

Woodbrook Vale High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120293
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	339669
Inspection dates	11–12 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Ceri Morgan 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	11–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	476
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Gary Page
Headteacher	Mr Graham Bett
Date of previous school inspection	12 June 2007
School address	Grasmere Road Loughborough LE11 2ST
Telephone number	01509 557560
Fax number	01509 557562
Email address	office@woodbrookvale.leics.sch.uk

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

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. During the inspection 39 lessons were observed taught by 30 teachers and a full range of key school documentation was reviewed. Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body and the school's improvement partner. A full suite of meetings were held with staff responsible for various aspects of the school's work. These included a review of the pupil tracking system, the curriculum plans, the impact of the specialism and a full staff briefing. Regular meetings, both formal and informal, were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher as the inspection unfolded. Inspectors also considered the response from the 236 parental questionnaires.

However, the majority of the inspection was spent observing learning and inspectors hosted two discussions with pupil groups and frequent further discussions with pupils during breaktimes and lessons. A work scrutiny was conducted in a sample of four different subjects, including English and mathematics.

- The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:
- the rate of progress being made by pupils - given that no national measures are easily available for this school
- the quality of teaching, in matching lessons to individual pupil's needs, especially for more able pupils
- the impact of wider leadership in securing accurate and rigorous monitoring of school improvement.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than a typical high school. Pupils are predominately from White British heritage backgrounds and the proportion from other heritages is about half the national average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average and, as result of a gradual change to the intake, most pupils enter school with average or above-average skills. The school is a keen award-bearing school with a range of successful awards, including Healthy Schools status, Sportsmark, Investors in People and many others. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly above average, despite those with a statement of special educational needs being well below national levels. The school has specialist status for the Arts.

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

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. It has some significant outstanding features. It continues to improve consistently and already has some of the characteristics found in outstanding schools. These include an outstanding range of wider activities which enhance a very strong curriculum. Pupils enjoy their time here, as evidenced by their outstanding attendance and their frequent smiles. They are excellent ambassadors for their school. Both adults and pupils are proud of their school and there is a tangible sense of commitment at all levels to continue to improve despite the obvious success already achieved. There are no areas that could be considered a weakness and the school has a professional and ambitious approach to continued school development.

This is an inclusive school where teachers provide high quality care and support, especially to potentially vulnerable pupils. Pupils respond well to these good role models and are themselves supportive and encouraging to each other. The school works exceptionally well with a wide range of partners. This includes some innovative work with pupils from nearby special schools and a major contribution by the specialist arts department staff to developing art in both the local community and primary schools. This all helps establish the school as an outward thinking and pro-active school. This ethos has been carefully nurtured by a strong leadership team. The headteacher leads the school with a clear set of principles and has secured the confidence of the local community and the school. This has led to a thoughtful and reflective approach to staff development and, given the integrity of decision-making, generated a powerful momentum which challenges any hint of underperformance.

The school has implemented an accurate and comprehensive method of tracking pupil progress. This is important in a school which, unusually, pupils leave at age 14. Although the school acknowledge the system could be further refined and used more productively in generating a more detailed improvement plan, showing, for example, what is expected for different groups of pupils and subjects more precisely, it is an impressive tool. This system has contributed to the growing sense of ambition. For example, targets set, whether for individual pupils or for whole school development, are very challenging. A strong governing body ensures the school is held to account regularly in progress towards these targets. As a result the school generally exceeds them. Governors also meet all statutory requirements in relation to safeguarding and as a consequence, pupils feel safe and are encouraged to lead very healthy lifestyles.

There are some aspects of inconsistency. Despite some very high performing subject departments, not all do as well. Teaching is good and improving, with examples of outstanding practice. There is scope for a more open style of questioning and a more precise use of assessment to promote greater challenge and excitement, especially for

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more-able pupils who are themselves asking for greater demand. As an example, high-ability boys could achieve more in English. Despite this, teachers plan well, insist on high performance from pupils and have a strong classroom presence. Behaviour is good and even better when teaching is exciting and engaging. The pupils themselves express a slight concern about some fringe boisterousness but also recognise it is usually well dealt with by school staff.

