and provide effective learning outcomes for all students by
 - making sure that lessons are more precisely focused on what different students are expected to achieve by the end of the lesson
 - providing a range of tasks and activities that match their different abilities more appropriately.

How good is the overall outcome for individuals and groups of pupils?

2

In a high proportion of lessons observed, students made the best progress when learning was practically based and activities were exciting and interesting. Teachers have high expectations and drive students to make good progress. Teachers' lively engagement ensured students were enthused and motivated. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities made particularly good progress because they were often well supported in lessons by teachers and teaching assistants. Learning resources were well adapted to their needs. Those with behavioural difficulties were helped to manage their own behaviour and to keep on task. More students than before have achieved the highest levels in a broader range of subjects over the last four years. This is due to the changes in the curriculum so that it better meets the needs of all students. It also demonstrates that most teachers have benefited from the training and support given to ensure their teaching is at least good. Students have also received much additional support to help them reach higher levels in their work. However, they are too reliant on teachers to tell them what to do rather than find out more for themselves and use their research and problem solving skills. Standards in major subjects, including those in the specialist status subjects, are generally above average and have risen for the last three years. The gap between boys and girls has also narrowed. Passes at GCSE, including in English and mathematics, compare most favourably with those for arts colleges nationally. School data indicate accelerated attainment for students in Years 10 and 11 and they are already on track to significantly improve on the results last year.

Students enjoy school, as seen in their good attendance, behaviour, positive attitudes, relationships and enthusiasm. Large numbers are involved in the arts, sports and cultural activities. The 'Boys Dance Company' and the sports teams are very successful in national competitions. Students have a good understanding of the importance of healthier living and spoke enthusiastically about the points they accumulated for choosing healthy eating options in the new restaurant. Students say they feel very safe at all times in school and can trust the staff to help if needed. They have reviewed the behaviour policy and participate in life skills training. Students develop effective teamwork and workplace skills. Those on the college increasing flexibility programme link courses, horticulture courses, young apprenticeships and diploma courses develop a real pride in their achievements.

Students' outstanding contribution to the school and wider community is seen through their work as prefects, buddies, mentors and ambassadors. They have raised funds for solar panels and a windmill, and are applying for a green flag award and work with children in a local special school. They participate in a number of community projects, including the federation's film 'Where are they Now?' featuring past learners at local schools. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The specialist status and strong physical education (PE) department has enabled students to experience a huge range of opportunities to appreciate art, drama, music and sports. Links with schools in South Africa and France enhance students' understanding of diversity.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
Pupils' attendance	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

The quality of the school's work

Teachers' strong subject knowledge, high expectations, good questioning skills and setting and use of learning targets are major features in ensuring students make good progress. Teaching usually ensures learning is practically based and interesting, such as in history, when Year 10 students challenged each other's knowledge of the 'night of the long knives' in Nazi Germany with a 'just a minute' style quick quiz. Good use is made of resources such as interactive whiteboards and data projectors to aid learning. Year 9 were absorbed in test racing their Formula 1 model cars designed using computer aided design/computer aided manufacture (CAD/CAM) technology. Year 10, students manipulated digital images in art and diploma students used digital SLR cameras creatively for portraiture. Teachers are clearly aware of students' different learning needs but lesson planning does not consistently ensure that it is clear what students of differing abilities are expected to attain. Opportunities are sometimes missed to develop students' independent learning skills.

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

The school's robust tracking system accurately pinpoints students' progress and those at risk of underperforming. This is used effectively to trigger intervention support to catch up. Many teachers use this information effectively. Students know their own learning targets and helpful marking of their work and guidance ensures they know what to do to reach the next level or grade. In the best lessons they are involved in checking their own and the performance of others.

The curriculum is innovative and features an impressive range of courses developed in association with the school's specialist status, including a rural studies course. Students speak very positively about the new courses. The excellent links with partners and other institutions have enhanced the range of vocational courses. An additional optional lesson at the end of each day, flexi-days and curriculum enrichment weeks together with a very wide range of extra-curricular activities meet the needs of individuals exceptionally well. The extended schools and community arts further enrich the curriculum for all students. 'Aim higher' courses motivate the more able students. These all make a very significant contribution to learners' enjoyment, achievement and self-esteem.

