

# Wednesfield High School, A Specialist Engineering College

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104392
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wolverhampton
<b>Inspection number</b>	355575
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 October 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Michael Smith 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>	Secondary
<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>	891
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	203
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Andy Hayburn
<b>Headteacher</b>	Claire Evans
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 April 2008
<b>School address</b>	Lichfield Road Wolverhampton WV11 3ES
<b>Telephone number</b>	01902 558222
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<b>Email address</b>	wednesfieldhigh@wolverhampton.gov.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. They visited 17 lessons on the first day of the inspection and observed all the different activities as part of the whole school creative curriculum day on the second. Inspectors held meetings with staff, students, parents and governors. They observed the school's work and looked at the minutes of the meetings of the governing body, aspects of community work, the minutes of meetings with the school improvement partner, subject evaluations, and school action plans and evaluations. They also scrutinised 57 parent and carer questionnaires, 34 staff questionnaires and 291 student questionnaires.

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

- How effectively leaders and managers, at all levels, have brought about significant improvements to the quality of provision.
- The extent to which standards in English and mathematics have improved?
- How well the school is managing its deficit budget.
- How well the school evaluates the impact of its developments, policies and procedures.

## Information about the school

This is an average sized specialist engineering school which operates on a split site and draws students from several areas with significant levels of disadvantage. Over a third of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly Indian. A higher than average proportion of students is learning English as an additional language with a few at the early stages. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Since the previous inspection the school has appointed a new headteacher. The school is due to have an extensive rebuild starting in spring 2011 and completed two years later.

**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

Wednesfield is a good and improving school. The headteacher has made a very marked impression. Students were very ebullient about the impact she has had and this is supported by similar comments from staff, parents and carers. Staff say they feel empowered and focused on continually improving the quality of teaching and increasing the rate of learning. Standards which had been below average are improving rapidly, with many areas now above average. In English and mathematics standards have risen and are now broadly average, although the school rightly recognises there is more to do. Progress is good. The effective sixth form prepares students well for their next phase of education or the world of work.

Teaching and assessment are good with some outstanding practitioners. Assessment is used well in many lessons to inform students how to improve, although at times marking is not as effective. The specialist area of engineering has been instrumental in extending curriculum opportunities and in providing good support for local schools and the community. Very good relationships between staff and students represent a strength of the school. During the inspection students were observed enjoying a wide variety of activities during the creative curriculum day. In many of these sessions learning was very good because they were planned to maximise learning and students were able to work independently or in groups and the work often involved practical activities. These opportunities were not as evident when lessons were observed on the previous day.

Staff know students well and offer good care and support. As a result, students enjoy school and respond well in lessons. They make a good contribution to their own learning and their behaviour is good. Safeguarding procedures in school are thorough and consequently students say they feel safe. Risk assessments for educational visits and other off-site activities are comprehensive. However risk assessments for activities in some departments have not been updated recently and while they do not appear to pose a threat to safety, they need immediate attention.

The school has worked well to improve many elements of its provision, although as yet some have not become established over a number of years. After a thorough analysis the curriculum has been broadened to include a wider variety of courses and activities. The vertical form system is well received and provides good support. Leadership is good, although in some areas leaders do not yet have a secure understanding of what constitutes the best classroom practice. Monitoring information is not always collated and interrogated to give clear evaluations of the impact on elements of the school's work. There is a clear shared ambition for the school to be judged outstanding in the future. There is a good and improving capacity to improve.

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

- Ensure all risk assessments are up-to-date.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, before the school moves to its new buildings, so that all lessons are judged to be at least good and more are judged outstanding, by:
  - ensuring students have more opportunities to work independently, in groups or on practical work
  - considering the learning of students when planning lessons and marking consistently informing students how to improve.
- Improve the rigour and impact of monitoring by leaders at all levels by:
  - ensuring all leaders have a good understanding of what constitutes good learning and how to achieve it
  - collating systematically, monitoring and other information so that there is a clear overview which can then be evaluated.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**2**

Students start at the school with standards below average. They make good progress so that standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are average for some benchmarks and above average in others. Standards have risen rapidly over the last few years and results in science show a significant improvement in 2010. Progress is good for students of all backgrounds. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities generally make good progress, although there is a large amount of variation among those who are identified at School Action Plus. When these students do not appear to make good progress the school is able to identify individuals and to explain the additional help and support they received. For some while they did not always gain examination success they did make good progress towards developing effective work related skills and aptitudes. Achievement is good.