The size and very particular demands on the school mean that the tight and particularly effective management of resources has been critical to the school's success. Premises developments are generally self-funded and staff are particularly well deployed. The school has been especially successful, for example, in developing the skills of teachers and middle managers and recognises this could be further developed. The capacity to sustain this improvement is good. As a consequence of this and the good and improving outcomes for pupils the school currently offers outstanding value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop greater consistency in teaching by using the already strong practice to ensure:
 - higher expectations of what pupils could achieve, but especially boys and the more able
 - questioning skills that develop pupils' extended thinking and speaking skills
 - a greater level of focus on meeting the needs of particular groups of pupils.
- Ensure the ambition evident in the wider management team is translated into:
 - greater consistency and rigour in evaluation of current provision, especially at head of department level
 - refining the newly established pupil tracking system to offer greater potential of analysis
 - ironing out inconsistencies between the performance of different departments.

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

Since the national tests for pupils aged 14 were disbanded the school has used a combination of teacher assessment and end of year tests to gauge pupil achievement. This system is increasingly robust and can now identify the progress pupils make in all subjects accurately. It shows that almost 90% of pupils make good progress and have high levels of attainment in most subjects, although it also shows some variation in the performance between departments. This picture chimes with the last available national comparisons in 2007 when the school was judged to be in the top 10% of all schools nationally for the progress pupils make in English, science and mathematics and indeed in the top 5% for English. Despite a slight dip in 2009 in some subjects, standards have continued to rise since that period.

Although pupils start at age 11 with overall levels of attainment that are in line with

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national averages, this masks a more complex picture. A significant proportion, currently around a quarter, start with levels of attainment that are lower than those expected, particularly in literacy, whilst a similar proportion has considerably higher attainment. However, the majority make good progress. The school's tracking system, confirmed on inspection, shows that there is some variation in performance for some groups of pupils with particular differences in the relative performance of boys and girls and some disparity between subjects for more-able pupils. For example, the proportion of boys likely to achieve the higher levels in English is below that for girls whilst this picture is reversed for mathematics. There is a picture of particular strength in key departments with science, physical education and the school's main specialism, art, managing especially strong records.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make equally strong progress as their peers. This is often as consequence of effective additional support from well briefed and diligent classroom support assistants. Although the small numbers make a secure comparison more difficult, there is emerging evidence that the few pupils from other than a White British heritage background make at least satisfactory but slightly less progress than most students.

The school organises a wide and impressive range of additional activities designed to promote healthy lifestyles, not least a good range of physical activity and additional advice about safe and healthy choices. Sports options are more than the traditional ones with dance, fitness and trampolining on the menu. Take up is excellent and pupils enjoy them. Another example is the recent initiative to reduce cyber bullying and the cycle to school travel plan. The latter is popular with pupils, even in poor weather. School lunches offer healthy options, staff pay careful attention to safety and pupil safeguarding with secure and robust procedures in place for ensuring pupils well being. As a consequence pupils say they feel safe and have an outstanding understanding of the importance of healthy choices.

This attention to personal development is carried through to some equally outstanding contributions to the local community via charitable activities, international links, performances and links with others. Particularly impressive are the links the pupils establish with other children with profound disabilities and needs from nearby schools. Other ideas, such as a local resident attending school council meetings on occasions, show a willingness to adopt open relationships with the local and wider communities. Pupils willingly accept responsibilities, including mentoring younger pupils and acting as 'buddies' for those who may need extra support. The school uses its specialism of art well in working with other primary schools nearby. As a result of such activities, pupils' development of workplace and other skills is excellent, showing a highly responsible attitude to punctuality and enterprise, with well-developed numeracy and literacy skills. Recent action to improve attendance has worked with recent levels well above national averages.

