

Wadebridge School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112048
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	337827
Inspection dates	25–26 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Pauline Robins 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1234
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	176
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Stuart Robertson
Headteacher	Miss Tina Yardley
Date of previous school inspection	0 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 31 lessons, and held meetings with students, staff and members of the governing body. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's development plan, its analysis of students' progress and attainment and a wide range of policies including policies concerning safeguarding procedures. Inspectors considered the views expressed in 202 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, a representative sample of questionnaires from students and 59 questionnaires completed by members of staff.

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

the quality of the provision and how effectively it meets the needs of all students, including the more vulnerable groups, to ensure that outcomes are equally good for all students

how effectively the school has raised the standard of teaching since the last inspection

the impact of the school's business and enterprise specialism and how this has contributed to school improvement

the quality of monitoring and evaluation by senior and middle leaders

the quality of provision and outcomes for sixth form students.

Information about the school

Wadebridge is a larger than average school serving an area which is mainly rural with the concentration of the population being in the towns of Padstow and Wadebridge. The school has specialist status for business and enterprise. Although the proportion of students entitled to free school meals is low, some of the students come from areas of significant deprivation where incomes are low. The vast majority of students are from a White British background. The percentage of students with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average. The proportion of students identified as having special educational needs and/or a disability has increased significantly each year and is in excess of 20% in Key Stage 3. The long- serving headteacher retired in April of this year and a new headteacher is now in post.

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

Wadebridge is a good school and has improved appreciably since the last inspection. Effective leadership and management both in the recent past and currently have secured improvements in almost all aspects of the school's work with the result that the vast majority of pupils make good progress in their learning. The school is much appreciated in the local community and is oversubscribed each year. The ethos of a caring school where every individual matters and is valued is strongly demonstrated in all aspects of the school's work. As a result, care, guidance and support are outstanding and make a significant contribution to students' achievement. As one parent wrote, 'For such a large school, they (the staff) are very aware of the individual needs of the pupils. I have been more than impressed.'

A strength of the school is the extent to which students take responsibility for their own learning and contribute to monitoring, evaluation and development processes. As members of the school council, in positions of responsibility such as junior sports leaders, star trainers and trailblazers, or as a member of a learning team where they observe lessons and feedback to teachers, students play their part. All of these and more contribute to the student's sense of ownership and belonging which in turn leads to enjoyment in their learning and a desire to do their best.

Standards have risen since the last inspection as the result of improved teaching and an innovative and accessible curriculum. The curriculum is close to being outstanding except for an acknowledged inconsistency in the delivery and effectiveness of the current tutorial programme. Accurate tracking and assessment data show that students make good progress and that standards are set to rise further in the coming year. The school has succeeded in reducing the number of students who are persistently absent from school through the rigorous implementation of its own monitoring systems and close liaison with parents and external agencies. However, it has been less successful in reducing the percentage of occasional absences despite much effort and deploying a range of new strategies.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are effective and recent appointments have been carefully planned to make the best use of staff skills and experience. Provision and outcomes in the sixth form are good and, as in the main school, care, guidance and support are outstanding. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection.

The school's self-evaluation is accurate and arrived at through a process of rigorous monitoring and analysis of data. The clear and determined leadership of the headteacher and her team has ensured that recent budgetary challenges have been

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thoughtfully and proactively addressed without risk to future developments. This, together with the school's record of improvement since the last inspection, indicates that the school has good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the tutorial programme by:
 - evaluating and enhancing the content of the existing personal, social and health education programme to provide wider opportunities including times for quiet reflection
 - monitoring the quality of delivery to ensure time is used effectively.
- Decrease the percentage of occasional absence to a rate that is consistently in line or below that of the national average, by the relentless and rigorous implementation of the current practice that is successfully addressing the problem of those students who persistently fail to attend school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

The school has worked hard to improve students' achievement since the last inspection. As a result, the vast majority of students make good progress and some make outstanding progress. There is no disparity in the rate of progress made by students of varying ability or by those who are most vulnerable as they receive exceptionally well planned and targeted support. The most able students are set targets which are aspirational, and are very well supported in their efforts to achieve them. Unvalidated examination results for 2009 indicate that 76% achieved five or more GCSE grades A*-C which confirms an improving performance over the past three years. The proportion of students achieving GCSE grades A*-C including mathematics and English has fallen from an exceptional high in 2008, to 58% in 2009 which is still significantly above the national average.

The large majority of students enjoy school and perform well in class. They are extremely positive and articulate. They have a high regard for adults within the school and relationships with the teachers are mostly excellent. The atmosphere of trust in lessons allows them to respond positively to taking responsibility for their own learning and assessment and to constructively contribute to the assessment of their peers. This underpins their usually rapid learning. Behaviour around the school is excellent and is of a high standard in the majority of lessons. Where teaching is more mundane, and in some instances during the afternoon session, some low level disruption such as inattention and off-task chatter was observed.

Students have a strong commitment to living a healthy lifestyle and understand the importance of exercise and a balanced diet. Business and enterprise status has contributed significantly to opportunities for students to enhance their skills for life and understanding of the workplace. For example, funds have been used to provide extra basic skills training in 'synthetic phonics' so students' literacy skills have been raised and

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they are better able to access the curriculum. Students' strong social and moral development is reflected in their care and support for each other. Spirituality and cultural understanding are evident in many areas of the curriculum, particularly in English, history and geography, although the school acknowledges that there is further work to do in embedding these aspects more widely, especially into the tutorial programme.

