

Highworth Warneford School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126461
Local Authority	Swindon
Inspection number	315560
Inspection date	13 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Peter Limm HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	910
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Philip Wirth
Headteacher	John Saunders
Date of previous school inspection	17 November 2003
School address	Shrivenham Road Highworth Swindon SN6 7BZ
Telephone number	01793 762426
Fax number	01793 861865

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: pupils' progress at Key Stage 4 since the 2007 results; the key factors explaining the school's improvement since the last inspection, especially relating to the quality of teaching and learning and changes to the curriculum; and the impact of leadership and management at all levels on raising standards and achievement. Evidence was gathered from details of current standards and achievement; observation of lessons and extra-curricular activities; analysis of parents' questionnaires; and discussions with staff, including the headteacher and senior members, and with pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This smaller than average secondary school serves the small town of Highworth and the surrounding area including parts of Swindon. It is an economically advantaged area and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage and there are small numbers of refugees and asylum seekers. Few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school attained technology college status in 2005. The school has been designated an Extended School, and has Healthy Schools status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Inspectors agree with the parent who wrote simply that Warneford 'is an excellent school'. It is an outstanding school because, at the same time as helping pupils to mature into well-behaved and thoughtful young people, teaching is so effective that pupils make excellent progress in their studies. The headteacher's thoughtful leadership is a key factor in the school's success. He is extremely well supported by an excellent senior leadership team who are, in turn, supported by excellent leaders and managers at all levels in the school.

Pupils enter the school with slightly above average standards and they make rapid progress during Key Stage 3 to attain excellent results in national tests. Performance at Key Stage 4 has been consistently above the national average and although there was a dip in 2007, inspectors agree with the school that current progress is excellent. Pupils in Year 11 are well on track to achieve very challenging targets in 2008. The school exceeded its 2007 target, including all those for its specialism. The school was quick to identify that a small group of boys did not achieve as well as they should in 2007 and since then, staff have worked hard to raise attainment for this group. The school focuses tightly on all aspects of teaching and learning to ensure that lessons are not just good but outstanding, so enabling all groups of pupils to attain excellent results. It is because of this that many parents echoed the views of one who wrote, 'We live out of catchment for Warneford and make a special effort for our children to attend because we believe the work ethic encouraged by the staff is outstanding.'

Pupils feel confident that they are taught really well, observing, for example, that 'some of the lessons are absolutely brilliantly planned'. Such openness reflects the respect between teachers and pupils, which contributes to the excellent learning. Lessons are characterised by starters that catch pupils' interest, questions that extend their thinking, several different activities undertaken at pace and good reflection on what has been learned at the end. The impact of technology college status has been hugely positive across the school in enabling all teachers to use computers and interactive whiteboards to enliven lessons and engage all pupils.

The curriculum is outstanding and is relevant to pupils' interests and needs. There are clear pathways for pupils to follow different combinations of courses at Key Stage 4 and some of these courses begin in Year 9. These pathways are not exclusive and pupils can mix and match courses from each one to suit their needs. A small group of pupils, who find more academic work very hard, attend courses at the local further education college. There are excellent plans for extending curriculum provision for pupils at Key Stage 4, including a diploma for creative work.

The school analyses data about pupils' performance meticulously and then supports underachieving pupils through a wide range of relevant strategies. Before, during and after school, pupils attend either individual or group sessions to improve whatever they need, for example, their reading, numeracy, coursework, confidence or self-esteem. Gifted and talented pupils are provided for increasingly well, with outings and additional activities as well as extra challenge in lessons.

Parents' attendance at review meetings is very high, a further factor contributing to pupils' success. Many attend the impressive performances and shows put on by the school. The vast majority of parents are extremely positive about all aspects of school life. One parent wrote to say that one of her three daughters is now studying for a degree at university but thanked the 'fantastic school' for giving her such a good start in her education. Others had 'nothing but

praise for all members of staff' in enabling their children to become confident and mature young people.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This is reflected in the very strong learning ethos that permeates the school. Pupils have a very strong respect and awareness of other cultures. Pupils have wholeheartedly adopted healthy lifestyles, with the Healthy Schools award recently re-designated. They feel very safe in school and there is a distinct lack of any intimidation where large groups of pupils gather. Pupils themselves take on very responsible roles, which benefit the whole school community. Peer educators and the very impressive work of the school council are only two examples of how pupils want to work for the benefit of all. Very positive attitudes are evident in lessons, and particularly when pupils talk about the school with a sense of pride. These, coupled with the excellent behaviour and lack of disruption to lessons, have a very positive impact on achievement and standards. With very strong literacy and numeracy skills and events such as Enterprise Day and good careers guidance, pupils are extremely well prepared for the next step in their life. Attendance figures, whilst good overall, are affected by the persistent absence of a small number of pupils.

The pastoral care that pupils receive is outstanding. By knowing pupils extremely well through the tutor system and providing well targeted personal support, using outside agencies to excellent effect, pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are able to progress at least as well as others. Pupils and parents speak very highly of the support given. This extends to academic support and guidance, which is also excellent. The in-depth analysis of tracking data and individual support, such as through individual pupil mentoring, mean that all pupils are very aware of their personal targets and what they need to do to improve. The Academic Review Days are used extremely well for pupils to set their own sharply focused targets and pupils and parents speak very highly of their value.

Governors are fully involved in all aspects of the school's life and take an interest in quite specific aspects, for example, the effectiveness of boy/girl seating. They have a wealth of relevant experience, which they contribute to their deliberations and support for the school's development. They do not shy away from asking probing questions when they have any concerns about the school's development. The school is not complacent and constantly strives to be a truly outstanding school. Its capacity to improve on its already impressive achievements is strong.

What the school should do to improve further

- Seek ways to improve the attendance of a small group of persistent absentees.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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

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

¹ 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

14 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Highworth Warneford School, Highworth SN6 7BZ

Thank you for your positive contributions during our visit to your school recently. We learnt a great deal from talking with you and the staff. These are our main findings.

- The school provides you with outstanding education and care.
- Your academic standards and progress are excellent.
- Most of you really enjoy coming to school, attend well and get on very well with each other.
- You told us you feel well cared for and the staff are committed to helping you make as much progress as possible.
- Lessons are excellent and often 'fun'.
- The school provides an outstanding curriculum which supports your academic progress as well as the development of your excellent attitudes and behaviour.
- The staff, led by the headteacher, work extremely well together to check how effective the school is and to make improvements where necessary.

In any school, even one judged outstanding, there are ways to improve and I have asked the headteacher to focus on one.

- Improve the attendance of persistent absentees.

Thanks again, and good luck in the future.

Peter Limm Her Majesty's Inspector