Pupils are proud to attend Woodbrook Vale High school, and feel secure in their learning. They enjoy being at the school. Pupils know whom to turn to for help in the rare event of any bullying and as a consequence say they feel safe at school.

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Their behaviour around the school is good, and in the best lessons it is exemplary. However, where teaching is less good pupils sometimes lose interest and their behaviour deteriorates. This has an impact on learning. The school has introduced a new behaviour management system for the current year, and pupils and teachers agree that this has caused classroom behaviour to improve considerably.

Pupils' moral understanding and social skills are excellent though teachers sometimes miss opportunities to promote spiritual and cultural aspects in lessons.

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	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching observed on inspection covered the full spectrum from outstanding with occasional but rare inadequacies. However the majority was securely good with flashes of outstanding practice in some subjects. Key strengths evident are good relationships between adults and pupils, effective use of timings to keep sessions brisk, thoughtful planning and good use of a wide range of resources. Behaviour management was good, support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities was crucial in ensuring good progress for the pupils who benefit from it 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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most classrooms were characterised by an atmosphere of hard work and a willingness to learn. Pupils are very supportive of each other and work collaboratively very well. There were many smiles evident in lessons.

Despite these widespread strengths there were some common reasons why a higher proportion of teaching was not judged as better than satisfactory. These included sessions where the priority appeared to be on completion of set tasks rather than in exciting and engaging pupils' understanding. Similarly there were too few opportunities for pupils to work on extended and challenging activities and teachers did not routinely ask questions designed to extend speaking or thinking skills. This limitation particularly disadvantages the more able pupils who express a desire for greater problem-solving and challenge in their work. Despite this, teachers know their pupils well and set ambitious targets for all pupils. A key strength in this regard is the way work is levelled accurately and teachers explain what is required to move each pupil to the next level. Marking is generally completed diligently but is more helpful in some subjects than others. The amount and the usefulness of homework activities are generally good although there is some evidence that it starts each term better organised than it is by the end of the term.

The curriculum has been developed over the last year and is outstanding. All statutory requirements are met, and the school has adopted an innovative approach in order to meet the needs of all abilities and backgrounds. For example, the arrangements for teaching humanities secure an appropriate blend of separate curriculum areas such as history and geography, whilst integrating the approach to the teaching of religious education and citizenship. Opportunities in modern foreign languages include an extra-curricular course in Mandarin Chinese.

The range of extra-curricular activities is outstanding, especially in Year 9, where one afternoon per week is devoted to sporting and cultural activities, and community work in local institutions such as special schools, old peoples' homes and primary schools. Many visits, both to and outside the school, are arranged for groups including gifted and talented pupils. These activities are much enjoyed, and promote personal development, enjoyment and academic progress. The school's arts specialism and the wide range of successful partnerships that have been forged, for example with other schools, is a key feature in the outstanding curriculum.

Arrangements for induction on entry to the school are excellent, and pupils are well prepared for transition to upper school, for example through taster courses. Pupils say they know what is required of them; they receive high-quality guidance at key decision points and recognise the care shown to them by teachers and other adults. They especially appreciate the work of the school nurse. The regular pupil performance meetings and reviews are leading to good progress by identifying early those pupils at risk of underachievement.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leadership and management are characterised by a thoughtful response to challenges and a proactive and ambitious view for future development, including long-term school growth. The headteacher balances rich experience with a continued enthusiasm for change. He models a decision-making process that rests on integrity and professionalism which is being mirrored by the newer members of the leadership team. He encourages the development of those around him whilst maintaining an accurate and honest view of the school's strengths and relative weaknesses. This approach is complemented well by others in the leadership team who are increasingly rigorous in their use of performance data to iron out areas of inconsistent performance. Together they form a powerful and effective team. The school has a very accurate view of its own performance.

