

Wrotham School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118881
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	339317
Inspection dates	17–18 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Christopher Corp

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

Type of school	Modern (non-selective)
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	710
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	77
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mark Reeve
Headteacher	Mr David J A Day
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2006
School address	Borough Green Road Wrotham Sevenoaks TN15 7RD
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 29 lessons and visited other lessons, and held meetings with staff, students, the chair and vice chair of governors and the School Improvement Partner. They observed students' work in lessons, the school's current data on teaching, learning, attainment and progress, and a variety of evaluation and policy documents. In addition, 155 parental, 16 staff and 110 student questionnaires were scrutinised.

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

- the impact of changes to the curriculum, including the contribution of the specialist humanities status, on improving students' outcomes, and how well this revised curriculum meets the needs of all students
- the attainment and progress of the current Year 11 and Year 13 students, especially in mathematics, to ensure improvement has been maintained
- the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels in identifying and addressing areas of relative underperformance.

Information about the school

Wrotham is smaller than average. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is lower than the national average, as is the percentage of students coming from minority ethnic groups. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average, although the number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average. The school achieved specialist status in humanities in 2005 and gained the Healthy School award in 2007. The sixth form is part of a local partnership of four schools.

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

1

Main findings

Wrotham is an inclusive, friendly and vibrant school that has continued to improve over the past three years. This improvement has been overseen by a totally committed and inspirational headteacher whose drive and determination to make Wrotham even better is a major factor in the school's success.

The school has a positive and welcoming ethos where students make good academic progress in an outstandingly safe and supportive environment. The personal well-being of every student is at the core of everything the school achieves. This is well known by the local community and the school received over 400 applications for the 120 places in Year 7 this September. As one parent commented, 'I could not be happier with Wrotham School. It is a school I would highly recommend to others.' The students are also proud of their school and the vast majority feel safe and well cared for. They appreciate the teaching and the excellent care, guidance and support they receive. They enjoy attending Wrotham School. Students share good relationships with each other and their teachers and behave in a sensible, mature manner both in lessons and around school.

Attainment on entry is low, but standards are above average in most subjects by the time students reach Year 11. This represents good progress overall and in some respects it is outstanding. There is a rising trend in attainment in English, science and mathematics. However, standards in mathematics still lag behind, in spite of recent improvements to provision. In the unvalidated 2009 GCSE results, attainment in English and science was above the national average for the first time. Improving achievement in the wide range of vocational courses demonstrates the positive impact that the recent changes to the curriculum are having on students' progress. The school's humanities specialism is celebrated throughout the building and has had a positive impact across the entire curriculum. The communication and literacy themes are used in many subjects and the improved information and communication technology (ICT) resources linked to the specialism are fully integrated into the students' learning.

Students have many opportunities to contribute to school life through the school council, as prefects and through a range of other roles. The school has introduced a wide range of strategies to encourage all students to attend regularly. While largely successful, there are still some persistent absentees.

The lessons observed included examples of good and sometimes outstanding teaching and learning. Students enjoyed the lesson and were challenged in a variety of activities. However, in a significant number of satisfactory lessons progress was slower. Here, teachers talked for too long or the tasks set were insufficiently challenging, restricting the students' engagement. .

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Staff, parents and students particularly appreciate the outstandingly effective leadership of the headteacher and the head of school. Staff at all levels share the enthusiasm shown by the senior team, and middle managers take full responsibility through a rigorous evaluation process for the learning and progress of students within their subject areas. This outstanding management team has a strong track record of improvement since the last inspection and clearly demonstrates an outstanding capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in mathematics at GCSE by monitoring closely the impact of recent initiatives to raise standards and ensuring they are effective.
- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching and learning across the curriculum, by:
 - ensuring that lessons consistently engage and motivate students through rapid pace and interesting activities that challenge all groups of pupils to do well
 - building on the examples of outstanding practice already seen within the school.
- Improve attendance, especially of persistent absentees, by working closely with parents and other support bodies such as the family liaison officer.

