



# Winchcombe School

Inspection Report - Amended

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**Unique Reference Number** 115768  
**Local Authority** Gloucestershire  
**Inspection number** 290330  
**Inspection dates** 26–27 September 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Faysal Mikdadi

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 address</b>	Greet Road
<b>School category</b>	Foundation		Winchcombe
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16		Cheltenham GL54 5LB
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01242 602233
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	471	<b>Fax number</b>	01242 604211
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Martin Blackwell
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Lindsey Cooke
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 February 2001		

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<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
11–16	26–27 September 2006	290330

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## **Amended Report Addendum**

Report updated to resolve formatting inconsistency

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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

Winchcombe is a smaller-than-average secondary school. It has science specialist status. Students are mostly White British, with a very small number coming from a minority ethnic background. A new headteacher took up her post at the beginning of September 2006.

## **Key for inspection grades**

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Winchcombe is an outstanding school providing its students with a happy, safe, caring, healthy and challenging learning environment. One parent reflects the views of the overwhelming majority of parents when she says that Winchcombe 'is an inclusive caring community, which succeeds in making each child feel valued'. Another parent writes, 'I cannot speak highly enough of the school'. Parents told stories of the positive impact that the school has had on their children's personal development and achievement. Many parents also wrote in saying that they felt very happy with the new headteacher and that they had high expectations of her vision for the school. Students described this as 'a happy school, like a family'.

The result of the school's excellent leadership, governance, teaching, curriculum and care is that students of all abilities make excellent progress, culminating in well-above-average standards. Science specialist status has been accompanied by exceptionally high results in science. The science specialist status has also led to the establishment of very successful links with other schools, universities, teacher-training providers and others. Since the last inspection there have been significant improvements in literacy, especially boys' writing, and in information and communication technology (ICT).

The school not only does well academically; it also offers its students many effective opportunities to enhance their personal development. The result is that students take part in a huge number of activities, work well together, and behave towards each other and towards adults with great courtesy. Consequently, the school successfully teaches them to treat others with respect just as they themselves are treated by the adults around them. All of this also means that they genuinely enjoy being in the school, which they consistently describe in positive terms, repeatedly singling out their outstanding teachers as the main attraction. They make significant contributions to their immediate as well as to the wider community. The school's strong careers and citizenship programmes, as well as students' proficiency in basic skills, prepare the students successfully for their future economic well-being.

The school's own self-evaluation promotes consistent improvements in its provision. An improved target-setting programme has been put in place that includes careful monitoring and, where needed, individual mentoring. In English, science and history, marking is outstanding and always tells students what their standards are and what they need to do to improve them further. This does not yet happen consistently in every subject area.

The school is set to improve even further because of its outstanding leadership, committed and hard-working staff, strong parental support and the positive attitudes shown by its students.

### What the school should do to improve further

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- Ensure that marking always indicates to students what their current standards are and what they need to do in order to improve further, as is done consistently in English, science and history.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Achievement is outstanding and standards are well above average. The challenging targets that the school sets are met.

When students join the school their standards are average overall, with only small fluctuations from year to year. This was particularly true for students who took their GCSEs in 2005 and, in addition, that year group on entry had a smaller proportion of higher attainers than usual. The standards attained by these students in their GCSEs were well above average for the percentage of five grades A\* to C, showing significantly above-average achievement during their time in the school. Standards remain very similar in the provisional results for 2006. In these latest results, science and ICT were among the most successful subjects. The most improved subject was English language, with boys showing more improvement than girls, narrowing the gap between them to a level close to that seen nationally. Lower-ability students and those with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) achieved exceptionally well in relation to their targets.

Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 have shown a rising trend over the last four years and the provisional results of the 2006 National Curriculum tests show a further significant improvement, especially in boys' writing. In English, mathematics and science, the percentage of students attaining at the expected level is above average, as is the percentage at the higher levels in English and science. Overall, achievement during Key Stage 3, including for those with LDD, is significantly above average.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Students have remarkably wide-ranging opportunities to contribute to the school. These are taken up enthusiastically. For example, nearly half of Year 10 and 11 students are active in mentoring and supporting lower-school students. Even larger numbers take part in sporting and musical activities, for which the school has a deservedly high reputation. The school parliament provides a forum for active involvement in school affairs and consequently the students participate with considerable interest. Elections were being conducted during the inspection, with candidates presenting their manifestos, and students voting responsibly in the knowledge that this was a genuine opportunity, amongst others, to have their voices heard. This is part of a curriculum that gives very full attention to spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, with the result that outstanding developments are achieved.

Winchcombe has received the Healthy School Award. This shows that the outstanding attention given to diet, exercise, and the understanding of health issues through the

curriculum, sports provision, and the arrangements made for healthy catering all have a significant impact on the students' health.

Students enjoy their education: indicated by what they say, by their considerate behaviour, and by their outstanding attendance. This is not surprising because they are responding to circumstances where much is on offer, and much is expected of them. Their contribution to the wider community is impressively evident through outreach activities with primary students in science and sport, and through involvement in a wide variety of local events such as dance and flower festivals. The student charity committee oversees hugely successful contributions to local, national and international causes. In commenting on their work experience, local employers universally remark on Winchcombe students' qualities of courtesy, enthusiasm and commitment – further evidence of excellent personal qualities thoughtfully fostered by the school. All this stands students in extremely good stead in relation to their future career prospects.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 1

The school rightly judges the quality of teaching and learning to be outstanding, as the inspection evidence shows. Students questioned about the school consistently mentioned its main quality as being its teachers, whom one student affectionately described as 'really cool'. Parents also speak highly of their children's teachers.