Excellent attention is given to all aspects of pastoral care and this is highly valued by students, parents and carers. Well-targeted specialist support has increased to meet the growing and diverse needs of students and these are being strengthened with trust status. Mentoring, counselling, health and well-being specialists, including therapeutic intervention work with a wide range of students, help the students do well. The school's own learning support team unit is very effective in supporting students with learning needs and/or disabilities, those at risk of exclusion and those with school phobia. Those with relatively weaker literacy skills have particularly benefited from additional support. There are good transition arrangements, and careers and progression advice is widely available to students across the ability range. The school's outreach work in the community with students and families has significantly improved attendance.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	2
Effective assessment	2
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	1
Support, guidance and care	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has provided outstanding clarity of purpose and direction and his astute leadership has been key in raising aspirations and securing the support of all those involved in the school. A strong commitment to school improvement is threaded through every aspect of the school's work. Improving achievement and provision are testament to the successful work of managers at all levels. A strong sense of purpose and teamwork is also evident. A thoughtful and analytical approach to monitoring and self-evaluation is guided by a comprehensive analysis of performance data. Improvement planning at whole-school and departmental level is

driven by accurate self-evaluation. The quality of self-evaluation at subject level is especially good. The school is proactive in its approach to inclusion and meticulous in its attention to the needs of individual students. Safeguarding procedures are robust.

Governors are experienced and active in their involvement through their meetings and individual visits. They are well informed and confident in offering a balance of support and challenge. Through the 'strategy group', they are making an increasingly effective contribution to the school's future direction. The school works successfully in partnership with most parents, although a small minority are critical of the quality of communication between school and home. A deep commitment to community cohesion reflects the school's intimate relationship with its local community, built up particularly through the community partnerships established through the school's specialist status. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good in most respects, including its developing links with schools in other countries, and it has just begun to evaluate its practice formally. The school has made good use of its specialist status within the arts to strengthen and expand its community links. Important partnerships have also been developed with nearby primary and special schools. The school takes effective action to meet the needs of all groups of students. It can demonstrate improvements in their achievement, the higher participation rates in courses and extra-curricular activities, and improved attendance.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Communicating ambition and driving improvement	1
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	2
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	1
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	1
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	2
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	1
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	2
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Replies to the inspection questionnaire were received from the parents/carers of approximately 12% of the students. The vast majority of parents who replied were highly satisfied with the overall provision made by the school. Such comments as, 'My child is a happy young lady thriving under their care' and, 'We couldn't have chosen better' were typical of many of their views. These comments generally match the overall findings of the inspection. However, a very small minority of the parents' responses are critical of the school's general communications with them and would like the school to take greater account of any suggestions and concerns they may have.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



12 March 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Worle School, Weston-super-Mare, BS22 8XX

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We really enjoyed the opportunity to talk with you about your work and to listen to your views about the school. We judged that Worle is a good school and teaching is good. It has some outstanding features.

What we liked most about your school

- The range of learning experiences that the school provides in Years 7 to 11 is outstanding. The school's specialist status really enriches your learning opportunities in all sorts of ways.
- You are extremely well cared for and supported and are given excellent guidance about your work, how to reach your targets and to prepare for the next stages in your lives.
- Leaders constantly strive to improve the school, often in very creative ways.
- We were very impressed with your responsibilities as buddies, prefects, mentors and ambassadors, and with your extensive work in the local and wider communities.
- Teachers work hard to make your learning exciting and interesting, which is why you make such good progress, enjoy your learning and so many of you attain above average standards.

What we have asked your school to do now

- To help you take greater responsibility for your own learning and develop your independent learning skills.
- Check that lesson plans ensure that you are provided with tasks and activities that match your different abilities more precisely.

You can help too by doing all that you can to develop your own learning skills. Good luck in the Formula 1 National competition!

Yours faithfully

Sheila Browning

Lead Inspector

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