

Wellfield Community School A Specialist Maths and Computing College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114315
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	338338
Inspection dates	20–21 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Wendy Ripley 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	834
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Ann Wilson
Headteacher	Mrs J Elliott
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors spent around two thirds of their time looking at learning. This included observing around half the teachers at work in the classroom through 30 visits to lessons. Inspectors also held meetings with governors, staff, groups of students and partner organisations. They looked at a range of documents including the minutes of governing body meetings, the school's raising attainment plan, information from senior and middle managers' monitoring activities, the school's assessment information and analysis, and 75 parental questionnaires.

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

- current standards and progress of students across the school
- the impact of teaching on students' learning and progress
- the ways in which the curriculum meets students' needs and prepares them for their futures
- how effectively leaders and managers set clear direction and use information from analysis, monitoring and evaluation to prioritise actions, tackle weaknesses, and plan for improvement.

Information about the school

Wellfield is an average-sized secondary school. The number on roll has fallen by around 220 since the last inspection. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals, at 28%, is double the national average. Very few students are of minority ethnic heritage or have home languages other than English. The proportion of students identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities has risen since the last inspection to over a third, which is well above the national average. The proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is slightly above the national average. The school has held specialist status for mathematics and computing since 2004. It has gained a number of nationally recognised awards including Investors in People and Healthy Schools Status. There is a local authority unit for students with physical disability on the school site.

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**3****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****3**

Main findings

Wellfield is a satisfactory and improving school. Strengths include the good actions taken to care for and safeguard students and a curriculum which is well matched to their needs and aspirations. Vocational options such as those in construction, business, information and communication technology, and design and technology, are proving very popular because students can clearly see the links between what they are learning in these subjects and their future economic well-being.

Attendance has improved and is now broadly average. The number of students who are persistently absent has reduced; as has the number of students excluded from the school. The behaviour of the vast majority of students is satisfactory. Nevertheless, a small minority of students lacks self-discipline and consideration for others and constantly push at the boundaries of what is acceptable behaviour.

A strong drive to raise standards has had a positive impact on students' attainment, resulting in a pattern of sustained improvement over the past three years. In 2009, 65% of students attained at least five GCSEs at grades A* to C. This is the school's best ever performance and an increase of 20 percentage points when compared to 2007. When English and mathematics are included, the proportion gaining five GCSEs at A* to C grades is much lower at 36%, nevertheless this is an improvement of 11% since 2007, and takes the school above the National Challenge target of 30%. These results reflect students' broadly average attainment and satisfactory progress given their broadly average starting points in Year 7. The attainment of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities has also improved at a similar rate and is now satisfactory overall.

Teaching is satisfactory overall. There is some good and some outstanding teaching, but not enough to ensure that students make the consistently good progress required in lessons to further improve achievement. Teachers generally plan their lessons well and have good subject knowledge. A key shortcoming is that not all teachers apply the school's system of rewards and sanctions consistently in the classroom and instances of poor behaviour go unchallenged too often. Where this happens, one or two students have the capacity to slow down the rate of learning and progress and reduce other students' enjoyment of the lesson. The quality of teachers' marking is variable and their feedback does not always provide students with a clear indication of what they need to do next or how they can improve their work further.

The school's specialism in mathematics and computing has a satisfactory impact on the work of the school, the community and students' achievements. Although staffing difficulties affected mathematics targets, the school now has appropriate strategies in

place to rectify this and consequently is meeting the majority of specialist targets of late. The school has a range of effective partnerships, including with a local further education college and neighbouring schools, local businesses and a range of external agencies. Shared provision such as the 'Vocational Skills Centre', make a good contribution to the development of students' workplace skills.

The restructuring of the leadership team in the past year has injected vigour and enthusiasm, which has galvanised action and enabled a sharper focus on performance management and a rigorous cycle of monitoring and review. Consequently, the school has a realistic picture of its strengths and of the developments required to drive improvement forward. There is effective external support from the School Improvement Partner and the local authority, and staff have access to an appropriate range of training and development linked to the school's priorities. There are significant pockets of good practice emerging throughout the school, but a systematic approach to sharing this across the school has yet to be developed. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities well, including updating safeguarding and child protection procedures in light of recent legislation. Given all of these factors the school has satisfactory capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' achievement and maximise their enjoyment of learning by:
 - eradicating the remaining instances of poor behaviour in lessons and around the school by raising expectations of what is acceptable behaviour and by ensuring that all teachers apply the school's behaviour policy and procedures consistently
 - systematically identifying and sharing the good practice that already exists in the school in order to increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching
 - ensuring teachers' assessment and feedback is consistently good throughout the school and always lets students know what they need to do next to improve their work.
- About 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Inspection evidence and the school's own records show that students' attainment in most lessons is average and they make satisfactory and sometimes good progress in their learning. Students make good progress in lessons when they are actively engaged in their learning, are provided with opportunities to work independently and in groups and can see the relevance of what they are doing to their future life and the wider world. For example, inspectors observed some good examples of brisk pace and

