

Welling School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101467
Local Authority	Bexley
Inspection number	330225
Inspection dates	2–3 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Patricia Metham HMI

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

Type of school	Modern (non-selective)
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1520
Sixth form	111
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Lesley Robins
Headteacher	Mrs Diane Khanna
Date of previous school inspection	22 January 2008
School address	Elsa Road Welling DA16 1LB
Telephone number	020 8304 8531
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Welling is a larger than average school, whose students are predominantly of White British heritage. The proportion of students from minority groups is increasing, as is the number for whom English is an additional language. In recent years there has been a significant increase in the proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, mainly associated with behavioural, emotional and social issues. The school participates in the Bexley local authority partnership focusing on provision for 14–19 year-olds, and collaborates with two other schools to extend options for its sixth-form students. Associated with its specialist status for visual arts, the school has established links with higher education institutions, such as Goldsmiths College and the Byam Shaw Arts College, to provide opportunities for sixth formers to develop projects with university staff and students.

This inspection comes after a monitoring visit following the inspection in January 2008 that placed the school in special measures. In January, inspectors highlighted the need to raise standards across the school in English, mathematics and science, to take immediate steps to eradicate inadequate teaching and underachievement, to ensure that the governing body was able to hold the school account for its performance effectively, and to improve sixth-form facilities for private study and access to computers. Since January 2008 the school has been under new leadership and management, there have been wide-ranging staffing changes, and the governing body has been restructured. In September 2008, Welling became part of the Kemnal Trust, with two other schools. Sixth-form facilities and resources have been upgraded.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

The school has improved significantly and is now providing a satisfactory quality of education overall. It is good in the sixth form. The capacity to improve in leadership and management at all levels has increased significantly over the past year and is now good. The executive principal and the headteacher, whose substantive appointment was confirmed in October, have led a rigorous audit of teaching quality and implemented a substantial change-over of staff. Well supported by the local authority and independent subject advisers, the school's leaders and managers have made good progress in tackling the issues raised at the previous inspection. The impact of their strategies and interventions is visible in improved standards of behaviour, higher rates of attendance, falling exclusion rates, more effective teaching, and rising standards.

Leaders and managers recognise that much remains to be done to raise standards further. Provisional GCSE results for 2008 are well below national averages, demonstrating the legacy of inadequate teaching and ineffective tracking of students' progress in previous years. There is, however, now evidence of significant improvement, initially in English and mathematics and more recently in science, humanities, information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education. Achievement overall is satisfactory and good in the sixth form. Standards are now broadly in line with or just below national averages. An extensive and well-directed programme of professional development for teachers and support staff is leading to more effective lesson planning, to questioning styles that encourage students to think for themselves and to assessment and feedback that reinforce learning. Teaching is rigorously monitored, which sets priorities for further training or support, but the impact of specific initiatives on the day-to-day quality of students' learning is not so well evaluated; for example, whether or not starter activities always help students to focus more sharply on the rest of the lesson. The marking of written work does not always balance praise with specific guidance on how to improve. Teaching is satisfactory overall and good in the sixth form. Curriculum provision is satisfactory overall, with expanding vocational provision complementing the established curriculum, but the school is not currently meeting National Curriculum requirements with regard to citizenship. Particular aspects fall within the territory of subjects such as humanities but there is no overall coordination to ensure full coverage of the prescribed syllabus and no shared assessment.

The school's management of its specialist visual arts status is good. The targets set by the school for attainment in the relevant arts subjects in 2008 were exceeded. Targets for take up of arts subjects in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form were also exceeded. The school is making effective use of expertise within the arts across the school as a whole. For example, a cross-curricular activity involving art and science enabled younger students to develop their knowledge of the periodic table. The school has continued to develop its arts-based links effectively with other schools and the wider community. It has delivered and funded projects in primary schools to enrich the curriculum and raise standards. The school's art gallery provides a stimulus for art as a living form.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall, and good in the sixth form. Students feel safe at school, confident that any difficulties will be promptly and positively dealt with. The Care and Guidance Unit provides a valuable range of pastoral support,