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	2
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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

A range of teaching was seen by inspectors and the large majority was good or outstanding. Common features of these lessons included: questioning which stretched students' understanding, developed their analytical skills and encouraged them to become independent learners; good pace which held students' attention and generated enthusiasm and enjoyment; and effective use of teaching assistants to support students' individual needs. In a small minority of lessons, teachers' overly- long explanations and lack of challenge led to a comfortable pace, passive learning and low level fidgety behaviour. A wealth of assessment data are available and effectively used and

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

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understood by teachers and students both to set targets and ensure that next steps are explicit. As one teacher explained, 'We can tell if a student is going off target within two lessons.' However, day-to-day marking is less consistent. In the English department, for example, it is outstanding but in some other areas the impact on presentation and in giving students immediate feedback is negligible.

The curriculum is innovative and continually evaluated so that it meets the needs of individuals and groups of students. The business and enterprise status has played a considerable role in improving curriculum provision, making it interesting to students and relevant to the world they live in. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is strongly skills based with a half-termly focus on different cross-curricular themes. This has a positive impact on raising standards. The very wide range of pathways and qualifications available at Key Stage 4, both in school and through local partnerships, has successfully engaged the disaffected and vulnerable students yet also enables the most academic to gain the qualifications they require for future study. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme with its community service and development of life skills is taken up by approximately two thirds of students. Tutorials are not always used effectively to promote learning and time is wasted.

Students are guided to achieve their best academically while at the same time their social and emotional needs are extremely well supported. They report that they feel safe and extremely well cared for in school. They are confident that any bullying incidents which might occur are dealt with effectively both by the staff and with the support of older students who are trained for this. They speak with great affection about the staff who teach and care for them and for whom they have great respect. Students frequently spoke to inspectors about difficult situations where they would not have been able to cope without the support of school staff. The school's exceptionally strong and well organised links with outside agencies make a significant contribution to the support for the vulnerable. Its highly successful work to improve the attendance of persistent absentees has included close monitoring, multi-agency teamwork and the use of incentive schemes. The strategies to reduce occasional absences are as yet less innovative and relentless. Nevertheless, they include first day calling and a stringent scrutiny of applications for holiday absence; further strategies are being implemented.

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?

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Without exception, staff who responded to the questionnaire were supportive of the new headteacher and her team. They demonstrate strong and effective leadership and management and have high expectations for the future of the school. They have complementary skills and are good role models to both staff and students. They know the strengths and the weaknesses of the school and what needs to be done to bring about further improvement. Self-evaluation is thorough and involves all members of the school community from middle leaders to students. Sophisticated systems to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection have been effective. In addition to driving up standards, the care and support for students features highly in the school. As a result, all students are given every opportunity to succeed in whatever way is best suited to their needs. Robust safeguarding procedures are systematically implemented and risk assessments are carried out as a matter of routine. Community cohesion is apparent in the daily work of the school but the school identifies in its own self-evaluation that this has yet to be coherently planned for. Opportunities to further it are not always explicit in the content of the personal, social and health education programme. Governors are hugely supportive of the school and they also provide a level of challenge that comes from an understanding of data and previous experience.

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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

The sixth form is seen as integral to the school and very definitely not separate provision. The progress that students make is good due to the good teaching that they

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receive and outstanding care, guidance and support. As a result, the retention of students from AS to A2 courses and in completing qualifications is at least good in all areas. The curriculum is innovative and personalised to meet the needs of individuals. The school recognises that to create further flexibility in the curriculum consideration of an increased number of level 2 and diploma courses is necessary. Existing partnership work is outstanding and supports the school in this area of development. Students feel that the guidance they receive when selecting courses is excellent; it contributes to them feeling valued and encourages them to attend. They are confident young people who speak with enthusiasm and affection about their school and the opportunities that it offers them. The leadership and management of the sixth form are very strong, particularly in the inclusion of more vulnerable students.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of parents who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire are highly supportive of the school, its leadership and the quality of education their children receive. They expressed the view that their children are safe, happy and well taught. A very small minority of parents made critical references to support for learning and dealing with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found behaviour to be good and support outstanding. Although some parents identified school meals and healthy living as a concern, students were unequivocal in their praise of the canteen and improvements that had taken place as a result of work by the school council.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Wadebridge 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 202 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1234 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	71	35	121	60	3	5	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	67	33	125	62	8	4	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	95	47	100	50	7	4	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	73	36	106	52	19	9	3	2
The teaching is good at this school	66	33	127	63	6	3	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	61	30	108	53	27	13	5	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	42	21	128	62	22	11	2	1
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)	67	33	113	56	11	6	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	65	32	113	57	14	7	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	60	30	113	56	17	9	6	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	56	28	118	58	11	6	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	79	39	105	52	5	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	93	46	102	50	2	1	3	2

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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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.



Dear Students

Inspection of Wadebridge School, Cornwall PL27 6BU

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave to us during our recent visit. We were particularly impressed by the way you engaged us in conversation and wanted to share your experiences with us. A special thanks to those students who represented you so well in the small discussion groups, explained how the school operates and talked about your lessons and learning opportunities outside of the classroom. I hope some of you will take the time to read the full report.

We found that Wadebridge is a good school and still improving. The staff provide outstanding care, guidance and support and you told us that you are safe and well looked after. You make good progress in your work because teaching is good and both you and your teachers know the standard at which you are working and what you need to do next to improve. The curriculum is good, too. It is interesting and changes are made to suit the needs of individuals who may need more challenge or an alternative pathway. The sixth form offers a good education and preparation for further education and work. You are very involved in school development and feel a sense of ownership and belonging. The leaders and managers of your school know you well and what they need to do make the school even better.

We have asked staff and senior managers to make two improvements but they will need your help to do this, especially with the second one.

Improve the tutorial programme so that you all use the time in a worthwhile way and add to your learning.

Decrease the number of occasional absences that students take ' this is one for you! Taking time off school really does affect your learning.

I would like to wish you all every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Pauline Robins

Her Majesty's Inspector

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