

# Wheatley Park School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	123243
<b>Local Authority</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	340314
<b>Inspection dates</b>	16–17 September 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Cathie Munt HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1170
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	260
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs H Stradling
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms K Curtis
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 April 2007
<b>School address</b>	Holton Oxford OX33 1QH
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 29 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at its improvement plans, a number of faculty evaluations, minutes of governing body meetings, lesson plans, the improvement partner's report, student and staff questionnaires and 151 parental questionnaires.

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

- The impact of the school's specialist status on the curriculum and other outcomes.
- Examination results for different groups since the last inspection, including lower-attaining boys and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The school's capacity for improvement.

## Information about the school

This larger-than-average school, in a magnificent parkland setting, serves rural and urban areas around the city of Oxford. The majority of students are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups has risen over the last few years to about one in ten. The proportion of students in the school with additional learning needs, including those with a statement of educational need, is in line with that found nationally. The number of students eligible for free school meals has risen slightly since the last inspection but remains below average.

The school was awarded specialist status in media arts in 2000. A purpose built English and media centre, designed in consultation with the students, opened in 2008. The school holds the Healthy Schools Award, Eco Schools Silver and the International School Award among others. The senior leadership team has been through a period of significant change and, at the time of the inspection, three of the six members had only very recently joined the team.

**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?**

**4**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**4**

## Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its students an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Whilst there are aspects of this school that are successful, there are also important weaknesses. The governing body has failed to meet statutory requirements in relation to safeguarding. Whilst students report that they feel safe, systems to protect them are insufficiently robust. Governors do not have in place a gender equality scheme and have only partially worked on a disability equality scheme. There is no formal assessment of the impact of these schemes or of the race equality policy.

At the last inspection the school was asked to make improvements to the rate of progress made by pupils. The leaders of the school have not managed to achieve this. Some subject reports and a recent school improvement partner's report indicate that more-able students generally make better progress than less-able and middle-ability students. In addition, the small but significant group of students taking GCSEs in the sixth form, is making inadequate progress. Poor behaviour in some lessons, especially in low attaining groups, is not managed well enough, resulting in disruptions to students' learning.

The school's specialism in Media Arts has had a very positive impact on curriculum provision, the students' enjoyment of learning and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They are extremely proud of their achievements in this field and make the most of the wealth of opportunities offered. Captivating photographs of New York, adorning the English and media corridors, and delicate screen prints and challenging sculptures throughout the main building, attest to the range of provision and the students' creative skills.

Students are very well informed on how to keep healthy and adopt positive lifestyle choices. The student council has worked with leaders to improve the quality of food in the canteen and the majority of students participate enthusiastically in sport, physical education activities and team games. By their efforts the school has earned the Healthy Schools and Sportsmark awards. In general students look after each other well.

The school judges that, since the last inspection, there have been improvements in teaching. Actions taken to improve outcomes for students have resulted in some improvement to the quality of teaching. There are good lessons taking place, for example in history, in the arts and in media studies. However, the school's judgement

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does not take enough account of the fact that lesson planning does not always focus sufficiently on the learning needs of different groups within classes. Lesson objectives are often related more to the activities to be undertaken than to the students' learning that is to take place. Such lessons lack challenge and a brisk pace and do not accelerate the students' learning. It is too early for the impact of more recent improvements to teaching and behaviour identified by the school to be secure.

A recent report noted that the learning support department's tracking systems did not fit in with the school's existing data systems and data were judged to be unreliable to be used to evaluate students' progress. The school recognises that its use of assessment and tracking information has weaknesses. Suitable plans are in place this term to address these issues.

New systems have been put in place to help middle managers evaluate the quality of their work more consistently and with greater accuracy. Some faculties are able to demonstrate how these are contributing to driving improvement but this is not robust across all departments. The self-evaluation plan, prioritising departments' activities so that their evaluations can inform the leadership in a timely manner, is newly in place and has not had time to impact on outcomes.

The statutory attainment targets for 2008 and 2009 were not met and the small improvements in progress made by students in previous years stalled in 2009. This, coupled with the statutory failings in relation to safeguarding and equalities, does not demonstrate the capacity for sustained improvement.

The school development plan, covering the academic year 2007 to 2009, had no success criteria making it difficult to ensure consistency in monitoring outcomes and evaluating the success of the plan. The current plan has remedied this weakness.