During the inspection, students were observed making good progress in lessons. In the creative curriculum day students were very excited and motivated in a wide variety of activities. For example, some enjoyed designing and producing a machine to accurately project a capsule, others were engaged in performing different chants and routines for the Olympics or learning about conflict. Some of these students were particularly moved when veterans of RAF Cosford recounted their experiences from the Second World War. Tracking information shows that the vast majority of students are likely to achieve in line with or above their challenging target grades next summer.

Responses to the student questionnaire show a very large majority of students feel safe and enjoy coming to school. Students respect each other and groups from different ethnic backgrounds get on well with each other. They have good social and interpersonal skills. Students report that the very few incidents of bullying are dealt with immediately and effectively, with some younger students saying that the vertical tutor groups helped reduce bullying.

Students develop a good understanding of moral issues. A strong spiritual awareness is evident when students consider emotions and beliefs; display is also effective in giving

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students a sense of pride in their work and environment. Students enjoy opportunities to consider the impact of other cultures through visits to faith centres. They also enjoy opportunities to take part in musical and drama productions and visits. Above average attendance, along with good work-related skills, ensures that students are well prepared for their futures. The proportion of students who are not in education, employment or training after they have left school is low.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</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

## How effective is the provision?

Students make good progress through a combination of effective teaching, a curriculum which meets their needs well and good care, guidance and support. Staff know their students well. Lessons generally ensure that students progress well and the pace is often good. Students are engaged. While learning objectives plan to meet the needs of all students, at times they lack precision and work is not always sufficiently varied to meet the needs of differing abilities. Well-focused questioning is used well to extend students' learning and their responses used to ascertain how well students have progressed.

The curriculum meets the needs, interests and aspirations of students. It includes suitable vocational courses and BTEC subjects. The specialist area has enhanced the use of modern technologies within lessons and works well to support elements of the Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programme. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported. The curriculum is enhanced by a

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wide range of extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors and well-received creative curriculum days.

The good pastoral care ensures that students are well supported. The school takes very good care of all its students and tailors support to their individual needs, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those whose circumstances make them more vulnerable. Parents are happy with the care and guidance received by their children. Assessment information is used well to identify how well students are doing and, when appropriate, providing additional support. There are very good intervention strategies within the house system to encourage students to do better still, or to help those who are underachieving. One parent commented how appreciative she was of staff who are always willing to help and how her son came to school early twice a week for additional mathematics help. The school co-ordinates the uses outside agencies very well to provide good specialised support. The deployment of learning mentors has a positive impact on behaviour. Students say that they are very well informed and supported prior to arriving at the school, when they make choices at the end of Year 9 and before going on to sixth form or the world of work at 16.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

The highly effective headteacher, well supported by senior leaders, gives a very strong steer and direction. Staff share the school's vision and ambition and are highly motivated in building on the improvements. All staff who submitted their questionnaire agreed that they were proud to be a member of staff and that the school was well led, with the very large majority strongly agreeing. This is testament to how effective leaders have been in motivating and supporting staff. The school has been successful in improving the quality of teaching, and has utilised effective support through both its specialist areas and the local authority. Departmental reviews involve middle leaders in evaluating the work of their subject areas although some are not fully clear of what they are looking for when they monitor lessons. The school has good arrangements with other local schools and external agencies and parents are pleased to be asked for their views on proposed new buildings.

Governors are supportive of the school through their well-defined and effective committees. They challenge the school well. The school gives good support to the local community and works well with its partners. They also ensure safeguarding meets current requirements. Community cohesion is good with a clear understanding of local, national and global issues, including gaining the International School award.

