

Wreake Valley Community College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120267
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	339657
Inspection dates	2–3 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Gwen Coates 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	1500
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	376
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Burditt
Headteacher	Helen McDermott
Date of previous school inspection	7 January 2007
School address	Parkstone Road Syston Leicester
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 62 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school improvement plan, departmental reviews, minutes of governing body meetings, monitoring data in relation to students' progress and the quality of teaching. Inspectors received, 55 parental questionnaires, 345 student questionnaires and 61 staff questionnaires .

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

- the attainment and progress of particular groups of students who might be underachieving, including boys, to determine how well teaching and the curriculum is taking good account of their needs
- the effectiveness of strategies to improve teaching from satisfactory to good so that attainment and progress improve
- how well teachers in all subjects use assessment to support learning and the impact this is having on students' progress and learning
- strategies to improve attendance and their impact, particularly on the rate of persistent non-attending
- the rigour of systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and how well these impacts on student outcomes.

Information about the school

Wreake Valley Community College is a larger than average school. It is unique in that it has two points of entry: a 5-form entry in Year 7, when students progress from local primary schools, and a 14-form entry in Year 10, when students progress from a local high school. As a result, two thirds of Year 10 students are new to the school every year. The proportion of students who are eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of students who are from minority ethnic groups or for whom English is an additional language is above average overall but is below average for students who enter the school in Year 7. The largest minority ethnic group is Indian. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average but the proportion of those with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The school gained specialist science college status in 2006 and has achieved several awards including the Careers Mark, Arts Mark Silver, Healthy Schools and, in November 2009, the International School Award (intermediate level).

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

Strong leadership at all levels is ensuring that well thought-out strategies for improvement are having a positive impact on provision and in turn on outcomes for students at Wreake Valley Community College. The good curriculum and the outstanding quality of the care, guidance and support ensure that the needs of all students are very well met. Improvements in teaching and in the quality of the curriculum are engaging students more effectively so that behaviour, attitudes to learning and the progress students make are now good. As a result attainment, which has been average in recent years, improved significantly in 2009. Other outcomes for students have also benefited from the improved provision. For example, students feel exceptionally safe in the school, a view expressed by students and fully supported by their parents and carers.

The school has good capacity not only to sustain current levels of performance, but also to improve even further. Evidence for this includes:

- the good track record of improvements that school leaders at all levels have brought about, including addressing those areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report and meeting and exceeding the challenging targets it has set itself
- the fact that staff understand fully what the school is trying to achieve, are committed to these goals and involved in striving to attain them
- good self-evaluation at whole school and departmental levels.

Despite the significant improvements that have been made, areas of inconsistency remain. The school has accurately identified these in its self-evaluation and set them as priorities in its improvement plans. There are variations in attainment and progress across subjects and between students groups. This is because, although teaching is good overall, there remain some inconsistencies in the quality of marking, the effectiveness of questioning, the use of assessment to support learning and the extent to which learning activities are matched to students' ability. Monitoring and tracking of students' performance is rigorous and involves staff at all levels. Nonetheless, there is room to further improve how quickly potential underachievement, in relation to both attainment and progress, is identified at each key stage.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Remove remaining inconsistencies in the quality of teaching by ensuring that:
 - the marking of students' work is always thorough and indicates clearly how they can improve

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- teachers' questioning is always appropriately challenging so that all students are required to think hard and that there is an expectation that all students will listen and respond if requested
 - assessment to support learning is always planned for and always used effectively within all lessons
 - learning activities are always matched appropriately to students' levels of ability.
- Extend and refine existing systems for monitoring and promoting students' attainment and their progress at all key stages.

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

Attainment at Key Stage 4 over recent years has been average but is improving. In 2009, the number of students gaining at least five GCSEs at grade C or above including English and mathematics was 57%, which exceeded the school's own target and the national average. Attainment in English has been above the national average over recent years and in 2009, there was a significant improvement in attainment in mathematics. The attainment of minority ethnic students is high. Boys' attainment has shown significant improvement and, in 2009 at GCSE, actually overtook that of girls. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities have also demonstrated improvements in attainment.

Students' attitudes to learning and their ability to apply themselves in lessons are good. This is reflected in the good progress they made in lessons observed during the inspection. The rate of progress students make over time has been improving and is now good. The significant improvement in attainment in 2009 and the projections for 2010, based on interim module and test results, support this. The progress of individual groups of students, including boys and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with overall rates of progress.

