

Worcester, Nunnery Wood High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116979
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	326508
Inspection date	2 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Clive Kempton HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1350
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Annette Vaux
Headteacher	Alun Williams
Date of previous school inspection	23 November 2005
School address	Spetchley Road Worcester WR5 2LT
Telephone number	01905 363636
Fax number	01905 363666

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools and an Additional Inspector.

Inspectors investigated the school's overall effectiveness and the following issues: the consistency of achievement and standards across the school; leadership and management at all levels and the quality of improvement planning; students' personal development and well-being, especially their behaviour; the school's strategy to improve the quality of teaching; and the assessment of students' work in lessons. Evidence was gathered from the national published assessment data for the school, the school's own records and other documentation, and observation of the school at work. Parents' responses to the inspection questionnaire, and interviews with senior and other staff, students and parents also informed inspectors' judgements.

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 of these areas, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Nunnery Wood High School is an oversubscribed school that serves its local community on the south eastern edge of Worcester. The majority of students are White British, but a significant minority come from other ethnic groups. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. The school has a learning resource base that supports students with moderate learning difficulties. The majority of students live close to the school and come from one of its six feeder primary schools, but a significant minority come from further afield and outside its catchment area.

The school became a science college in 2004 and holds several awards, including Eco-school green flag, Investors in People, Sportsmark and Leading Aspect. The school is part of the local 'Aspire' consortium of schools and colleges that works collaboratively on a number of projects including the 14 to 19 curriculum.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Nunnery Wood High School is an outstanding school where students thrive and make exceptional progress. One parent described the school as 'friendly, welcoming and supportive'. The school is an exciting place to be and a strong culture of mutual respect permeates all relationships. The school lives its motto: *Aspire, Strive, Achieve*.

Students enter the school with broadly average standards and make outstanding progress as they move through the school to attain above average standards at GCSE. This is especially the case in science, the school's chosen specialism. The school has improved whole-school standards of attainment year on year since the last inspection when it was judged to be good. The variations between subjects, identified then, have reduced significantly. Students now make good progress at Key Stage 3 and exceptional progress at Key Stage 4. The high quality data tracking system devised by the school indicates that students are on target to achieve even higher standards of attainment again next year. The science specialism has been a catalyst for whole-school improvement, both within the school and within the local community of feeder primary schools and as a result, students now start the school in Year 7 with higher standards in science. Many students are now entered early for GCSE science in Year 9 and this year 83% of students gained an A* to C grade in science GCSE by the time they left the school.

The annual science weeks, where every department in the school responds to a science topic, for example The Final Frontier week, allowed each subject area to respond to an outer space focus in their own way. At other times, the timetable is suspended for a single day to focus on topics such as recycling or multicultural themes. These events contribute to an outstanding curriculum that is tailored to meet the needs of every student. The consortium arrangement with local schools enhances the range of courses available at Key Stage 4 and all students are able to access appropriately challenging pathways.

This outstanding curriculum is one of the many examples of the exemplary care, guidance and support provided for all students. All staff really do care for students, especially for those who have found it hard to settle in other schools, or who have severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities. All are welcomed and well supported to succeed. All groups of students regardless of their needs make similar progress, including those with moderate learning difficulties. One commented, 'The school is really good at pushing you.' The high quality support provided for students is recognised by parents, especially those of the most vulnerable students who speak warmly of how the school keeps in regular touch with them about how their child is getting on. Pastoral support is strong. An impressive and innovative example is the Lead Learners. Student representatives for each subject gather the views of their peers about the provision in each subject and report back to heads of department, the senior management team and governors. As a result of their findings, the provision is revised. For example, a group of Lead Learners across the school looked at the marking of students' work and reported back the inconsistencies they found.

A significant feature of the support for students is the academic tracking system. Underachievement is flagged and timely intervention to support those identified follows. The intervention programmes are successful in putting students back on track. In some subjects, students are exceptionally well supported by careful marking of their work. Year 11 students were able to demonstrate some clear evidence of the progress they had made with various

drafts of their work following teacher feedback. The strong care for students is also evident in the robust safeguarding and health and safety procedures.

Inspectors agree with the school's own evaluation that the quality of teaching is good. There has been steady improvement in its quality since the last inspection and whilst there remains a very small and decreasing percentage of weaker teaching, the vast majority of teaching is good or better, although not enough is yet outstanding. Teachers plan a wide range of challenging activities for all students who tangibly enjoy their learning. Lessons are taught at a brisk pace and good questioning strategies are used to ensure that learning is consolidated. Purposeful homework is regularly set and efficiently marked, and assessment is a regular part of each lesson. In the less successful lessons, the pace of learning is too slow, there is insufficient use of targeted questioning and lessons are over-directed by the teacher. The school has a large number of teaching assistants, although they are currently inconsistently deployed.

