

# Wrockwardine Wood Arts College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	123572
<b>Local Authority</b>	Telford and Wrekin
<b>Inspection number</b>	327941
<b>Inspection dates</b>	4–5 March 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Michelle Parker HMI

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>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	971
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	David Duggan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Richard Williams
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 March 2006
<b>School address</b>	New Road Wrockwardine Wood Telford TF2 6JZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01952 388300
<b>Fax number</b>	01952 388301

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

Wrockwardine Wood Arts College is a large school in north Telford. It has performing arts specialist status. Students are mainly White British, with a small number coming from minority ethnic backgrounds. Students come from the local area, which has some pockets of substantial deprivation.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with some good features. Wrockwardine Wood Arts College is improving because of the drive and ambition of the headteacher. The senior leadership team share his vision and passion for the college and its improvement. Since the previous inspection the college has experienced considerable turbulence because of staff instability, but has largely overcome these difficulties by successfully recruiting and retaining staff. Several key posts have been filled. Leadership and management are now good and, as a result, the capacity of the school for further improvement is also good. These features are reflected in raised standards in English and mathematics, which are now broadly average, improvements in behaviour and a rise in attendance.

Students' achievement is now satisfactory. Current college data indicate that attainment has improved and students are on track to meet appropriately challenging targets at the end of Key Stage 4. Aspirations are rising because of the successful work in performing arts. Consequently, a significant minority of students have pursued further qualifications and careers in the arts.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There have been recent improvements in mathematics, science, design and technology, and modern foreign languages. In lessons, teachers confidently evaluate their teaching but insufficient attention is paid to the individual needs of different groups of students. As a result, activities are not always pitched at the right level of challenge to ensure that all students make good progress.

The curriculum is satisfactory. It now meets statutory requirements in both key stages and contributes well to students' good personal development. In Key Stage 4, an appropriate range of opportunities are provided for vocational education. However, in Key Stage 3, there are insufficient cross-curricular opportunities for developing students' basic skills in literacy, numeracy or information and communication technology (ICT).

The good quality care and guidance students receive has meant that, in contrast to previous years, there have not been any permanent exclusions this year. Improved tracking and monitoring by department and faculty heads, and senior leaders, ensure that speedy interventions support all students and prevent them from underachieving. College leaders recognise that their monitoring is not yet rigorous enough to support further improvements in teaching and learning. Students' personal development and well-being are good. Although they understand how to live healthily and take full advantage of the healthy option at lunchtime, a few students choose to smoke. Some parents are concerned about this; the college takes their concerns very seriously and is helping the smokers to stop. Students feel safe and generally behave well. On the rare occasions that bullying occurs they are confident that the college deals with it promptly. Safeguarding procedures and risk assessments meet statutory requirements.

The majority of students enjoy coming to college and work hard. The performing arts have increased the enjoyment and motivation of students and given them rich insights into the world of work and life in their community. The encouragement of previously less motivated students in performing arts has given them an improved sense of their own worth. Consequently, they have a real sense of purpose in coming to college regularly and achieving. The college is rightly recognised for its good work in the community and outstanding work with partners. Through the specialism, students have gained huge respect from community partners and children from

local schools. As a result of the high quality of college productions, younger children aspire to perform and participate in them, increasing their enjoyment of college life.

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

- Ensure that teachers make better use of assessment information to plan lesson activities that challenge all groups of students to do well.
- At Key Stage 3, improve the links between subjects so they have more meaning and interest for students, and provide more opportunities for students to apply and practise their key skills across different subjects.
- Improve learning in lessons through more sharply focused monitoring and evaluation by college leaders of students' progress.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Students enter the college with attainment that is broadly in line with national averages. They now make satisfactory progress through Years 7 to 9. At GCSE, the proportion of students gaining five A\* to C grades, including English and mathematics, has improved over the last three years but the 2008 results were still below national averages. The college has developed challenging targets, together with robust tracking arrangements, to identify and rectify recent underperformance. As a result, data on the performance of current Year 11 students in English, mathematics and science show that standards are now broadly average.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress, as do looked-after and Traveller students. Recently introduced tracking systems to monitor these students' performance are exemplary. The college has demonstrated its commitment to the inclusion of all students and almost all leavers now gain at least one pass at GCSE or equivalent.

