

# Wednesfield High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104392
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wolverhampton
<b>Inspection number</b>	319410
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30 April –1 May 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Judith Matharu 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
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1004
6th form	159
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Andy Hayburn
<b>Headteacher</b>	Peter Coates
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 March 2003
<b>School address</b>	Lichfield Road Wednesfield Wolverhampton WV11 3ES
<b>Telephone number</b>	01902 558222
<b>Fax number</b>	01902 558200

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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

This is a larger than average comprehensive school. It operates on a split site and draws pupils from several areas with significant levels of disadvantage. Almost a third of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly Indian or Caribbean. Around 10% speak 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. The school gained specialist status for engineering in 2004. At the last inspection, the school was given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement was required in relation to achievement and standards, and teaching and learning.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

In accordance with section 13 (5)) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. The school is now providing a good standard of education. The areas of weakness have been successfully tackled.

This is a rapidly improving and ambitious school. The leadership team, re-energised by the addition of a deputy headteacher, has tackled the issues of underperformance with gusto. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work well together to provide clear direction and guidance for staff. The leadership team has seized every opportunity to examine all aspects of school provision and set about an extensive improvement strategy that goes right to the heart of the previous issues. Consequently, the improvement evident in many aspects of the school has been dramatic. Whilst standards remain average, they are improving and progress of students has accelerated swiftly, owing to consistently good teaching, a relentless focus on tracking student performance and well chosen intervention strategies with students who are underperforming. The impact of these actions has been considerable; the result being that all students are now making good progress. The 'back to basics' approach adopted has required teachers to plan lessons carefully, teach and assess thoroughly and uphold school policies consistently. This has paid dividends.

Behaviour and attitudes to learning are now good. Students themselves speak of the improvements with pride and show enjoyment in their learning. Students' views are listened to, and acted upon. They are now more suitably engaged in lessons, although the level of challenge for the more able students is not always as stretching as it might be. Students clearly enjoy lessons that are active and varied with opportunities to get involved and make decisions about their learning. Successful lessons incorporate these elements; consequently, learning is fun. However, there are still some lessons when teachers adopt a lecturing style and therefore learners are too passive. Feedback to students has improved considerably; books are generally well marked and students have a good understanding of their target grades. There are shining examples of excellent assessment when students are encouraged to think about feedback from teachers and their peers and apply this in their next piece of work. However, not all subjects do this consistently well and best practice is not sufficiently shared. The curriculum is good and provides suitable experiences for students of all abilities. It is significantly enhanced by the vocational provision made through specialist engineering status. Good progress is being made towards meeting the school's specialist targets in related subjects. Students are well cared for and supported effectively within a well-organised pastoral system.

One of the main factors in the school's improvement has been the engagement of leadership at all levels and the commitment of the staff more widely to move the school forward. This is infectious; at all levels, there is energy and ambition to secure and sustain improvement.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 2

This is an effective sixth form. Students enjoy being part of it and feel happy here. They appreciate the effort teachers make to support their learning and value the good teaching they receive. Teachers are knowledgeable specialists, well able to develop students' understanding and help their learning. Consequently, students make good progress and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Standards are average and rising. Sixth form students contribute

strongly to the life of the school and demonstrate confidence and maturity. The head of sixth form ensures that it is a significant partner in the local consortium and students benefit from the range of courses it provides and the seamless way that complex timetabling between the schools is managed. Particularly pleasing is the fact that more students are joining the sixth form every year and a high proportion continue their studies to an advanced level.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards by ensuring that learning is active, relevant and engaging for all students.
- Eradicate inconsistencies in assessment practices so that students are clear in all subjects about how to improve their work.
- Challenge the more able students to achieve higher standards.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

In the past year, standards have risen significantly. As a result of recent improvements in teaching and learning, students are now making good progress. Improvements have been particularly noticeable in GCSE English and mathematics. A year ago, standards in these subjects were exceptionally low and progress was judged to be unsatisfactory.

Students enter the school with broadly average knowledge and skills but with a smaller proportion than usual having higher-level skills. In Key Stage 3, students make good progress in English and achieve well, with standards that are above average. In mathematics and science, progress has been slower and standards lower. The school has successfully tackled this; consequently, the current progress made in these subjects is significantly improved.

Progress at Key Stage 4 has accelerated. School monitoring data show that the proportion of current Year 11 students who are now making good progress is significantly improved. In particular, results already achieved in English and mathematics indicate the school's best ever performance by far. There are considerable variations in the standards for different subjects. Students express a preference for more practical subjects and achieve well in design and technology and art.

In science, standards are improving but are still below average. There are no significant differences in the achievements of different groups of students. Good support enables those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to achieve equally with others.

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

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students' personal development and well-being are good. The students relate well to each other and value the cultural diversity and creative opportunities that the school provides and which it regularly celebrates. They have good attitudes to learning and enjoy the opportunities that their school offers. Overall, they behave well in classrooms and around the school. This is an improvement that is apparent and commented upon by many, including caretaking and support staff. Students feel safe in school, mentioning particularly the support from peers and staff and practical improvements such as those to toilets and secure fencing that contribute to this. They also know what to do to be safe in risky or difficult situations, and understand