The outstanding teaching is helped enormously by a rigorous programme of lesson observation by senior leaders and other managers. Because each department is closely involved in evaluations, teaching and learning become a strong focus of the school's work.

A particular strength of the teaching is the fact that clear lesson objectives place a strong focus on the learning to take place, enabling teachers and students to evaluate the progress that has been made. Although no lesson seen was less than satisfactory, in the relatively less successful lessons, imprecise objectives meant that lessons lacked this focus and pace. In typical lessons, teachers make excellent use of challenging questioning and discussion to prompt students to extend their knowledge and understanding. Very good use is made of teaching assistants to offer support to students who need it.

The quality and usefulness of marking varies somewhat between subjects. Students said that they would sometimes like to see 'fuller comments' and that the quality of feedback 'depended on the teacher'. There are examples of high quality marking in all subjects that make it clear what the student should do next to improve their work, but there is greater consistency in some subjects than others. Not all match the best practice seen in English, science and history.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum is outstanding. It covers the requirements of the National Curriculum thoroughly and is exemplary in many respects. The impact of specialist status in science is clear in the enhanced opportunities for students to specialise in that area, and also in the use of ICT to improve teaching and learning across the curriculum. For many years the school has held an Investor in Careers Award – an acknowledgement of exceptional provision in careers education. Extra-curricular provision is similarly wide ranging. As a result, students do outstandingly well, responding to many enrichment activities and work-related opportunities with great commitment and in large numbers.

Personal, social and health education has been recently and intelligently developed so that citizenship is comprehensively attended to in those areas and in other subjects. Again, because the curriculum is thought through in terms of skills to be developed as well as knowledge to be gained, both within and outside of school, the personal development of students of all abilities is taken forward exceptionally well. Master classes are part of the provision for gifted and talented students, and booster classes successfully look towards accelerating the progress of students with special needs. The guiding principle is to offer all students real but manageable challenge through the work they do. This leads to a curriculum of remarkable range and focus.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Care, guidance and support are good, with many outstanding features. Transition from primary schools into Year 7 is extremely well managed so those students arrive confident and happy. There is an excellent system for pastoral care through tutor groups and heads of year. Students know how well they are looked after, and speak warmly of the courtesy, respect and high expectations which their teachers model for them. Contact with other agencies provides additional and valued advice concerning careers and health. The counselling services offered are much appreciated by the students, who feel that they have someone with whom they can share their concerns in confidence. There are many ways in which students contribute equally with staff to the school's caring ethos. One of many examples is the way that Year 11 students act successfully as mentors to young students, with all parties benefiting from the experience.

Careers guidance is excellent across all Years. In Year 9, well-attended meetings explain vocational and other options to students and parents so that wise and informed choices are made. Similar care is given to progression to post-16 opportunities.

The effectiveness of academic guidance is demonstrated by the fact that the majority of students achieve above expectations. However, some aspects of guidance and support in relation to assessment and target setting are not as uniformly good as other features of the school.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 1

The school's leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. Everything that the senior and middle managers do is successfully aimed at improving provision so that the students can attain their potential. For example, the school's outstanding self-evaluation has highlighted the need to improve their system of setting targets and ensure that assessment is consistent across subjects. The result has been the setting up of an improved target-setting system which involves each student having a designated mentor who would help with strategies to raise achievement. The school has just begun to tackle the inconsistency in assessment practices as part of its improved target-setting procedures. The school's capacity for improvement is excellent because of the way that all those involved work closely to evaluate, plan and implement agreed strategies.

Governors have an excellent relationship with the headteacher and the school. They are heavily involved in strategic planning and they fulfil their role as critical friends effectively. They have an extraordinary level of understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are successfully involved in self- evaluation.

The school has been successful in meeting its targets related to its science specialist status, with a clear impact on standards. It has, as a result of the expertise gained, made strong and successful links with other schools and with higher-education institutions and teacher-training organisations, as well as having successfully put on many trips and other school-based activities.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	1
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Winchcombe School Greet Road Winchcombe Cheltenham Gloucestershire GL54 5LB

27 September 2006

Dear Students

Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed listening to your views.

Yours is an outstanding school and it provides you with an excellent education.

Your standards are very high indeed. As a result of your hard work as well as the excellent teaching, you make outstanding progress. You are given a great number of opportunities to contribute to the school and to the world outside which you take up with real commitment and energy. For example, the school parliament gives you a real voice in the way that the school is run and you use this very responsibly. As a result, you contribute equally with the staff to the school's excellent work and to the way in which it constantly tries to improve still further. You know that you are very well cared for in the school and you talk appreciatively about the adults charged with looking after you. Your behaviour is excellent. We agree with the way that you describe the school as a happy and orderly community.

You raise huge sums for local, national and international charities, which is an indication of how well you understand the needs of others.

Some of you say that you are not absolutely sure how well you are doing in some subjects and what you need to do to improve.

We have suggested that your school needs to ensure that all teachers consistently mark your work as precisely and helpfully as possible, giving you a clear indication of how well you are doing and what you need to do next to improve.

Dr F H Mikdadi Lead Inspector