## **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure that the school meets statutory requirements in relation to safeguarding and equality.
- Eradicate the incidence of disruptions to learning by managing more effectively the behaviour of students who are not engaged.
- Increase the rate of progress made by students taking GCSE courses in the sixth form and in the other less well performing groups in the main school, by ensuring that teaching meets the needs of all students and that lessons are consistently challenging with sharply focused objectives for learning.

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

**4**

Many students are able to work extremely well in groups and contribute well to each other's learning through debate and collaborative work. These students are enthusiastic about their learning. This was seen in the media faculty, in mathematics and in history. Some students, however, are not as engaged in their learning and inspectors observed, particularly in lower ability sets, their poor behaviour inhibiting the progress of their peers. In the sixth form, learning is secure, but students are not sufficiently independent

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in their learning.

Generally, students make satisfactory progress but there are variations. Students with learning difficulties make less good progress than their peers, as acknowledged by the school. Boys also performed less well than boys nationally over a three year period, particularly in English. The school's data show that in the 2009 examinations the scores achieved by boys and girls were below those of the previous year. Scores for other groups, including those not claiming free school meals and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, were also lower than in 2008.

Many students express enthusiasm and support for their school and contribute fully to its life and the wider community. For example, older students support younger students in the classroom and many benefit from the school's partnership with a prestigious professional opera company and engage in a wide range of community projects, including working with elderly people. They enjoy school and appreciate the different activities and trips on offer. However a small number of students feel disenfranchised and do not enjoy school. They are not clear how to improve their work. There are a high number of exclusions and, of these, students with special educational needs and/or learning disabilities are over-represented.

Throughout the school, students are aware of the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. They are well informed about how this might be done and also about how to keep safe. There are very few racist incidents.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> 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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<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b> Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	<b>3</b>
	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

The school does not meet statutory requirements in relation to the safeguarding of students and, therefore, the effectiveness of care, guidance and support is inadequate. This is despite some strengths in provision, particularly in ensuring smooth transition to the school. Leaders acknowledge that there have been significant weaknesses in the provision of support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The member of staff recently engaged to improve this provision has not had time to make a difference.

The curriculum in Key Stages 3 and 4 meets the needs of students well by offering a range of courses and pathways to enable different groups of students to follow appropriate options. The school is offering three diploma lines and is well along the way in developing a further two courses; it offers five languages and vocational courses such as Motor Vehicle Studies. The curriculum is enriched by exciting activities within the arts, music and media faculty which provide students with good, innovative experiences of these fields. In addition students value the sporting opportunities provided by the school. However in the sixth form the range of courses on offer for students for whom A Level courses are not suitable is insufficient and this, together with the limitations on progress for some groups of students, is why the curriculum is judged as satisfactory. The school offers a good range of Advanced level or equivalent courses, but courses at GCSE or equivalent level do not fully meet students' needs.

There is good teaching in the school but there is also much that is satisfactory. Good lessons are characterised by activities that enable students to develop good communication, creative and teamwork skills. They are well planned and have good pace. Teaching assistants make strong contributions to learning through good questioning. However, in general, lessons are not planned sharply enough to ensure a close match to the different learning groups within the class. Too often learning objectives identify the planned activity rather than the learning that should take place. Consequently, these lessons do not focus tightly on the desired learning.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b> Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	<b>3</b>
	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>4</b>

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## How effective are leadership and management?

Governors have not met statutory requirements in two important areas: safeguarding and equalities. However, they have supported the headteacher well and made difficult decisions in relation to staffing. They offer challenge through the link governor roles. They have had involvement with the school development plan, but do not routinely evaluate the progress made by the school towards shared targets.

Some groups, for example, lower-ability students, students with learning difficulties, those joining the school after Year 7 and students following GCSE courses in the sixth form, do less well than could be expected. The work of the school to remedy this has not yet been successful.

Within the last year, senior leaders have introduced a range of systems designed to secure improvement in key areas, including teaching and learning, behaviour and self-evaluation. These have been widely discussed by staff, many of whom feel a sense of ownership and commitment to implementing them. However, there has been insufficient time for there to be demonstrable impact on the outcomes for students.

The recommendations of the last inspection, to raise standards and to ensure that the needs and interests of all students are met by improving teaching, have not been fully met. Together with the work outstanding on meeting statutory requirements and the newness of the team, the capacity for sustained improvement is not yet proven.

