

# Wildern School

## Inspection report

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Unique Reference Number	116414
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	326388
Inspection dates	3–4 December 2008
Reporting inspector	David Humphries HMI

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.

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Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1813
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs G Lane
Headteacher	Miss M L Litton
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2006
School address	Wildern Lane Hedge End Southampton SO30 4EJ
Telephone number	01489 783473
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## Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors visited 29 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at the school's development plans, its analyses of pupils' progress and attainment and other key aspects of its performance. Inspectors also considered the views expressed in 334 questionnaires completed by parents and carers and 99 questionnaires completed by members of school staff.

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

- trends in pupils' achievement since 2006
- the impact of changes in leadership on the performance of the school.

## Information about the school

Wildern School is a very large and heavily oversubscribed 11–16 comprehensive school serving the Hedge End, West End and Eastleigh areas of Southampton. As a community school it is open seven days a week providing a range of facilities and activities for local adults and young people. The school has been awarded specialist status in Performing Arts and is designated as a High Performing Specialist School in Raising Achievement and Transforming Learning. It is also a Leading Edge school.

Following the death of the previous headteacher in autumn 2007, an acting headteacher led the school and, shortly before the inspection, her post was made permanent in conjunction with the appointment of an executive headteacher with effect from January 2009.

## Further information about the school

	School's figures	School's figures compared with other schools
School size	1813	Above average
Free school meals	5.3%	Below average
Proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	13.0%	Average
Proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups	5.4%	Below average
Proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language	1.7%	Below average
Proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	0.3%	Below average

## Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

1

## Main findings

- Wildern is an outstanding school. One parent commented that 'all three of our children achieve high expectations...are happy and enjoy school' and this perceptively captures the key strengths of the school. There is a relentless drive to ensure that all pupils achieve their best in tests and examinations, but this is matched by a deep commitment to their personal development and well-being. The school has shown great resilience in coping with the loss of a highly regarded headteacher, building successfully on his legacy to maintain high standards and demonstrating an outstanding capacity for further improvement.
- The overall quality of teaching and its impact on learning is greatly enhanced by an extensive programme of teaching outside of timetabled lessons. This is a key factor in pupils' excellent academic progress. A sharp focus on pupils' individual learning needs is underpinned by rigorous target-setting, although the quality of marking of pupils' everyday work is too variable.
- The school shows an unswerving commitment to take account of pupils' views and provides innovative and wide-ranging opportunities for them to exercise responsibility and participate in decision-making. In this vibrant and purposeful atmosphere, pupils enjoy school and become articulate and confident learners. They are eager to contribute to the school's promotion of community cohesion although the school has not yet developed a full range of opportunities for them to work with young people from diverse ethnic and faith groups in other parts of the country.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the marking of everyday work is used consistently well across the school to provide pupils with regular, detailed and constructive feedback which helps them to improve the quality of their work.
- Enhance the school's work in its duty to promote community cohesion by developing opportunities for pupils to work with others from diverse ethnic and

faith groups nationally, and by evaluating more systematically the impact of its work on community cohesion.

## How well does the school meet the needs of individuals and different groups of pupils?

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- Pupils' achievement is outstanding. They make rapid progress throughout the school so that the results they achieve in GCSE examinations are consistently well above the national average. There is strong performance across most subjects and, although attainment in English is not as high as in mathematics and science, it is above average and improving.
- In 2008 girls outperformed boys by a considerable margin in most subjects, but this is not an established pattern: in the current Year 11 the progress made by boys matches that of girls. The school very carefully tracks the progress of vulnerable pupils, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the few from minority ethnic groups. Prompt intervention and well-targeted additional support is provided when needed, so that these groups also make at least good progress. One parent wrote of a 'fantastic transition group for those who are not so academic or have learning difficulties'. The most able pupils benefit from opportunities to take some GCSE examinations at the end of Year 10 and a significant proportion go on to achieve impressive AS-level results at the end of Year 11.
- Pupils' excellent behaviour makes a valuable contribution to their learning and helps to create a positive and supportive atmosphere in lessons and around the school. For example, in a drama lesson, Year 11 pupils were extremely attentive when reviewing each other's performances, providing a constructive blend of praise and helpful, good-humoured criticism. Pupils make an exceptional contribution to the life of the school, relishing opportunities to participate in discussions about important issues such as teaching and learning styles and helping to shape the school's development priorities. Pupils in the 'Students as Evaluators' group observe lessons and review learning in subject departments. During the inspection pupils from this group made accurate and perceptive judgements about the lessons that they observed jointly with inspectors.
- Pupils show a mature approach to the risks they face in their lives and know how to manage these sensibly. As they move through the school, they become well-rounded individuals with a strong sense of social responsibility and high aspirations. Pupils are very well placed to continue their education or move directly into training or employment. One parent, writing about his two children, commented that 'although they are very different children with different strengths and weaknesses, the school encourages them both to reach their full potential'.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

