

Wollaston School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122059
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	340084
Inspection dates	13–14 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Deborah Vaughan-Jenkins 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1371
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	171
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tony Cochrane
Headteacher	Mr Michael Browne
Date of previous school inspection	5 October 2006
School address	Wollaston School Irchester Road, Wollaston Wellingborough, Northamptonshire
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 48 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, a representative of the local authority and four groups of students. They observed the school's operation, talked to many students informally and looked at a wide range of documentation, including students' assessed work in lessons. In addition to parental questionnaires, inspectors also considered responses from staff and student questionnaires.

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

- the progress made by students in lessons, particularly for some groups of girls, students with special educational needs, and all students in mathematics
- the extent to which the school is improving students' attainment of the highest grades and challenging the most able students to reach their potential
- the impact of the school's specialist visual and performing arts status on the students' experiences and outcomes
- how well the school has improved and evaluated the quality of its work across all areas.

Information about the school

Wollaston School is a larger than average comprehensive school with a sixth form. The majority of students are White British and speak English as a first language. Around 5% of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The extent of deprivation in the school's catchment area is much lower than the national average, as is the proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals. The number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly lower than the national average, although there are slightly more students than average with a statement of need. The school gained the Healthy Schools Award in 2007 and gained specialist status for visual and performing arts in September 2008. It was re-designated Sportsmark status in 2009. Over the last year the school has been without two senior managers, including a head of sixth form.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Wollaston is a satisfactory school with a good sixth form. The school has a number of good features. It is successful at developing students' personal development and well-being and provides an inclusive, safe and welcoming learning environment. Students enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their good attendance and behaviour. Throughout their time at Wollaston, students demonstrate positive attitudes and aspirations and develop into confident, mature individuals.

Most students achieve broadly average standards by the time they leave Year 11, although a lower number of students than average attain the highest grades. Through Years 7 to 11 the majority of students make satisfactory progress and some make good progress. All students with identified special education needs receive good quality, often tailored care and support and make progress similar to that of their peers. Students in the sixth form achieve well. The extent to which students make a positive contribution is outstanding. A wide range of opportunities exist which enable students to contribute to their school and wider community. Students take their roles, such as course representatives and anti-bully buddies, very seriously and perform responsibilities effectively. The school generally prepares students well for the next stage of their education. At the end of Year 11, many students progress successfully onto further education or training. The overwhelming majority of sixth form students are successful in achieving their career goals to chosen routes in higher education.

Through improvements in the use of assessment and better quality teaching and learning, particular groups of students, such as girls working below Level 4, and certain key subjects such as mathematics, are making better progress than in previous years. The school is aware, however, that the standards reached in mathematics need to be raised further. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with examples of good and outstanding teaching observed across the school. The planning of lessons to stretch and challenge all students including the most able, however, is too variable and often limits the progress made by some students. The school has been successful in increasing the understanding of assessment criteria with students. This is beginning to work very effectively in some subjects such as English and is helping to raise standards. The extended curriculum is wide, varied and is significantly enriching students' learning experiences. The school recognises the core curriculum follows a traditional model and is not yet flexible or responsive enough to meet the needs of all students and broaden their choices sufficiently. It is too early to judge the impact of the school's specialist status for visual and performing arts on students' outcomes but it is helping to raise students' motivation. Students report how proud they are of their school's specialist status and how they value highly the additional resources such as a new dance studio

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and theatre. Dance and drama are increasingly popular subjects with students. Care, guidance and support are strengths of the school and arrangements for supporting students with special educational needs and more vulnerable groups are strong.