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students engrossed in their learning in science, construction, design and technology, child studies, music and some English lessons. Vulnerable students and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory and sometimes good progress in lessons because of the good quality care provided for them by staff.

Inspection evidence shows that while most students feel safe in school, many are concerned about poor behaviour. Students who spoke with inspectors believe that this is mainly because the behaviour policy is not being implemented strictly and consistently enough by all staff. Nonetheless, these students were very clear that behaviour has improved and report that year managers and pupil achievement leaders are having a positive impact on their learning.

Most students understand what to do to adopt a healthy lifestyle although they do not always implement what they know. Students have some opportunities to play a part in the school community, for instance, through shaping the lunchtime menu. This now has some popular healthy choices and, as a result, all of the students stay at school for lunch. This has resulted in improved attendance and punctuality after lunch. Student's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory, though the spiritual and multi-cultural dimensions are less well developed than the social aspects. Vocational courses, links with local employers and projects such as those in construction, science, and design and technology are increasingly helping students prepare satisfactorily for the world of work by reinforcing the links between the skills and knowledge they are gaining in school and those they will need for their future lives.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3

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

The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

The best teaching stimulates students' interest and enthusiasm and focuses on what each student will learn. Teachers listen carefully to what students say, asking further questions skillfully in order to make students expand on their answers and develop their thinking further. Where teachers talk for too long, students become bored and their attention wanders. This means that some students do not hear key learning points and important information goes right over their heads. This limits learning and progress for some students and, on occasions, creates the circumstances where disruptive behaviour begins.

The school has made progress in developing the use of assessment in lessons. Students are frequently involved in assessing their own learning and that of their classmates. Many teachers refer to the level or grade of the work taught and some encourage students to assess whether they have reached a particular level in the lesson. Inspectors saw some good use of assessment and feedback in students' books; with clear guidance on how to improve in some subjects such as English and science. However, this was not the case in all subjects so that overall, the quality of assessment throughout the school remains too variable.

Since the last inspection, the curriculum has been reviewed to provide greater depth and breadth and is now well matched to the needs and aspirations of different groups of students. For instance, gifted and talented students, historically, have not been as well catered for as other groups, but the school is tackling this successfully through, for example, the opportunity to study three sciences. The Key Stage 4 curriculum provides a broad range of options and students at risk of becoming disengaged remain in education and succeed because of the range of accredited work-related courses. At Key Stage 3, the school has adopted a more thematic approach to learning which builds on students' primary school experience and develops their emotional maturity, thinking and problem solving skills. Enterprise activities and cross-curricular projects add to students' enjoyment and offer different and challenging ways for them to learn.

There are some strong features in the school's care, guidance and support. Good quality care, such as that provided for students with a statement of special educational needs, and for students through the year managers and the school's own counselling service, for example, permeates many aspects of the school's provision. Close liaison with outside agencies also ensures that students are well-cared for and nurtured. At Key Stage 3, Year 7 nurture groups are carefully identified and the school ensures that suitable systems are in place to help students make the transition from primary school. Older students are provided with sound advice in relation to course options and future

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career development. The tracking of students' progress has improved considerably and now offers staff a very clear picture from which to identify quickly and tackle any underachievement. This has led to the introduction of a wide range of successful intervention programmes with resulting improvements in the achievement of the specific students involved. Students who have difficulty settling in classes are supported in smaller groups when necessary, for example through the effective inclusion and behavioural support units. These strategies have helped to reduce the number of permanent exclusions and improve attendance.

The school's system of rewards and sanctions is having less of an impact on students' well-being and care because it is not being applied consistently by all staff. As a result, instances of poor behaviour go unchallenged too often and this is rightly, a cause for concern for students and parents. As a result, the effectiveness of care, guidance and support overall is satisfactory

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has made good teaching and senior leadership appointments over the past two years. This is helping to build a solid and more consistent staff team, which is underpinning improvements in the quality of provision across the school. Management information is being used increasingly well throughout the school because it is well-organised and readily understood. Actions are regularly monitored and carefully evaluated. The leaders and managers track the progress and well-being of students accurately, resulting in earlier identification and elimination of underachievement. The school satisfactorily promotes equality of opportunity.

