

The Wordsley School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103858
Local Authority	Dudley
Inspection number	336180
Inspection dates	15–16 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Michelle Parker HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	755
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gary Barker
Headteacher	Mike Lambert
Date of previous school inspection	19 September 2006
School address	Brierley Hill Road Wordsley Stourbridge
Telephone number	01384 816015
Fax number	01384 482325
Email address	info@wordsley.dudley.sch.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The team observed 33 lessons and 30 teachers; meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, parents and carers, students, the chair of governors, staff and the school improvement partner. They observed the school's work, and looked at whole-school planning, teachers' planning, the staff handbook, school policies and 281 parental/carer questionnaires.

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

- the progress that students are making
- the effectiveness of the strategies put in place to raise attainment especially in English and mathematics
- the effectiveness of the strategies the school is using to ensure there is no underperformance of any student
- the impact of the curriculum on progression to post-16 courses.

Information about the school

The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is high. Since September 2005, the school has had specialist status for both business and enterprise and music. The proportion of students identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities, mainly learning difficulties, is high and rising, while the percentage with statements of needs is average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national average, as is that of students whose first language is not English. The school's aim is to raise the expectations of its pupils and its motto is 'high expectations + challenge = success'.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good and rapidly improving school. Parents and carers and students are overwhelmingly positive and justly proud of their school. Visitors walk into a smart and inviting reception area and are immediately put at their ease by the warmth and friendliness of the welcome. The reception emphasises the welcoming and inclusive ethos of the school and the vision of the headteacher. The headteacher's vision, together with all staff's constant striving for improvement and success, drive the good work of the school. As one parent/carer said, 'Every person from the site supervisor to the receptionist always goes the extra mile for the students.' Whole-school systems and the ethos at the school ensure that practices which ensure students feel safe, promote good behaviour and healthy lifestyles are outstanding.

Although attainment is still below average, it is rising fast because of the consistent attention to tracking students' attainment and the good use of timely interventions. All students, including those entitled to free school meals, looked-after students and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress, especially the many from Pakistani backgrounds. The school's joint specialisms have a positive impact on raising attainment and increasing the breadth of qualifications and courses students enjoy. For example, music offers an applied vocational qualification and the orchestra is preparing for a trip to Austria. The increased range of subjects taken by students and improved numbers going onto further education, together with good attendance and qualifications in information and communication technology (ICT), indicate that the school prepares students well for their future economic well being.

The school has acted swiftly to address the points for development from the previous inspection report and, consequently, it is positioned well to sustain further improvement. It ensures that staff have good opportunities for their professional development and keenly supports them to seek extra responsibilities in the school. The support for staff enables the school to fill vacancies for posts of responsibility from within itself, with a high calibre of candidate. Monitoring at all levels is embedded in the school's practices and in its improvement plans. The school is supported by the well-led and competent governing body.

The curriculum is good. At Key Stage 4, the range of academic and vocational courses offered maintains students' interest and provides appropriate challenge to meet the needs of all.

Teaching is good and several lessons seen were outstanding. Occasionally, teachers do not adapt work well enough to ensure all students make good progress throughout the lesson. There is insufficient focus on developing students' literacy skills in many lessons.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sustain the improvement in attainment and achievement by:
 - improving students' literacy skills throughout the school
 - making sure that teaching and learning are consistently good or better by ensuring a sharper focus on learning outcomes and by consistently matching tasks to the needs of all students.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Historically, attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 has been low, but the percentage of students gaining five or more GCSE A* to C grades including English and mathematics has more than doubled over the past three years to 37%. In 2009, there was a dramatic increase in the proportion of students gaining five A* to C passes. Many targets were exceeded. Current attainment, as shown by the school's robust tracking systems, while still below the national average, is improving quickly and closing the gap. Outcomes of the 2010 GCSE modular and other courses already secured point to continued improvements, notably in English and mathematics. Progress across the school in all lessons seen is good. Work interests students and activities in teams and in pairs promote their developing understanding. The school has worked hard to narrow the gaps between the attainment of boys and girls and between those students eligible for free school meals and their peers. Consequently, in all lessons, all groups of students now achieve in line with, or better than, expectations. Looked-after students make good progress in learning and are well supported at various transition stages, ensuring that their achievement is sustained. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress as a result of effective support and a relevant curriculum.

Students feel exceptionally safe in school. Behaviour is outstanding, both in class and out of class. It reflects the students' positive view of school and the respect for each other and their teachers. On the rare occasions where behaviour does not match the high expectations of the school, it is dealt with promptly to minimise any potential disruption.

The extent to which students adopt healthy lifestyles is outstanding. This is because the school promotes healthy activities and healthy eating. Students participate in a wide range of sports, clubs and enrichment activities. A 'disadvantage fund' is used to ensure that students who might find costs a problem can be fully involved, for example in going horse riding.

Students make a significant contribution to school and the wider community. They take part in a wide range of opportunities both in school and the wider community. Students enjoy taking responsibility and play a key role in some decision making within the school. Examples include mentoring others, such as in the cyber mentoring project, and planning the library and the canteen. Students act as ambassadors for the school in the local community and are well regarded. They take an active role in improving the locality at weekends and holidays. The school monitors students' participation carefully to

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

ensure that all groups contribute well.