In 2008 the overall achievement of students was raised considerably by the large majority who gained performing arts qualifications that are equivalent to GCSE A\* to C grades.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Students' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Students enjoy coming to school and keenly participate in the breadth of opportunities available.

The opportunities afforded by the art's specialism and the supportive atmosphere in the school, particularly in the mixed-years tutor groups, enable students to develop into mature and confident adults.

Students have a sound knowledge of how to stay fit and are actively encouraged to look after their health, but do not always do so in practice. Many students enjoy the healthy food in the canteen which is the outcome of an award-winning initiative between the school council and the caterers.

Parents are understandably concerned about behaviour, which the school recognises has been poor in the past. However, behaviour both in lessons and around the school is now good. There

is a respectful attitude between staff and students. The atmosphere around school is calm. At break times, students gather in informal groups and make the best of a very cramped and outdated site to talk and socialise.

Students are actively involved in the life of the local community through a wide range of opportunities, including peer mentoring in partner schools, sports and charitable activities. They contribute extensively to the school community, for example through the active college council, as librarians and by participating in staff appointments. Parents of Travellers and vulnerable students spoke very positively of the effort made by the college to make them feel valued and welcome. An excellent contribution to the community is made by some performing arts students. For example, for the last two years the college's 'Cloud 15' group have taken responsibility for organising and running a highly professional turning on of Oakengate's Christmas lights.

Valuable skills, understanding and insight into commerce and industry are developed through the work experience programme, mini-enterprise schemes and activities such as Dragon's Den. By the time they reach Year 11, students' good social skills and adequate basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT are a sound preparation for the future.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teachers have a good level of subject knowledge that is used successfully to raise students' confidence in their learning. In some lessons, questioning is used well to share the ideas of the class, to stimulate discussion and to allow further development of thought. Students work cooperatively and display positive attitudes. Students say that they really enjoy their learning in the active lessons, where they can develop independent thinking skills. Teachers have high expectations and use ICT well to develop thought and independence. The quality of teaching and learning in dance, music and the performing arts is good. Striking features are the engagement and enthusiasm of nearly all students to practise their performances to perfection.

In some lessons, however, teachers do not focus sufficiently on the students' differing ability levels. This means that students are not always able to work on activities with the right level of challenge; they may be too difficult for the less able pupils or too easy for those who can learn quickly.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

There is an improving range of option choices at Years 10 and 11, which are better suited to all levels of learners. For example, students can choose vocational courses, including both GCSE and Business and Technology Education Council qualifications. Students can study citizenship and religious studies, obtaining short-course GCSE qualifications. This contributes significantly to their good personal development. There are wide and varied opportunities for enrichment activities through the extra-curricular programme, especially in music, sport and dance.

The curriculum for the performing arts provides a wide range of excellent opportunities for all students to promote their personal development and well-being as well as raising standards in related subjects. It has, however, had limited impact on achievement in other subjects of the curriculum.

The curriculum for students in Years 7 to 9 has appropriate breadth and balance. However, the school has not sufficiently capitalised on the opportunity to link subjects at Key Stage 3 so that students can practise and consolidate their numeracy, literacy and ICT skills across different subjects.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The college offers outstanding support to the most vulnerable students. Information on students' current level of work is not always used effectively to ensure that all students make good progress. The inclusion unit offers a safe, caring environment where students who previously may have been excluded are offered an exceptional level of support. Outstanding partnerships have been established with outside agencies to support the work of the school. As one member of a partner agency reported, 'School staff are relentless in their pursuit of the welfare of the students, which helps to make our work more effective.'