The school operates a system of departmental reviews, conducted by the heads of departments, which are then challenged by the senior leadership team as appropriate. This system, although usually accurate and rigorous, has led to some inconsistencies in the quality of review between departments. The wider leadership team acknowledge that the system for tracking pupil progress, although effective, could be further refined to better manage the relative performance of departments. Although the overall school development plan is a useful executive summary it does not yet fully incorporate the information generated by the subject reviews. Monitoring by middle managers is accurate and effective but the school does not yet align the focus of each cycle of monitoring with the identified school priorities closely.

The governing body offers increasing challenge and engagement based on rich expertise. The Chair of Governors in particular shows a considerable understanding of the school's performance and responsibilities. Governors discharge their statutory requirements in respect of safeguarding, tackling inequality and promoting community cohesion particularly well and recently conducted a self-review process that highlights an ambition for the future. The school has an especially rigorous approach to managing change and the deployment of resources. Given the staff and finances available to what is a small high school, this represents outstanding value for money.

The targets the school now sets itself, both in relation to its specialism and to individual pupils, are ambitious. For example, individual departmental targets are based on a range in which the minimum expected level matches that of the top performing 25% of all schools nationally. Many departments outperform this and some subjects such as science and arts have already achieved the higher levels. The school is aware of the

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need to ensure that all pupils appreciate the rich cultural diversity of the wider society they will eventually mix with. The school has some innovative international links and is itself a very cohesive community but does not yet fully evaluate the impact on pupils' beliefs from the activities they engage in.

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	2
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	1

Views of parents and carers

The inspection team received a response from around half of all parents and carers. This is a strong sample. The very large majority were supportive of the quality of the education their children received. They were especially supportive of the efforts teachers made and the quality of leadership. For example, 95% of those who responded said their child enjoyed school, were kept safe and 96% were happy with the school. There were a few consistent requests however to provide greater advice as to how they could support their children at home and a very small minority expressed a concern about disruptive behaviour. The school plans an innovative on-line parental forum for the autumn term and has undertaken significant effort to improve behaviour recently in response to these concerns.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Woodbrook Vale High 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 171* completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 476 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	81	34	144	61	12	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	83	35	143	60	9	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	97	41	123	52	18	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	87	37	133	56	13	5	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	64	27	164	69	6	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	44	18	148	62	36	15	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	43	18	162	68	28	12	1	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	58	24	149	63	9	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	64	27	149	63	13	5	4	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	54	23	143	60	30	13	3	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	40	17	146	61	25	11	1	0
The school is led and managed effectively	63	26	150	63	11	5	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	94	39	134	56	8	3	1	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

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

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

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

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

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



Thursday 13 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Woodbrook Vale High School, Loughborough, LE11 2ST

You will recall that I visited your school recently with some colleagues as part of an inspection. I am writing to let you know of our findings.

We are pleased to confirm that, in our judgement, you attend a good school. It is close to outstanding in some respects. You make good progress and achieve well. This is due in no small part to your own efforts. Your attitudes to learning, attendance and willingness to do well are a credit to you and your teachers. In particular you do well in science and art. You told us that you enjoy school and take a full part in the opportunities on offer, including sports and other clubs.

This is also made possible by good and knowledgeable leadership and a team of teachers who know your needs well and work hard to ensure you do the best you can. They plan lessons effectively and are ambitious for you to do well.

As with all schools there are some aspects which could be improved even further. We have asked the school to consider offering greater challenge and excitement in lessons, especially to the more able amongst you. This includes boys in English. We have also requested that they use the new pupil tracking system more effectively to ensure your achievement in all subjects is as good as in the strongest.

I am sure you will continue to do your part in this success. I would also like to wish you well for the future and thank those of you who took time to speak with us. We were hugely impressed with the way in which you gave us your views.

Yours sincerely

Ceri Morgan

Her Majesty's Inspector

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