the importance of a healthy lifestyle and how to follow it. They often contribute their time and effort to charitable causes. More students than usual are represented on the school council, which makes a very effective contribution to the life of the school. Students' attendance has improved steadily over the last three years. It now matches the national average and reflects the hard work put into improving students' attitudes to and enjoyment of their education and in getting parents on side. Because of the school's specialist status and its strong technological emphasis, students acquire important skills that are relevant to their future economic well-being.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Teaching and learning are now good, having improved substantially since the last inspection. No subject teaching is unsatisfactory. Students of all abilities and backgrounds enjoy their work and learn well. Lessons are now well planned with content carefully matched to most students' learning needs with a strong focus on raising achievement. However, the most able students are not always suitably challenged. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good individual support. The majority of classes are managed effectively and the atmosphere for learning is positive. Students enjoy good relationships with each other and respond enthusiastically to teachers, particularly to those who consistently reward their efforts with praise. In many lessons, they work hard on varied and interesting activities, often in pairs or groups. In a few lessons, however, students are sitting still for too long, listening rather than actively learning. Books are regularly marked and the use of homework tasks has improved. Feedback to students is often good, for example in design and technology and English, but sometimes students are insufficiently involved in reflecting upon and evaluating their own work.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The curriculum for Years 7 to 11 is good with some outstanding features. It is reviewed regularly and further improvements are in hand for next year. The curriculum successfully meets the needs and aspirations of all students. The school's status as a specialist engineering college has had a significant impact in broadening the range of technical subjects available. At Key Stage 4, all students study at least one such subject as well as information and communication technology. There is outstanding flexibility to study them at different levels, including a college based Young Apprentice course. A strength of the provision is that girls feel entirely comfortable with the school's engineering status; nearly half the first group of Young Apprentices are female. Links with employers, particularly those in engineering, are excellent. There is an effective work experience programme in place and careers guidance is good. Students appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular activities such as in sport, art, music and drama, together with after-school revision and booster classes.

## Care, guidance and support

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The pastoral care of students is good across the school. The mixed-age tutor groups are particularly effective. The house system enables staff to know their students well and for students of different ages to socialise together. Younger students value the opportunity to be with older 'family members' and older students enjoy supporting younger ones. Safeguarding procedures are securely in place and the school provides good quality care for vulnerable students through strong working links with a range of external agencies. Academic guidance has improved significantly since the last inspection. Students' progress is very carefully tracked and individuals or groups that are underperforming are quickly identified and well supported. The weaknesses in the assessment of students' work noted in the last inspection report have largely been tackled. Tutors regularly check students' planners. The personal, social and health education programmes support students' personal development well and provide good careers guidance.

## Leadership and management

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Leadership and management have significantly strengthened since the last inspection. Consequently, these are now having good impact on the work of the school. Much has been achieved in a short time. The headteacher's ambition is being ably realised owing to the clear direction and good leadership provided by the headteacher and the senior team. This new team is perceptive and purposeful. The newly appointed deputy headteacher has contributed strongly to the progress the school has made in tackling the previous issues of concern. Self-evaluation is accurate. There is a sharp understanding of the school's priorities and robustness in the subsequent improvement plans. These are shared and understood by the middle leadership team.

The senior leadership has also successfully secured greater consistency from staff in upholding and reinforcing school policies. This has brought about notable improvements in behaviour and students' attitudes to learning, which students themselves have noticed and are pleased about. Similarly, the consistent use by teachers of assessment data to monitor students' progress is another noteworthy improvement. This is now in an easily understood format and clearly identifies where interventions should be made. In particular, the careful tracking and monitoring of students, notably with the current Year 11 students, have been successful in improving academic performance.

Middle leaders are strong contributors to the school's rapid improvement. They are clear about their roles and their accountability for the work of their teams. There is a shared understanding of the priority to improve teaching and learning in order to raise achievement. Middle leaders of both subjects and house pastoral teams feel valued and well supported in their work. There is a shared mood of optimism across the staff, which bodes well for further improvement. The close monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning have led to significant improvements. For example, teachers' lesson planning is now good and most lessons are conducted in a positive climate for learning. Governors are well informed in supporting and suitably challenging the

school. Given the rapid progress achieved and the shared determination across the school to continue its improvement strategy, the school's capacity to improve is good.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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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?	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

### The quality of provision

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

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	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

2 May 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Wednesfield High School, Wolverhampton, WV11 3ES

Thank you for your warm welcome at your school's recent inspection. We enjoyed meeting you and listening to your views. Many of you told us how much your school has improved. We agree with you and found there have been a large number of improvements since the last inspection.

We found that your school is now providing you with a good education overall, which is enabling you to make much better progress with your learning. You told us how much behaviour has improved and we noted that the majority of you behave well and contribute strongly to school life. The teaching in the school is now good overall. You told us how much you particularly enjoy practical activities and 'hands-on' learning. We think many of you learn best in these lessons. The curriculum is also good and provides you with lots of interesting activities, particularly the various engineering opportunities, which most of you enjoy. Your teachers know you well and provide you with very good care. Your headteacher and the staff team are working hard to improve things and they are particularly focused on ensuring that you achieve better results in the Year 9 tests and the GCSE examinations in Year 11. We agree that standards could improve further. Therefore, we have asked the school to do the following:

- Check that the level of challenge is right for those of you who find learning easy.
- Make sure all subject areas provide opportunities for you to be active and involved in your learning.
- Make sure that teachers in all subjects help you to understand how to improve to the next level and involve you in assessing your work. You can help by taking every opportunity to get involved in your learning and by thinking about the advice offered in lessons and trying your best to use it in your next piece of work.

We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Judith Matharu Her Majesty's Inspector

**Annex B**

2 May 2008

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You can help by taking every opportunity to get involved in your learning and by thinking about the advice offered in lessons and trying your best to use it in your next piece of work.

We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Judith Matharu  
Her Majesty's Inspector