The school's strong ethos helps students to develop strong personal values. Tutor groups include students from all years, aiding the development and discussion of ideas, the cultivation of mutual respect and understanding of social issues. Students are aware of their own local history, which is reflected in the school badge. Music, art and religious education contribute well to students' cultural and spiritual understanding, but opportunities are missed to develop these qualities in other areas of the curriculum.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

In most lessons, students' learning is at least good and often outstanding. This is because teachers have created a secure climate for learning in which students feel they can practise developing skills without fear of criticism. The students tackle challenging activities with determination and work with sustained concentration. Students transfer their skills to different curricular areas and work with competence demonstrating good subject knowledge and understanding. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress and are able to participate fully in lessons alongside

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

their peers because of the good support they receive from teaching assistants. Girls are inspired to pursue any subject pathway, including those usually followed largely by boys, and are encouraged and supported in this by staff. One Year 11 girl said, 'Now I know I can shine outside and be just as good as a boy.'

Lessons are well planned and activities are generally effectively matched to the needs of individuals. Occasionally, the level of challenge is not sufficiently sharply focused to ensure all students can accelerate their progress. Although teachers' good subject knowledge enthuses and challenges students' thinking and makes learning good fun, opportunities are sometimes missed to improve literacy skills.

Good assessment procedures accurately track and monitor students' progress. Learners are encouraged and supported to use assessment to improve their work.

The curriculum is well organised, providing students with a wide range of opportunities and memorable experiences, including arranging a para-Olympics for neighbouring schools and special musical events. Through the school's specialism, a wide range of courses is offered, including music and music technology, applied business studies and a range of ICT qualifications. All subjects have assessed their contribution to developing enterprise skills. A well-designed school checklist to support lesson planning promotes this, but it is not fully used in all teachers' planning.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Students are fulsome in their praise of the school and how it has helped them to succeed. One Year 10 boy said, 'I cannot sum up how good this school is compared to other schools. The difference it has made to me is to give me back my trust in learning.' The school's outstanding partnership work with a range of agencies has enabled students to access external provision crucial to their health, safety and well-being. Good-quality information is provided to both parents and carers and students prior to choosing learning pathways. The school's creative and flexible approach to inclusion has ensured good links have been developed with partners. Thus, transition arrangements are well planned and ensure that students are supported at all points.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leadership and management at all levels are strong and improving. The vision and leadership of the headteacher are exceptional. He enjoys the confidence of the whole school community, with staff, parents and carers and students speaking highly of his

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

ability to lead and their pride in the improvements that have been implemented. The headteacher has established a clear direction for the school, underpinned by a commitment to improving achievement. The senior team are working effectively in planning and implementing improvements. The school has a culture of sharing best practice. This culture helps all staff to share a common vision and to work tirelessly to achieve it. Middle leaders are well supported and have benefited from a range of professional development. This support has improved their confidence in monitoring their departments in order to strengthen teaching and learning and has enhanced students' performance at the end of Key Stage 4. Additional support is put in place to address any concerns. External recognition of this is seen in the school's work for the Department for Education in hosting the Inside Knowledge programme for schools. Governors ensure that they are well informed about all aspects of school life. They use their professional expertise to good effect, both in supporting the school and holding it to account. Safeguarding is robust. Procedures and policies are regularly updated. All staff are appropriately trained.

This is a very inclusive school. It is exceptional in raising aspirations and supporting and helping all students to achieve their potential. Exclusions have fallen dramatically over the last few years. Plans are well in hand for the development of an inclusion centre, which will enable the school to reduce exclusions further. This work reflects the school's ethos and highly successful work in promoting equalities and tackling discrimination. Community cohesion is good and reflects the school's belief in working with and supporting its local community. Parents and carers said they greatly valued this aspect of the school's work. Good links are made across Dudley to help students better understand cultural diversity. For example, students are part of an orchestra which plays with two other schools. International links are good, but national links are in the early stages of development.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2
---	----------

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers who were interviewed and those who completed questionnaires were overwhelmingly positive about the school and their children's education. Inspectors followed up the concerns of a very few parents and carers with regard to the school contacting them promptly in response to issues raised, but found nothing of significance to support parents' and carers' concerns. A few parents and carers were worried about bullying and smoking. The inspection found that the school has appropriate policies in place with regard to these issues and procedures are followed consistently. Evidence was not forthcoming to endorse these concerns. Inspectors were able to confirm that the school took any concerns of parents and carers seriously and followed them up assiduously.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Wordsley School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 281 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 755 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	111	40	151	54	14	5	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	115	41	159	57	6	2	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	154	55	118	42	7	2	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	136	48	126	45	10	4	5	2
The teaching is good at this school	127	45	141	50	10	4	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	107	38	150	53	21	7	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	88	31	172	61	16	6	1	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	116	41	145	52	8	3	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	106	38	159	57	9	3	4	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	128	46	131	47	13	5	6	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	85	30	169	60	17	6	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	141	50	132	47	2	1	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	154	55	117	42	5	2	4	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



17 June 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of The Wordsley School, Stourbridge, DY8 5SP

Thank you for the courteous and warm welcome you gave to us and the insightful and thoughtful comments you made. You have been very helpful in giving us a detailed picture of your school. We agree with you that you go to a 'smashing' school. Every member of staff works hard to support and help you have the best start to life. You attend well and enjoy school.

The strong leadership of your headteacher has helped yours to be a good school. He is very ably supported by his senior team and staff, who all share his vision. Together, you and the staff make a strong team. The development of the school's specialism as a business and enterprise and music centre has enriched your education and provided you with some first-rate experiences, for example in travelling abroad to represent your school in the orchestra. You work hard in your lessons and have high aspirations.

Your school is increasingly successful in helping you to achieve a greater number of higher GCSE grades. Year 11, last year, gained 37% and this year the school's systems suggest you should do even better. You all achieve well in lessons. We have asked your school to help you make even better progress by ensuring that all of your work is consistently matched to your individual needs. Results in English and mathematics have improved and to help you become even more successful we have asked that every lesson has a focus on improving your literacy skills.

We wish you continued success in all you do.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Parker

Her Majesty's Inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.