The headteacher, senior managers and governors set a clear vision for the school and sixth form. The absence of two significant senior post holders has been well managed with appropriate interim arrangements in place. Data are used much better than in the past by managers to monitor student and school performance. Quality assurance arrangements in some areas of the school's work are good. Monitoring and evaluation in a number of key areas of the school's work, however, are not sufficiently rigorous and the impact of actions taken to improve in these areas has been limited. Consequently, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is judged as satisfactory rather than good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards across the school, particularly in mathematics and in the achievement of high grades by:
 - ensuring greater consistency in the planning and quality of teaching and learning
 - sharing the best assessment and teaching practice that exists in the school more formally
 - ensuring all lessons give students the opportunity to extend their learning fully and reach their potential through the better use of appropriate extension tasks and activities for all differing levels of ability.
- To ensure all aspects of the school and sixth form are evaluated and monitored rigorously so that this provides a clear basis for improvement by:
 - making sure all actions to improve are clearly linked to their impact on students' outcomes
 - using data more consistently to set measurable targets by which to assess students' progress and the impact of actions more effectively.
- To develop the core curriculum further across both key stages to better meet the needs of all students by:
 - increasing the flexibility and personal choice for students across subjects
 - widening further and embedding the newly introduced skills-based courses at Key Stage 3 and vocational options at Key Stage 4
 - ensuring the curriculum offer is more responsive to individual aptitudes and talents and provides an appropriate level of challenge.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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Students enter the school with broadly average levels of attainment and the standards they reach by the end of Year 11 are also average. The school is successful at ensuring all students leave with at least five A* to G grades at GCSE. The proportion of students who gained at least five good GCSE grades including English and mathematics remained in line with that of similar schools in 2009. High grades achievement is steadily improving in some subjects and is above average in English literature but overall, students' attainment of the highest grades at GCSE is consistently low and is recognised by the school as a continued area for development. Most students make the progress expected of them in most subjects. The school has clearly identified where groups of students, including lower ability girls and students with special educational needs, were not making enough progress in previous years. It has also highlighted underperforming subjects, notably mathematics. Appropriate action has been taken but it is too early to measure the full impact of these actions on students' outcomes. Focused observations by the inspection team, however, confirm the school's view that progress is now at least satisfactory for all these groups. Students applied themselves well in most lessons although the progress they made was variable in different subjects.

The school has successfully created a friendly environment in which students feel safe and enjoy their education. Students report that bullying is uncommon but whenever it does occur, it is handled swiftly and effectively by teachers. The regular promotion of health, well-being and sporting activities is enabling students to make informed choices about leading healthier lifestyles. Students understand the benefit of regular physical exercise and participation rates in extra-curricular activities such as dance, sport, music and other constructive leisure activities are very high. The student council is well established and there is clear mechanism for young people to have their say and have a real influence on decisions that affect their curriculum and experiences at school. Student council representatives give presentations to governors, and other students provide feedback to the local authority. Opportunities for reflection through assembly are good and students demonstrate sound moral values. The vast majority of students are respectful to their teachers and to each other. Creative and performing arts subjects are used well to build students' cultural awareness and appreciation.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers show good subject knowledge in lessons and are confident in their delivery. Although inspectors observed examples of good and outstanding teaching across the school, this good practice is not systematically shared. Too many lessons are not planned well enough to ensure the activities and pace cater for all ability ranges. As a result, some students are not sufficiently challenged or stretched to their potential. The use of information and learning technology in lessons observed by inspectors was limited. Where information and learning technology was used well, for example in some language lessons, it was successfully reinforcing learning and supporting students' engagement. Overall, the use of assessment is good, particularly in English, and has been given a high profile by teachers. Students are clear about which level they are working at and know exactly what they need to do to meet and exceed this. Written feedback in students' workbooks is good in some subjects but in others it is too brief. Enrichment activities are extensive, well attended and are successful in developing students' personal development, including their confidence and teamwork skills. The school has been slow, however, to adapt and extend its core provision to meet the needs of all its students but in recognition of this it has begun to review and plan this more effectively to better tailor its curriculum. As a result, skills-based courses are being introduced into Key Stage 3 and to widen the curriculum offer at Key Stage 4, the school has begun to introduce more vocational courses which are proving popular with students. Care, guidance and support are good, particularly for more vulnerable students and looked after children. All students value the support they receive. The impact of this support is seen through improvements in students' learning and GCSE