The personal development and well-being of students are outstanding and a strength of the school. Students enjoy coming to school which is why attendance is good and behaviour is outstanding. A small minority of parents expressed concerns about the behaviour of individual students in lower ability classes. However, such classes were observed and no inappropriate behaviour seen. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good overall, although there are missed opportunities for spiritual development through discussions within lessons and periods of reflection in assemblies and tutor time. Students know how to lead healthy, active lifestyles, although some choose not to eat healthily. Half the school population regularly have a school dinner and more than 60% of students take part in after school sports activities. Students feel valued and are regularly consulted and asked to express their views; one commented, 'everyone is valued here'. The range of leadership opportunities, for example as Lead Learners, eco team, prefects, head boy and girl, the Junior Sports Leadership award or the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme help them to develop into confident, articulate young adults. They respect all areas of the school and its accommodation and help to keep it tidy. Students also learn about the importance of giving something back to the community. They raised more than £6,000 for charity last year, including the local hospice as well as supporting national disaster appeals. The eco team is also strong in the school and students are conscious of recycling and alternative energy sources. They organise walk to school weeks, and lobby for more bike sheds and lockers for helmets. They also raise the profile of environmental issues. As such, the school is a strong, cohesive community.

The school is very well led by an outstanding headteacher. He is ably supported by an exceptional and determined senior leadership team. Together, they have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness and have improved the school since the last inspection, successfully acting on the issues raised. There is a strong emphasis within the senior team on using the wide range of data they collect to inform their actions. Development planning at all management levels is clear and identifies the key priorities for development, although there is insufficient use of interim targets and measurable success criteria. There has been good support for middle managers since the last inspection. Nine have taken part in nationally accredited leadership courses, and there is now much more consistency in their effectiveness.

Parents report that communication with the school is effective. Regular newsletters, termly assessments and annual reports keep them in touch with the progress of their children. They feel confident to make e-mail contact with the school when they have concerns. A large number of parents responded positively to the inspection questionnaire, and 94% agreed that the school is well led and managed.

Governance is impressive; governors are committed and regular visitors in school, arranging meetings with heads of department and receiving their subject reports on a regular basis. They hold the senior leaders to account for standards achieved.

The school's own mission statement is a reality:

'We value each and every student regardless of their age, gender, race or ability. We share an irresistible belief that all students are able to succeed and we constantly communicate this to them. Our aim is to unlock as much of each student's potential as we possibly can, by ensuring that each individual is continually challenged, whilst they enjoy school and develop a love of learning. We want every student who leaves Nunnery Wood High School to have a strong sense of self-worth; the skills and knowledge to take the next steps in life; compassion and care for other people; an appreciation of their rights and responsibilities; to have enjoyed their school days and to be happy'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that development planning at all levels includes measurable success criteria.
- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching in the school.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	2
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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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?	No

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

3 October 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Nunnery Wood High School, Worcester, WR5 2LT

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school earlier this term. You are obviously happy at school and greeted us with a smile. We enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work, watching you learn and experiencing a most enjoyable day at Nunnery Wood High School. I thought you would like to know the outcome of the inspection and what I think could make the school even better.

You and your parents think you go to an outstanding school and I agree. You all make exceptional progress as you move through the school because your teachers really care for you and want you to do well. They work hard for you and prepare interesting lessons that you obviously enjoy. I was particularly impressed with the Lead Learners who have the opportunity to say what they think about teaching and learning. All of you have lots of opportunities to develop leadership skills through school and year councils, the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, eco schools, as Junior Sports Leaders or becoming prefects. It was really good to meet Josh and Sam and hear their views as head boy and head girl of the school. These various experiences allow you to develop into confident, articulate young adults who are ready to take your place in the world.

I noticed how you behave well and respect each other, including those who need more help. You have a wide range of curriculum experiences such as science week, activity week and ACE days. Subjects are available that meet your individual needs, including some taught in other schools and colleges. I think that you have an outstanding headteacher and senior staff who have successfully improved the quality of the school since the last time it was inspected. You know what it means to lead healthy, active lifestyles, although some of you choose not to eat as healthily. A lot of you take part in one of the regular school clubs. You raise an impressive amount of money for charity which helps you feel a part of the local and global community. You are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of looking after our environment and the significance of recycling and sustainability.

There are always things that schools can do to improve and I have suggested the following two points that I know will make a difference.

- Make sure that there are more measurable milestones in the school's planning.
- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching in the school.

Yours sincerely Clive Kempton Her Majesty's Inspector