Other outcomes for students are all at least good.

Bullying incidents are rare and students are confident that there is always a member of staff to talk to should the need arise.

Behaviour is good and the number of exclusions has been reduced.

Participation in extra-curricular sporting activities is high.

Students are effective members of their school community and are involved in the wider community, for example, via Fair Trade activities, local and national charity work and links with a school in Ethiopia.

The number of students who progress to employment, further education or training on leaving school at 16 is above the local authority average and has been increasing steadily, reaching 100% in 2008/09.

Attendance has improved year on year, but there remains a small group of students in Year 11 who are persistent non-attenders.

Students have good awareness of the value of diverse cultures and of moral, spiritual,

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and social issues as a result of their involvement in a range of activities including, international charity work, Rwanda dance and Holocaust events, as well as regular assemblies and 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	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?

The great majority of lessons observed were good and, where this was the case, assessment to support learning was also good. In all lessons, teachers gave at least good support to students. Very good relationships between students and teachers were evident. Most students were clear about their target grades and how they could improve their current work in order to achieve these. Excellent practice was observed where teaching was creative, encouraged collaboration, excited students' imagination and got them to work hard to produce top quality work of which they could be proud. Excellent examples were also observed in relation to: questioning that probed and challenged all students to think hard; matching learning activities to the varying abilities of students in a class; students demonstrating their ability to work very productively independently and in small groups; assessment to support learning that included peer and self-assessment;

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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and marking that detailed precisely how students could improve their work.

Despite the many strengths in teaching observed during the inspection, there remain some inconsistencies. Almost all lesson plans included approaches to meet students' different needs and elements of assessment to support learning. However, they were not always effective in practice. Occasionally, teaching activities were not matched well to the ability of all students. In such lessons, behaviour was only satisfactory because teaching activities failed to engage students effectively. In those lessons where learning and progress were only satisfactory, teachers had given little thought to assessing students' understanding of the key focus of the lesson. Questioning was sometimes only focused on those who knew the right answers and wanted to answer. At times, questions were insufficiently challenging. In some subjects, marking lacked detail or was not done regularly enough.

Since the last inspection, the school has broadened the curriculum to ensure it effectively meets the differing needs and aspirations of all groups of students. At Key Stage 3 students have to access a wide range of subjects, including modern foreign languages and performing arts. Key Stage 4 offers an increasingly personalised curriculum. Students can take a full range of GCSE courses and choose from BTEC, Applied and Diploma courses in a range of subjects including travel and tourism, performing arts, physical education and engineering. There is an extensive range of extra-curricular activities including revision clubs, performing arts productions, a full range of sporting activities and a multicultural group in religious education.

The school knows its students extremely well and targets appropriate resources in a highly effective manner. It does this in partnership with a wide range of outside agencies to ensure the best possible support is provided for all students. Despite the complexity of students joining the school in both Year 7 and Year 10, transition arrangements are outstanding and have been identified by the local authority as an example of good practice. Exemplary care is taken of students whose circumstances make them vulnerable in order to promote their personal well-being and ensure they achieve well. Improving attendance is a high priority for the school and it is exceptionally proactive in its attempts to improve the attendance of the small number of persistent non-attenders in Year 11. This includes introducing strategies to engage their parents more effectively. A good focus on meeting the social and emotional needs of students and the very well targeted support through the pastoral support centre is leading to a reduction in the number of exclusions.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

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How effective are leadership and management?

School leaders have a clear vision and have created a culture of high expectations that both staff and students support. They have high expectations of teachers and have supported them through effective professional development and performance management systems. There are robust systems to monitor and evaluate teaching. Lead teachers, mentors, coaches and support plans are in place to raise the quality of teaching where it is judged to be satisfactory. As a result, the number of good or better lessons has increased over time, leading to rising levels of attainment. Middle leaders are keenly focused on raising standards in their areas of responsibility and a teachers at all levels are accountable for their students' performance.

Parental surveys conducted by the school indicate a high degree of satisfaction. Attendance at school functions, such as parents' evenings, are good. The school provides termly reports to parents about their children's progress and consults them on major issues such as the recently introduced school uniform and the decision to stop students leaving the school site at lunch times. Despite this, the school recognises that it still has more work to do in reaching those parents who do not readily engage, for example, those whose children are persistent non-attenders. Extensive and highly effective partnerships enhance the school's own provision to contribute to the achievement and well-being of students. The school's specialist science status contributes significantly to the extensive nature of its partnerships, including links with local and national businesses that enhance the school's science and mathematics provision.