working well with external agencies when appropriate. Students understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and many, especially boys, take advantage of the clubs and activities offered. Students are emphatic that the school has really improved since the start of the academic year, with teaching that is more engaging and, in response, behaviour that is more positive. They are keen to do well and value the system of rewards that recognises individuals' achievements. The student council is well respected and has impact. Older students willingly take on responsibility for younger ones, with sixth-form prefects and Year 11 students acting as mentors to Year 7 tutor groups. Students are generally confident in their readiness to thrive in the world of work although levels of literacy are currently a limiting factor. The school itself is a cohesive community and there is satisfactory provision for students to engage with the local community particularly, and to build up an understanding of what it means to live in a multi-cultural society.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. It has particular strengths in arts subjects and many students have chosen to stay at the school because of this. In partnership with two other sixth forms it provides well for students' aspirations and abilities, especially at A level. The leadership team recognises the need to extend its curriculum provision to meet the needs of a wider range of students and appropriate steps are being planned. Although results in 2007 were lower than in other recent years, this downward trend has been reversed and in 2008 students made good progress from low entry levels, attaining broadly in line with national averages. Standards are particularly high in many of the arts subjects and outstanding progress was observed in some of these lessons.

Students in the sixth form have positive attitudes to their studies. Most are mature, confident and reflective. They respond well to the good support provided by the school and enjoy their learning. The school's systems for monitoring progress are effective and students are given good feedback by teachers about their work so that they understand what they need to do to improve. The school has responded constructively to the findings of the last inspection and provision for private study, including access to computers, is now good and well used by students.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure rigorous and consistent evaluation of the impact of strategies to improve teaching and learning, as a basis for future interventions.
- Raise standards and further strengthen achievement.
- Ensure that the teaching and assessment of citizenship across all years meet statutory requirements.

A small proportion of 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

The school has taken positive and effective steps to address the significant underachievement identified as a key issue at the last inspection. These strategies did not have time to make an

extensive difference to results in summer 2008, which were well below national averages. Local authority figures for 2008 indicate that Welling's students made better than average progress in English and mathematics across Years 7 to 11. The school has worked effectively with advisers from the local authority and Education London to drive similar improvement in science and ICT. In science, for example, a change of examination board and preparation of all Single Science students for higher rather than foundation level papers has enabled these students – the majority of the Year 11 cohort – to display consistently higher levels of attainment. The school has established a detailed and reliable system to track progress and identify underachievement. Leaders and managers at all levels are using this tool with increasing confidence and consistency. Standards are now broadly in line with or just below national averages. Students enter the school with lower than average levels of prior attainment and all groups make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students make it clear that they are enjoying the more buoyant and purposeful character of the school since the start of this academic year. Behaviour is now satisfactory in lessons and around the school, with low-level disruption only occurring where teaching has not engaged the interest of all, particularly in Year 7. Students feel safe and are confident that any problems will be quickly and fairly resolved. They have a good understanding of what is meant by a healthy lifestyle and most make healthy choices, many taking advantage of the school's catering. Older students take responsibility for younger ones, as well as becoming involved in local primary school projects as part of Welling's arts contribution to the wider community. They develop leadership, teamwork and problem-solving skills, which will serve them well in later life, but limited competence in literacy across the school compromises their readiness for the world of work. Attendance has improved and is now broadly average in response both to the school's rigorous checking systems and to students' growing sense that school is a worthwhile place to be. 'They do encourage you to learn'. 'It's definitely improved'.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning has improved significantly. It is now satisfactory overall and good in the sixth form. With well targeted and sustained support from external agencies, the school has put into place a number of key systems and strategies to strengthen lesson planning and classroom management but subject leaders and school managers do not always accurately identify the impact of these initiatives on the quality of students' learning. There are now very few inadequate lessons and the proportion of good or outstanding lessons overall has increased. There is widespread and effective use of computers and interactive whiteboards, creating opportunities for students to play an active part in the lesson and usefully presenting a good breadth of stimulus material. In the most effective lessons teachers use a lively range of strategies and activities, underpinned by confident subject knowledge, that motivate and engage students. In a minority of lessons, however, where the pace is slow or the transition from one activity to another not well managed, students either do not settle down to work promptly or lose focus and concentration. Low-level disruption and background chat are not always well managed and the progress made by students is then slow. Although lesson plans consistently include information about the range of abilities and styles of learning in a group,