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results for a range of students who were previously underachieving or experiencing a range of difficulties.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, senior managers and governors share a realistic and challenging vision for the school. The school has accurately identified the majority of its priorities to improve student outcomes and the quality of provision. Governors provide a good balance of support and challenge to senior leaders. They are realistic about the school's performance and are determined to improve it further. Focused actions to improve the progress made in mathematics and to increase the number of students gaining high grades are beginning to have a positive impact. Efforts to improve achievement in English are proving effective. Staff have high expectations of their students and are very committed to the school. Self-evaluation is well established and involves most staff but is not sufficiently rigorous in all areas. For example, the monitoring and evaluation across some aspects of the school's work, such as the promotion of equality and diversity, are too vague, both through the curriculum and at strategic level, and there is a lack of sharp targets by which to clearly measure progress. The school has developed an inclusive community amongst its students. Effective links are being developed in the local community through the school's extended provision, although formal evaluation on how the school is contributing to all aspects of community cohesion has yet to be undertaken. The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet current government requirements. Resources are deployed appropriately and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

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	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

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The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

At the core of the sixth form's success is the high quality of the working relationships with teachers. Students' personal development is very good and the majority enjoy their experience and contribute exceptionally well to the school as a whole. They are articulate and confident young people who are keen to do well and they provide outstanding role models for younger students. As a result of significant staffing difficulties, beyond the control of the school, examination results dipped in 2009. This interrupted a rising trend in results in 2009 that had risen to be above average in the previous year. In-year school assessment information, inspectors' observations of lessons and other inspection evidence indicate that because the staffing issues are largely resolved, students are currently making good progress and standards are again rising.

While teaching and learning are generally good, teaching strategies to promote students' independence in learning are not consistent features of all sixth-form lessons. Pending the appointment of a new head of sixth form, the interim leadership and management arrangements are satisfactory. More effective use is being made of assessment information to track students' progress; however there are inconsistencies in the use of this and other management information to monitor the quality of provision and to secure improvement.

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	3

Views of parents and carers

The parental questionnaires revealed that most parents and carers who responded were supportive of the school's work. Parental responses and comments did identify that a

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small minority of parents would like the school to improve communications arrangements and would appreciate more regular feedback about their child's progress. Parents and carers would also like the school to deal more effectively with unacceptable behaviour in some lessons and more to be done to help their child lead a healthier lifestyle. Inspectors agreed with the majority parental views although found the school to be promoting healthier lifestyles effectively and observed good behaviour and conduct around the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Wollaston 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 inspector received 321 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1371 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	83	26	203	62	32	10	4	1
The school keeps my child safe	83	26	222	69	15	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	53	17	183	57	66	21	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	55	17	201	63	33	10	5	2
The teaching is good at this school	55	17	214	67	21	7	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	35	11	183	58	61	19	5	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	39	12	198	62	63	19	2	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	54	17	187	58	30	9	3	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	60	19	201	63	28	9	9	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	55	17	199	62	28	9	12	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	10	175	55	44	14	6	2
The school is led and managed effectively	51	16	198	62	21	8	8	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	79	25	194	60	27	9	2	1

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.



1 January 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Wollaston School, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, NN29 7PH

I would like to begin by thanking you all for welcoming me and my five colleagues to your school on the 13 and 14 January. During the two days we spent at your school we visited many of your lessons, met several of you, looked at your work, and looked at questionnaire responses from a cross section of year groups. Throughout the inspection we were impressed by your behaviour and your positive attitudes.

We found the overall effectiveness of your school to be satisfactory with a number of good features. You told us that you develop good personal qualities, have a wide range of opportunities to take on additional responsibilities and receive good support, and we agree. There were three areas we felt your school could improve further.

To improve your GCSE results further, particularly in mathematics, and make sure more of you achieve the highest grades in all subjects.

To make sure all aspects of your school and the sixth form are reviewed and monitored carefully, so that school leaders and managers can more accurately assess how actions taken are improving the quality of your experience and your achievement.

To develop your curriculum further across Years 7 to 11 to better meet all your needs by increasing the flexibility and range of choices available to you.

Teachers and managers are working well to ensure your school makes your experience in education enjoyable. You can of course contribute to this by working as hard as you can in all lessons to achieve your best and continuing to report your views through your student council so the school knows exactly what it is doing well and what it could do better from your perspective.

Thank you again for your help in this inspection and I would like to wish you all the best in your studies and every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Deborah Vaughan-Jenkins

Her Majesty's Inspector

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