The school's approach to improving teaching so far, has centred on external support and activities such as structured observations by senior leaders and advisors. All staff have received training on key school actions such as 'assessment for learning'. There are significant pockets of good practice emerging throughout the school, but a systematic approach to sharing this across the school, in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning, has yet to be developed.

The school has improved its relationship with parents. There is a regular newsletter and the school surveys parents' views on its performance. The school's website provides a useful resource for parents to download information about the school and attendance at parents' evenings has improved. The safety and well-being of students are paramount

and some exemplary procedures for safeguarding procedures are in place, including strong and clear management responsibilities regarding child protection. However, while only a very small minority of parents responded to the inspection questionnaire, a few of these expressed concerns about behaviour that mirrored those of the students.

Community cohesion is good. The school has done much to integrate the local community which is a mix of separate villages, through activities such as the Wingate carnival. However, while students learn about other cultures through citizenship and religious education, opportunities for students to gain first-hand experiences of life in modern multi-cultural Britain are limited. Leaders and managers are currently putting plans in place to address this and to test the impact of its actions in the community. Governors play an active part in constructively supporting and challenging the school. Resources are effectively deployed.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

Inspectors received 75 parental questionnaires. The questionnaires show that almost all parents are confident that the school keeps their child safe. While a very large majority of parents are supportive of the school's leadership and the education provided, a small minority expressed concerns mainly about students' behaviour. Inspectors found that the behaviour of most students is satisfactory and this is an improvement since the last inspection, even though a small minority of students lack self-discipline and consideration for others. The headteacher was made aware of parents' concerns and the small number of students' concerns when it would not breach the confidentiality of

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either. She is taking steps to tackle any issues arising.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of students registered at Wellfield Community School A Specialist Maths and Computing College 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 75 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 834 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	17	23	42	56	14	19	2	3
The school keeps my child safe	27	36	38	51	4	5	5	7
The school informs me about my child's progress	26	35	41	55	4	5	3	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	28	40	53	8	11	4	5
The teaching is good at this school	15	20	47	63	8	11	3	4
The school helps me to support my child's learning	18	24	47	63	6	8	2	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	24	52	69	2	3	2	3
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)	23	31	41	55	7	9	2	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	24	32	39	52	8	11	3	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	29	33	44	13	17	7	9
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	24	39	52	11	15	4	5
The school is led and managed effectively	18	24	41	55	9	12	4	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	20	27	39	52	11	15	5	7

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.



22 January 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Wellfield Community School A Specialist Maths and Computing College,
Wingate, TS28 5AX

I am writing on behalf of all the inspectors to tell you about the findings of our inspection but, first of all, I would like to thank you for the help that you gave us. We enjoyed visiting your school and talking to you about your experiences of school. We have carefully considered your comments and those of your parents who completed the inspection questionnaire.

Wellfield is a satisfactory and improving school. Your attendance is broadly average. Standards are improving, although they are still below average in comparison to other schools nationally. You are making satisfactory progress in your learning from the time you enter Year 7 to the time you leave in Year 11. The curriculum meets your needs and interests well. For instance, at Key Stage 3 you enjoy the 'personal learning and thinking' activities you are doing, and at Key Stage 4 you like the vocational courses and links with local businesses because they are helping you to gain an understanding of the world of work. Most of you told us that you feel safe and are well cared for while at school, but many of you also said that behaviour is 'not good'. During the inspection, most of you behaved well both in lessons and around the school, and, therefore, behaviour is judged to be satisfactory overall. However, we agree that a small minority of students lack self-discipline and consideration for others: this is unfair on the rest of you who do try hard and want to do well because it spoils your enjoyment of school and sometimes slows down your learning in lessons.

In order to help the school improve further we have asked school leaders to maximise your achievement and enjoyment of learning by:

- making sure there is 'zero tolerance' for poor behaviour in lessons and around school and ensuring that all teachers apply the school's behaviour policy and procedures consistently
- helping staff to share their good ideas and what they know works for you in the classroom and in other aspects of school life
- ensure that teachers' assessment of your work is accurate and the feedback they give you always lets you know what you need to do next to improve your work.

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You can help by making sure your behaviour is exemplary and telling the staff what activities you enjoy the most and help you learn as much as you possibly can.

All the best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Ms Wendy Ripley, HMI

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