Health and safety issues are dealt with well. Child protection issues are handled effectively and procedures adhered to and understood by the staff. Any learners at risk are identified early and effective arrangements put into place to promote their well-being. Well-organised systems are used to help students settle in to the college. The transition is made easier by the active participation of older students who peer mentor new arrivals. Heads of house and tutors know their students very well and successfully involve parents and carers in efforts to enhance their learning.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The gains that students now make have come about because the headteacher and senior leadership team effectively set staff targets for improvement, monitors them, and provides good support to ensure staff can meet them. Teachers conscientiously take part in weekly professional development workshops to broaden their range of teaching styles. These are successfully contributing to improvements in teaching. The use of these teaching styles is monitored through regular lesson observations by school leaders, but not enough consideration is given to evaluating the impact of teaching on learning.

Middle managers have benefited well from their training in 'leading from the middle'. They have a shared understanding of how to raise standards and are confident in using data. They have successfully encouraged teachers to observe each other, thereby sharing good practice. This has had an impact in subjects such as mathematics, where weaker teaching has been reduced to enable students to make better gains in their learning.

The leadership of the performing arts specialism is outstanding. The introduction of performing arts courses for all Key Stage 4 students has had a considerable impact on their achievement. Rigorous self-evaluation and procedures for tracking students' progress have enabled the great majority of students to achieve the very challenging targets set by the college.

The headteacher inherited a large deficit budget and has worked very effectively with the local authority to reduce this. Notwithstanding this, the college has continued to improve and strengthen teaching and learning, and raise standards. It gives good value for money and matches resources effectively to learners' needs.

Community cohesion is satisfactory. The college has an appropriate strategy in place and has moved forwards in working regionally, especially in the performing arts, but has, as yet, developed few links at national or international levels. Governance is good and governors are confident to hold the school to account. Their professional skills are harnessed effectively by the school to help it improve further. Their views are underpinned by a sound analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have helped the school develop tools to monitor its progress effectively and ensure it meets its challenging targets.



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## Annex A

**Inspection judgements**

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</b>	<b>School Overall</b>
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**Overall effectiveness**

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
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	2

**Achievement and standards**

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

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<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
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	3

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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?	2

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
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
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
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**

6 March 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Wrockwardine Wood Arts College, Telford TF2 6JZ

Thank you for the warm and friendly way in which you met with us and helped us with the inspection. You were very honest and open in your views about the college. Most of you said that was it is a good place to be. We were impressed with the respect you showed to each other and to the staff. You behaved around the school and in lessons in a mature way. You make the most of a difficult set of buildings at break and lunchtimes even though there are no social areas for you to use. We were 'blown over' by your rehearsals for 'We will rock You'. It promises to be another very successful show because of the hard work and dedication of both you and your staff.

You go to a college which has some good features, but is satisfactory overall. Improvements have been made to teaching, which is now satisfactory, and this enables you to make satisfactory progress. New appointments, especially in mathematics, have particularly helped. Senior staff and department heads monitor teaching and we have asked them to look carefully at improving the match of activities in the lessons to appropriate levels of challenge so that you all make good progress.

Developments made to the Key Stage 4 curriculum have improved choice and provided opportunities for vocational study. At Key Stage 3, we would like to have more opportunities for practising your basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology across different subjects.

The staff are led well by your headteacher. Everyone works hard to make the college a better place and give you a good start in life. You know how to make healthy choices and to stay safe. The college is very proactive in helping you in this. Attendance has improved, but a small number of you need to make sure you attend every day if you are to take full advantage of all that the college has to offer.

Your personal development is good, as are the care, guidance and support the college gives you. You have all benefited from the inclusive ethos of the college in challenging all of you to do your best and 'reach for the stars'. Because of all your good work and involvement in the performing arts, the local community hold you in high regard and appreciate all you do with them. Working in projects such as 'Cloud 15' provides you with good opportunities to help you in later life.

We wish you every success in all you do.

Yours faithfully Michelle Parker

Her Majesty's Inspector