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

Students enjoy their lessons and have good attitudes to their learning. The progress seen in lessons was mostly good, and sometimes excellent. Students and teachers share good relationships and students work in a cooperative manner. They particularly enjoy the activities where they are directly involved, such as class presentations, practicals and research topics. Most teachers are very skilled in handling question-and-answer sessions that then motivate the students to discuss their answers and the responses of their peers. The most effective learning was seen where students worked together on challenging tasks, with the teacher circulating giving advice and praise. Achievement is at least good for all students, including those identified as gifted and talented. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit greatly from the guidance and motivation given by effective learning support assistants to make good and sometimes outstanding progress.

The percentage of students gaining five A*C grades including English and mathematics at GCSE has risen over the past few years, and students' work seen in Year 11 confirmed that overall attainment levels have continued to rise from last year. The head of department in mathematics recognises that attainment should be higher in mathematics. The department has introduced a different GCSE syllabus linked to a much more detailed progress monitoring and support system for students in its drive to improve progress further. The current GCSE modular examination results indicate that these changes are having a positive impact.

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Students are fully aware of the need to follow safety procedures in practical subjects. They are also fully aware of the need to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Large numbers of students take part in extra activities and adopt a healthy diet. The school is proud of its Healthy School award. In discussions, students admit there is a small amount of low-level bullying but say the school deals with this quickly and effectively. Students have many opportunities to take on roles of responsibilities within school and are fully involved in school life. For example, they help to interview staff and are starting a process to evaluate their lessons. There are many effective links with the community, including with primary, special and other secondary schools. The positive impact of the citizenship course and the personal, social and health education curriculum is seen in the good relationships across the school and the good behaviour both in class and around the school. Students are well prepared for their future through careers guidance, work experience and a good grasp of key skills, especially in literacy and ICT.

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	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers plan lessons in great detail and ensure the needs of all students are met

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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through using a range of resources and support materials. Good class control and positive relationships lead to a calm and cooperative atmosphere where students learn well. Many teachers assess students' work against shared targets and give good guidance on how well the student has done and also how to improve further. The students appreciate this monitoring and are fully involved in the process. Many teachers plan lessons that directly involve the student in a range of engaging activities. These lessons motivate students to learn and have good pace. However, some lessons are too teacher-led, with students listening passively. This results in a slower pace, with students losing concentration and not being fully involved. As a result, the progress these students make in these lessons is less than in the more engaging active lessons. Many teachers have introduced the concept of individual learning and thinking skills to support learning, following the recommendations of the last inspection, with good effect. The school has modified the curriculum throughout Key Stages 3 and 4. Students enjoy the themed project approach in Year 7. In Years 10 and 11 the school has introduced a more personalised vocational curriculum while retaining the academic subjects. This offers students the chance to study subjects that are most relevant to them, and in which they have a particular interest. This has been a major factor in the rise in attainment at the end of Year 11 in 2009.

One of the benefits of a small school is that all staff know the students well. Very effective systems are in place that identify any possible issues quickly and provide outstanding support and guidance. The school uses a wide range of external specialists such as the family liaison officer and local authority personnel to provide support and guidance when required.

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?

The headteacher has very high expectations that are shared by all the staff, and this has been the driving force behind improvements in a wide range of areas across the school over the past few years. Respect and cooperation are central to this fully inclusive school. All statutory equalities requirements are entirely fulfilled, and the impact of its policies is outstanding in many areas of school life. The high level of support and guidance given to each individual student results in the good or better outcomes in each strand of the Every Child Matters agenda. Safeguarding procedures in relation to recruitment and child protection are a particular strength, and are regularly reviewed at

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both school and governor level. The senior leadership team, together with leaders of learning and other staff in management positions, fully support the drive towards making Wrotham an outstanding school for its students in the near future. Leaders of learning rigorously evaluate outcomes from national examinations and students' ongoing progress within their subject areas. They are fully accountable and totally involved in the very effective management of the school.