The school actively promotes community cohesion. It helps students develop a wide understanding of different communities at a local, national and international level. Leaders have been imaginative in ensuring that all pupils are able to benefit from the wide range of experiences and interactions on offer. Similarly, the provision and funding attracted by the school's specialist status has been well used to enable adults and children in the community to take advantage of many social and cultural activities.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>4</b>



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<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>4</b>

## Sixth form

A high proportion of Year 11 students stay on for the sixth form and most of these students study towards AS and then A-level qualifications. They make satisfactory progress in their studies and many make good progress. The school supports them well in their preparation for university applications and nearly all gain places for their first choice of course at higher education institutions. However, a small but significant group, who join the sixth form to study GCSE courses over one year, make inadequate progress overall despite attaining good grades in information and communication technology.

Students play an active role in the life of the school through mentoring and through leading the student component of initiatives to improve aspects of the school such as teaching and learning. They appreciate the range of trips and other activities available although some feel that they would like more sporting opportunities. Systems are in place to ensure that sixth formers attend school and a tutorial programme gives them satisfactory support in developing their key skills. Students are well informed about how to stay safe and healthy. The AS and A levels on offer give individuals working at this level a good choice; however, the provision offered to those working towards GCSE or equivalent qualifications does not fully meet their needs.

The leadership of the sixth form is inadequate because the statutory requirements in relation to safeguarding are not in place. The new Director of Sixth Form, who has very recently taken on this role, is developing a clear view about the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. He rightly recognises that there is work to do in developing the quality assurance of the work of this area of the school.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>4</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	4
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	4

## Views of parents and carers

A large majority of returns to our questionnaire were positive. These parents commented on the:

- positive impact made by the headteacher on the school environment
- excellent transfer arrangements for Year 7 students

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- good range of provision for able pupils
- effective teaching
- good emotional support for their families.

A small minority of parents expressed concerns about a range of issues including the disruption to learning by poor behaviour of some students. A few parents were concerned that there are too many supply teachers and/or too many changes of staff and that this is disruptive to the continuity of their children's learning.

Inspection evidence supported the views expressed by parents and carers.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Wheatley Park 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 151 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1270 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	66	44	77	51	4	3	4	3
The school keeps my child safe	32	21	107	71	5	3	2	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	39	26	89	59	9	6	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	32	21	93	62	10	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	29	19	104	69	5	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	18	92	61	17	11	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	13	96	64	21	14	3	2
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)	35	23	85	56	16	11	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	31	21	99	66	8	5	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	23	15	84	56	22	15	6	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	17	89	59	13	9	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	49	33	85	56	7	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	50	33	85	57	8	5	1	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

	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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



18 September 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Wheatley Park School, Holton, Oxfordshire OX33 1QH

Thank you for showing us around and telling us about your school when we visited Wheatley Park on inspection. Many of you were very enthusiastic and talked with excitement about the opportunities available to you. We were impressed by the new English and media building and the work that is happening in the arts. Well done for the work that you have done on sustainability! We were pleased to see that you are very health conscious and that many of you take part in sport and extra-curricular activities.

Your parents told us that students in Year 7 have had a very positive experience of starting secondary education. However some of you and your parents expressed concerns that the behaviour of some students prevents you from learning as effectively as you would like in some lessons. Our investigations confirmed that too many lessons are disrupted by poor behaviour and we have asked the school to improve this situation. You can help here. Your time in school is precious. When people interrupt lessons they not only stop others from learning. They also make it more difficult for themselves to get back on track because they then have to deal with the consequences of their actions. If you have caused problems in class in the past, please try to co-operate with your teachers and support staff so that no-one misses out on their learning from now on.

We were pleased to hear that many of you feel safe in school. However we were concerned that governors fail to meet the legal requirements about keeping you safe and promoting equality. We have asked them to make sure that all policies are in place and that they keep a regular check on them to ensure that they help you to learn effectively.

The last inspection recommended that standards were raised and teaching should better match the needs and interests of all students. We judged that, although some improvements have been achieved by the school, not everyone does as well as they might, for example, those taking GCSEs in the sixth form. We have asked the school to ensure that everyone makes as much progress as possible in their learning.

As a consequence of our concerns, the school has been placed in special measures. This means that inspectors will visit regularly to support the school in securing improvement.

Yours sincerely

Cathie Munt HMI

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