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The inclusive nature of the school, together with a comprehensive analysis of examination data to identify any underachievement of individuals or groups, has enabled good equality of opportunity. In order to bring about improvements the school entered into an agreement with the local authority to run a deficit budget. There are clear plans to reduce the deficit over five years. This means the school provides satisfactory value for money, given the good outcomes.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<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>3</b>

## Sixth form

The sixth form has a very positive ethos where students thoroughly enjoy their studies. Attendance is high and relationships between staff and students are very good so that students develop good social and learning skills and make good progress. Standards are average and improving. This helps prepare them well for the world of work or for higher education. There are increasing numbers who are going on to higher education and the range of universities is extending, with more going to places outside the West Midlands conurbation.

Provision is good; the curriculum offers a wide range of courses for students of differing abilities, including good partnership work with other schools. There is also a wide range of enrichment and other extra-curricular activities which encourage students to participate in the wider community. Sixth formers act as learning mentors and help in lessons in the lower school, and there are good opportunities for sport and recreation activities.

Teaching is good and delivered by specialists, for example students completing a hair and beauty course are instructed by a well-qualified professional. Students are confident and appreciate the good help and advice staff give them to help improve and to support their progress to the next stage of their lives.

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Leadership and management are good. The head of the sixth form has a clear vision of how to continue improving and is held in high regard by students. There is an effective academic monitoring system in place. Students are given target grades with results from termly assessments used by subject teachers set targets for improvement.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

## Views of parents and carers

The inspection questionnaire sent out to parents was slightly different from the latest version supplied by Ofsted, due to a distribution error. Although most of the questions are the same, two key statements on parents' and carers' views about the quality of teaching and how the school helps them to support their child's learning were missing from that version. The table overleaf, therefore, does not include percentage responses to those questions. Inspectors did, however, make every effort to speak to a number of parents informally and in a meeting to ascertain their views about these aspects of the school's work.

The proportion of responses is low. The responses from the questionnaires and when the lead inspector met a group of parents showed how much parents and carers were pleased with the school. A recurrent theme is good communication with the school and how swiftly staff respond to any contact. Parents also said they felt the headteacher had made a significant change to the ethos of the school so it was now held in high esteem within the locality. As one parent said, to the general agreement of others, 'I would not have let my son come here a few years ago, now I am really happy'. Demonstrating the school's excellent engagement with parents and carers.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Wednesfield High School, A Specialist Engineering 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 57 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 891 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	29	51	27	47	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	32	56	25	44	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	32	56	24	42	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	67	18	32	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	14	25	38	67	3	5	1	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)	19	33	28	49	4	7	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	27	47	30	53	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	47	30	53	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	40	30	53	2	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	35	61	22	39	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	37	65	17	30	1	2	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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"><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 pupils' 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.**



15 October 2010

Dear Students

**Inspection of Wednesfield High School, A Specialist Engineering College,  
Wolverhampton, WV11 3ES**

When I visited your school recently with my colleagues, we met some of you at lunchtime and talked to others during lessons and at break. We were impressed with your good behaviour and manners and how well you contribute to the life of the school and local community. You told us that you really enjoy school and this is one reason, of many, that we judge your school to be good and improving.

You make good progress. Results in your GCSE examinations have improved a lot and are in line with results across the country. It was good to see the display around school which celebrated how well some of you had done last year. We saw some lessons on Wednesday and then parts of your creative curriculum day on Thursday. We judged that teaching is good and in order for your school to get even better we have recommended that they look at the type of activity you did on the Thursday and for more of your lessons to be like that. We have also said that marking needs to be more informative. There are very good relationships with staff, lessons are challenging and interesting. The curriculum enables all of you to achieve well and you receive some very good support. Almost all of you said in the questionnaire that the school prepares you well for the future.

Staff support and care for you well, making sure you are able to go forward to the next stage of your education, including for some of you to university. You also said they helped you to settle at the start of Year 7. Most of you said you felt safe in school and we saw that the safeguarding procedures are generally good, although we have asked the school to make sure they have an up-to-date risk assessment for some parts of the school. You told us how pleased you were with the headteacher and how you thought she had made a difference. She, along with other senior leaders, has very clearly identified what needs to be done and they are very determined to carry on improving the school. They are supported by some good subject and pastoral leaders and teachers. However we have asked the school to make sure all leaders are aware of what is the best practice and to have a good overview of all areas within the school. We wish you well at this good school of which you are justifiably proud.

Yours sincerely

Michael Smith

Her Majesty's Inspector

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