The management of the teaching and learning across the school is outstanding because of the organisation and accuracy of the process and the high level of commitment of the deputy headteacher. The school is fully aware of any issues that have an impact on the progress of students, and gives effective support and guidance to teachers where required. This has resulted in a continual rise in the quality of teaching and learning across the school over the past three years. The chair and vice chair of governors are also highly committed to the school. They are very supportive, while ensuring that the school continues on its course of improvement through rigorous questioning.

The school has been extremely successful in preparing students for life in the wider community through a wide range of activities, visits and visitors involving a diverse selection of people from the community and a range of religions. Many other opportunities are provided through the curriculum for students to appreciate their role within the global community and to understand the wider British community.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Standards are rising in the sixth form as a result of the improved quality of learning.

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Newly-introduced choices now include vocational as well as the more traditional academic subjects. Students with a wide range of abilities join the sixth form but, overall, standards on entry are below national averages. Last year, students' progress was satisfactory but now it is good, with attainment being closer to the national figures. The teaching observed during the inspection was good overall, with several lessons being outstanding. In all lessons teachers and students shared good relationships and students were keen to learn.

One reason for the formation of a sixth form within the school was to give those students who would be reluctant to move to a local college the opportunity of studying after the age of 16. This inclusive approach has been successful. In discussions the students say they enjoy the sixth form and it is very friendly and supportive. They appreciate the quality of teaching they experience and the relevant and engaging curriculum. All students are aware of their targets and current attainment. Further support and guidance is readily given to any student needing further help and this is greatly appreciated by the students. Sixth formers are fully involved in school life and in forming effective community links. Their mature and responsible attitudes towards their studies and each other provide good role models for younger students. Their attendance is good.

The newly formed management team is effective and ensures that teaching and learning are monitored to ensure every student makes the progress expected of them. They also provide constructive advice through a range of links and agencies on career or college choices after leaving school.

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

The questionnaires that were returned from staff, parents and students clearly demonstrate that the headteacher is held in the highest regard by all associated with the school. Overwhelmingly parents appreciate the efforts all teachers put in to keep them informed of their children's progress and the effective manner in which they deal with any emerging issues. Parents also greatly appreciate the approach taken by the school to ensure the safety of the students. All except a very small minority of parents say their children enjoy coming to school and make good progress. Even in the negative responses there were no major issues raised by these parents. Every one of the parents who responded said they are happy with the overall children's experience at Wrotham.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Wrotham 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 155 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 710 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	54	35	96	62	5	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	64	41	88	57	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	83	54	69	45	2	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	71	46	80	52	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	64	41	91	59	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	47	30	104	67	3	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	21	120	77	1	1	0	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)	55	35	91	59	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	56	36	98	63	0	0	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	64	41	85	55	3	2	1	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	43	28	100	65	2	1	1	0
The school is led and managed effectively	77	50	78	50	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	93	60	62	40	0	0	0	0

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.



20 November 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Wrotham School, Sevenoaks TN15 7RD

I would like to thank you so much for the pleasant and warm welcome you gave to all the members of the team of inspectors when we visited your school recently. We appreciated the discussions we held with some of you during this visit, and your views and opinions have been incorporated into the report. Thank you also for completing the questionnaires as these clearly demonstrated that you enjoy school, feel safe and appreciate the efforts of your teachers.

Many of you talked about being proud of your school and that you think that it is a good school. I believe you have every right to be proud of being a student at Wrotham, and it is indeed a good school that is improving year on year. To a large extent that is down to your good attitudes to learning, your behaviour and the effective relationships you have with all staff.

Your headteacher, along with all the staff, is trying to make Wrotham an excellent school and you will be a part of this. We have recommended that the school and governors should focus on:

- raising your attainment in mathematics at GCSE by ensuring that what the school has done recently to improve standards is effective
- spreading the best practice in the school so that all your lessons feature sharply challenging activities so that you enjoy the topics and all ability groups are fully engaged
- improving attendance, especially of persistent absentees, by working closely with the parents of students who are at times are reluctant to attend school.

You can help your school to improve even further by being part of the drive to make your school outstanding. So continue to enjoy all aspects of school life and make sure you do your best at all times.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Corp

Lead inspector

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