## The quality of the school's work

- There is a great deal of highly accomplished teaching in lessons across most subjects. At its best, teaching is imaginative, well-paced and lively with skilful questioning to probe pupils' understanding and challenge their thinking. Even in lessons where teaching is not of such high quality, it is well planned and purposeful. The overall quality of teaching and learning is outstanding, because timetabled lessons are complemented by a comprehensive programme of revision classes and clinics to help pupils with homework or topics that they find difficult. The school's virtual learning environment includes an extensive range of resources to support individual learning, and learning mentors provide valuable individual support for those pupils who need it most. It is the cumulative impact of this range of teaching and learning activities that enables pupils to make outstanding progress.
- The school has developed a sophisticated approach to target setting, successfully combining information about pupils' prior attainment with teachers' professional judgements to set challenging targets for individual pupils in each of their subjects. Their subsequent progress is monitored very carefully and shared with pupils, so that they have a very clear view about how they are performing and know what they need to do to improve. However, the quality of marking is too variable. While there are examples of exemplary practice, marking is sometimes irregular and does not provide pupils with the feedback that they need to improve the quality of their everyday work.
- An outstanding curriculum blends academic and vocational courses with a rich programme of extra-curricular activities. The school uses its specialist performing arts status very effectively to incorporate dance and drama activities

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

in subjects such as religious education and modern foreign languages.

- There are excellent transition arrangements for new pupils and pupils throughout the school benefit from high levels of academic guidance and pastoral care. Support for vulnerable pupils is very well targeted to meet individual needs, drawing very effectively on external expertise where necessary. Pupils play a key role in maintaining this highly supportive and caring school community through their involvement in peer mentoring and support.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	1
Effective assessment and academic guidance	1
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 motto 'care, equality and opportunity' permeates the work of the school. There are exceptionally strong systems within the school to ensure that all staff are fully supported and pupils' educational and emotional needs are met regardless of ability or situation. The school has very robust procedures to ensure the safety of its pupils. Legal requirements are met fully and health and safety on the site is given a high priority.
- Leaders and senior managers monitor the school's work very rigorously, taking careful account of the views of pupils, parents and carers to inform future planning. The acting headteacher has provided clear and determined leadership during a difficult period and has been well supported by other senior leaders. The governing body is fully involved in the life of the school and demonstrates a very thorough understanding of its work and performance. It takes its responsibilities very seriously, monitors the school's work closely and demands high standards not only of the school, but also of itself. Governors are rightly proud of the achievements of the pupils and are very supportive of them and the staff. They have ambitious, far-sighted yet realistic plans for the future development of the school.
- The school works hard to include all parents and carers and to involve them fully in their children's learning. It provides excellent support through a wide range of consultation and information evenings, and through an informative newsletter and the new virtual learning environment. The school has developed a large network of highly productive partnerships with outside organisations and uses these very successfully to enhance pupils' learning. Links with the wider community are outstanding.

- The school has made a good start to promoting community cohesion and has begun to evaluate its work in this area. Pupils are fully involved in a range of groups and activities, in the school, locally and internationally. Although pupils understand the diverse nature of Britain through their work in the curriculum, there is less opportunity for them to work with others from diverse ethnic and faith groups nationally.
- The school uses its resources very efficiently. The buildings are maintained well and the new dining facilities have been carefully planned to enhance the environment further and extend the range of healthy meals available for pupils. The school gives excellent value for money.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

Monitoring, evaluating and planning for improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	1
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	1
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	1
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	2
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	1

## Views of parents and carers

The views expressed by parents and carers about the work of the school were extremely positive. In those questions where parents were asked to comment on the work of the school, over 90% agreed or strongly agreed that it was doing a good job. The most positive areas related to pupils' enjoyment of school, the progress that they were making and the way in which parents were kept informed about this. The greatest concern related to the school's efforts to ensure that pupils were maintaining a healthy lifestyle, where 12% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction, some commenting on deficiencies in the present dining arrangements.

## 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 2006–7, 14% 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 2006–7, 46% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing for its pupils suitably. In 2006–7, 34% 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 2006–7, 6% 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.



18 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Wildern School, Southampton, SO30 4EJ

The inspection team enjoyed listening to your views when your school was inspected on 3–4 December 2008. Many of your parents and carers completed a questionnaire to let us know how they felt about the school. I hope you will talk to them about the inspection report because it explains what the school does well and how it can become even better.

Wildern is an outstanding school. Teaching in lessons is usually good or outstanding and, together with revision classes and other learning opportunities, enables you to make excellent progress so that the results you achieve in GCSE examinations are well above average. Your own positive attitudes to learning, excellent behaviour and attendance are also key factors in your academic success. The curriculum is outstanding and the school has very good systems for tracking your progress and providing you with additional support when you need it most. The school is a caring community – partly because of the hard work of staff, but also because you provide each other with valuable support and encouragement. You make an outstanding contribution to the life of the school, getting the most out of opportunities to have your voice heard and willingly accepting responsibility. We were particularly impressed that the pupils who observed lessons with us made similar judgements to the inspection team!

Your school is so successful because it is very well led, staff want the very best for you and they are very well supported by an excellent group of school governors. They are all committed to improving the school and we have asked them to do two things:

- ensure that marking is more consistent so that you receive more regular and helpful feedback on your everyday work. You can help by responding positively to teachers' suggestions and comments.
- provide you with more opportunities to work with young people from diverse ethnic and faith groups in other parts of the country. It is important that you make the most of these opportunities so that you are prepared fully for life in Britain's multicultural society.

I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours faithfully

David Humphries  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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