The school's promotion of equal of opportunity is good and, for example, no groups of students under-perform. The school's approach to community cohesion is highly effective. Its policy, audit and impact assessment are comprehensive and demonstrate the good work that is in place at the school, the local and the wider community levels. Governors have a good understanding of the school and provide a high degree of challenge and support to the head teacher. Safeguarding procedures are outstanding and involve exemplary record keeping, which is constantly reviewed and closely monitored. The school has a financial deficit but has taken appropriate action by publishing a three year recovery plan.

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

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The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

While attainment on entry to the sixth form has been below the national average in recent years, attainment at GCE A to E grades in the sixth form has been above the national average. Value added has been improving over recent years and no group of students is underachieving. The progress made by students taking GCE AS courses in 2009 was significantly above what might have been expected given their starting points - a clear indication of the impact of improvements in teaching and learning. Learning and progress seen in lessons observed during the inspection was mostly good and sometimes outstanding. Retention rates are good, with most students completing their chosen qualifications and progressing to higher education. Personal outcomes, including personal qualities, behaviour and attendance are at least good and students readily take responsibility for their own learning.

The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was at least good and some was outstanding. The curriculum is matched well to the particular needs of students and includes a growing vocational component that includes level 2 courses. Extra-curricular provision is good and includes young enterprise activities and sport leadership courses. Care, guidance and support is good and ensures that students are well prepared for their careers after school. Monitoring of students' effort and their academic progress takes place termly and systems are developing in line with the rigorous system introduced at Key Stage 4. Leadership of the school is ambitious for the sixth form and the strong focus on improving students' outcomes ensures that there are clear plans to tackle any remaining weaknesses in teaching between subjects.

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

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Views of parents and carers

Although relatively few parents responded to the questionnaire, those who did were highly positive about the education their children received at Wreake Valley Community College. Their views support the judgements made by inspectors, particularly in relation to how well the school keeps their children safe and meets their children's particular needs.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Wreake Valley Community 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 55 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1500 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	18	33	30	55	5	9	2	4
The school keeps my child safe	13	24	38	69	3	5	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	20	36	29	53	4	7	2	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	16	29	33	60	4	7	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	8	15	42	76	2	4	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	10	18	38	69	5	9	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	18	33	60	6	11	2	4
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)	14	25	34	62	2	4	2	5
The school meets my child's particular needs	13	24	38	69	3	5	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	14	25	30	55	4	7	3	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	6	11	37	67	6	11	2	4
The school is led and managed effectively	10	18	36	65	6	11	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	17	31	33	60	3	5	2	4

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.



4 December 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Wreake Valley Community College, Leicester, LE7 1LY

The inspection team enjoyed their visit to your school. Many thanks to all of you for making it such a pleasant occasion. Thanks to those of you we met personally for the time you gave to our discussions.

Wreake Valley is a good school. Leadership of the school is strong and this ensures that much attention is given to providing you with a good education that gives every one of you the opportunity to achieve well. Lots of work has been put into improving the quality of teaching and the curriculum. Improvements in these areas are having a clear impact on your attitudes to learning, the progress you all make and how well you attain. In 2009, Year 11 students achieved the school's best results, with 57% gaining five or more GCSEs at grade C or above including in English and mathematics - better than the school's own target and better than the national average. The quality of care, guidance and support the school offers you is outstanding and, as a result, your personal well-being and development are good. Attendance by most of you is good but there is a small minority of students in Year 11 whose persistent non-attendance is having a negative impact on the school's figures and relevant inspection grade. The school is trying very hard to engage these students and their parents.

Even though the school has been judged to be good, it can improve further because there are still some areas of inconsistency in the quality of teaching. In order to ensure that all lessons are as good as the best, I have asked the school to ensure that further improvements are made in relation to: questioning, the use of assessment, marking, and the matching of learning activities to your varying abilities. I have also asked the school to ensure that the way your progress is monitored is as good as it can be.

You can help the school to become even better by attending regularly, being punctual, behaving well and contributing fully in all your lessons.

With best wishes for all your futures

Gwen Coates

Her Majesty's Inspector

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