the varying needs of all learners are not always fully met. Many older students, including those in the sixth form, are effective independent learners but a significant minority of younger students are over-reliant on support from their teachers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is currently satisfactory and is still evolving. To help less confident students settle into Year 7, the school has introduced a coordinated approach to subjects such as English and humanities, with a clear and effective focus on the development of communication skills and literacy. Vocational courses have sensibly been added to the options available to Year 10 and 11 students. Vocational provision in the sixth form is increasing, but the most successful courses currently offered lead to A-level qualifications and are predominantly in the arts. Through collaboration with two other schools, Welling successfully extends students' opportunities. Leaders and managers have rightly identified the need to provide more alternatives to AS and A level on its own site. They have also rightly recognised that the school is not currently meeting national curriculum requirements for the teaching and assessment of citizenship. An audit is being undertaken to establish how far citizenship issues are being covered across the curriculum, as a step towards a setting up a comprehensive and coordinated approach. A most successful curriculum innovation has been cross-curricular projects developed by the art and science departments to excite and engage younger students. The mainstream curriculum is complemented by a satisfactory selection of after-school and lunchtime clubs and activities, visits, foreign exchanges and expeditions, and visiting speakers.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Students receive sound levels of care, guidance and support. The rate of exclusions has fallen significantly, with the Care and Guidance Unit providing a haven and support for students with a range of needs, drawing on external agencies whenever appropriate. The Learning Zone within that unit keeps challenging students in school and involved in constructive learning. Safeguarding procedures are thorough. Specialist support for students for whom English is not their first language is available on a part-time basis. Heads of year lead a team of tutors and non-teaching 'care and guidance workers' to provide strong pastoral support across the school. Links with students' families are being strengthened. This is one of the strategies being successfully used to raise attendance rates. Students feel that they are guided towards courses that generally match their abilities and aspirations, with in-school resources being usefully supplemented by organisations such as Connexions. They know their current levels of attainment and, in broad terms, what they must do to progress, but the marking of written work does not consistently balance encouragement with detailed guidance on how to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's impressive improvement has been vigorously and efficiently directed by the executive principal, the headteacher and a growing team of senior and middle managers. Radical measures have been taken to address the issues identified at the previous inspection, with the quality of teaching greatly improved by extensive re-staffing, intensive training and rigorous performance management linked to raising standards. Morale is now buoyant. Managers speak

with confidence of being part of a mutually supportive, whole-school improvement team. Well directed support from senior leaders is effectively complemented by expertise from other organisations. Lines of accountability are clear and monitoring of performance at all levels is thorough. Equality of opportunity is strongly promoted amongst staff as well as students. Leaders and managers know their school well, taking justifiable pride in the scale of recent improvement but also recognising that much remains to be done to raise standards and embed change securely. The school's incorporation into the Kemnal Trust is bringing a range of benefits, including economies of scale in the upgrading of resources such as information technology and access to specialist skills, ensuring that there is good value for money. Governance has been greatly strengthened and is good, combining useful skills and a clear strategic vision so that it much more effectively holds the school to account. There is a widely shared commitment to build on Welling's specialist arts status to give the school a distinctive and positive profile and to extend the contribution it makes to the local community. The school helps students to develop a satisfactory awareness of their place within the global community, through the curriculum and through international projects such as Operation Raleigh, but students' sense of their place and possible role within a multi-cultural Britain is limited.

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

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?	3	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3	2
The attendance of learners	3	3
The behaviour of learners	3	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	2

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	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	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	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**

10 December 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Welling School, Welling, DA16 1LB

Thank you for your friendly helpfulness when we visited your school recently to see how well it is doing. Your willingness to show us your work and answer our questions made our task much easier. I am pleased to have this opportunity to tell you what we found.

We agree with your headteacher and the staff that Welling is now providing you with a quality of education that is satisfactory overall and good in the sixth form. We could see that steps taken by the school, including the introduction of new courses and the appointment of a significant number of new teachers, have helped you raise the standard of your work and make faster progress than before in most subjects. You told us that you think the school has improved since September. You find your teachers encouraging and you appreciate improvements to facilities such as information technology, with the new e-portal proving useful to you and to your parents. You commented that behaviour has improved and that you feel safe and well cared for. Your student council is taken seriously and has an impact on what happens in school. One of the school's strengths, from which you all benefit, is the visual arts specialism. We saw how sixth formers are achieving good results in the arts and how art is being linked to other subjects in Years 7 to 9, such as science, to make your learning more exciting and effective.

To build on these recent improvements, we have asked your headteacher and her staff to do the following things.

- Look carefully at the effect on your learning of any steps taken to develop or adapt approaches to teaching, so that the next steps build on that experience and are as effective as possible.
- Make sure that you progress faster and attain higher standards, so that you all do as well as you can.
- Ensure that the citizenship element of the National Curriculum is fully covered and assessed.

I look forward to hearing of your future successes.

With best wishes,

Patricia Metham

Her Majesty's Inspector