

Wyvern College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134199
Local Authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	319581
Inspection dates	11–12 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Maria Dawes HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School	511
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Henry Head
Principal	Richard Butler
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2007
School address	Church Road Laverstock Salisbury SP1 1RE
Telephone number	01722 500700
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Age group	11-16
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Wyvern College is a small specialist technology college serving the eastern area of Salisbury and the nearby rural areas. It is a Church of England Voluntary Aided school. Boys join the college from a very large number of feeder schools. It shares a site with two other secondary schools and, from September 2008, the three institutions will be offering some collaborative Key Stage 4 provision. The proportion of students with statements of special educational needs is above average, although overall the college has a lower number of students with learning difficulties than is found nationally. The majority of these have low levels of literacy.

At the last inspection, the college was given a Notice to Improve because of concerns about students' achievement and standards at Key Stage 4 that were due to unsatisfactory teaching and learning, curriculum, and aspects of leadership and management.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

'This is a much better school – now I would recommend Wyvern to anyone.' These sentiments capture the views of the great majority of boys at Wyvern. Much has been achieved in the last year and the college now provides a satisfactory standard of education. Therefore, in accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. Good leadership and management have led to better teaching and an improved curriculum, with resultant better behaviour and examination results at the end of Year 11. The astute principal has worked tirelessly since his appointment to overcome a significant legacy of staffing difficulties, poor premises and financial deficit and has brought about a significant change in the culture of the school. There is good capacity to improve further.

There have been significant improvements in standards at Key Stage 4, particularly in terms of GCSE results. Systems are now in place to track and monitor students' progress regularly and these are now being used by staff to intervene in order to tackle underachievement in examination years. Because of this, and the improvements in teaching and learning, current Year 11 students are expected to exceed last year's results and the majority of students are now on track to meet their targets. However, boys are not achieving well enough in some technology subjects leading to standards that continue to be very low.

The college has rightly focused on improving behaviour, the curriculum, and the quality of teaching and learning to increase students' engagement and progress. The quality of teaching and learning has rapidly improved and weak teaching has been eradicated. However, the college knows that, although there is now much good and some outstanding teaching, it still has some way to go to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is more even across all lessons. In many lessons, there are too few opportunities for students to use their initiative and take responsibility for their own learning. Teachers are beginning to use data in their planning. However, this data are not yet being used rigorously to match planning and work to the needs of individual students in order to accelerate progress. Within the constraints of a small school, poor resources and budget limitations, recent changes now ensure that the curriculum is more closely matched to students' needs, particularly in terms of vocational learning. Nevertheless, it remains limited in some areas. There are well advanced plans to improve further the curriculum at Key Stage 4 in a collaborative arrangement with the two other schools on the site.

Until recently, the college's specialist status has had minimal impact on provision and outcomes. Recent and proposed changes are now strengthening staff, student and parents' perception of what the specialism means. The introduction of food technology and catering is giving the students a wider understanding and enthusiasm for technology and the Year 7 cross-curricular technology week is a good innovation.

Students' personal development is good and students are well supported by effective pastoral teams who provide high quality care and guidance. Numerous students say that behaviour has improved considerably and relationships between all members of the community are good. This has led to students enjoying life at the college and this is reflected in a much improved rate of attendance. The principal, together with the senior staff, has been instrumental in establishing the shared vision for the college's work and a striking feature is the positive morale amongst staff and students. Senior leaders know the school very well and are entirely clear about what elements are strong and what needs to be improved. The principal's belief that all staff play a

vital role in leadership and management is demonstrated clearly in the increasingly confident contributions that staff are making to the college improvement. Support for subject leaders has led to improvements, although there are still some inconsistencies between subjects. Staff have responded well to the strong support provided by the local authority and other external consultants. Governance is now good.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the college and, in particular, the turnaround that the principal and staff that have achieved in the last two years. As one commented, 'I realise the school has had its troubles but I am very confident that the new head is making a huge difference and therefore the school will go from strength to strength!'

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate the rate of improvement in students' standards and achievement by increasing the proportion of good teaching.
- Strengthen the curriculum, particularly in relation to its technology specialism.
- Develop the understanding, interpretation and use of assessment data to inform refined planning and focused intervention for all students.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students enter the college with broadly average standards, although there are relatively few high attaining students. Boys make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9 and standards are satisfactory, although students achieve better in mathematics and science than in English, particularly at the higher levels.

In recent years, students have not achieved as well as they should at Key Stage 4, although results in GCSE examinations in 2007 were considerably better than previously. The percentage of students achieving five or more good GCSEs with mathematics and English was in line with those found nationally and demonstrated an increase of 13% on 2006 results. Improved and accurate tracking of students' progress has enabled teachers to identify those who are underachieving. This in turn has led to personalised support and revision programmes for many students in Year 11. As a result, GCSE results are expected to improve again this year, on the basis of unit results already notified, and many more boys are expected to reach their targets. However, there are variations between subjects and, in particular, students continue to underachieve considerably in resistant materials and graphics.

Improvements in teaching and a more appropriate curriculum have additionally contributed to students' engagement and are beginning to compensate for the legacy of underachievement. As a result, achievement is improving in all years. Students with very low levels of literacy are well supported through focused teaching and in-class support and are making good progress throughout their time in school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

All aspects of students' personal development, notably behaviour, show appreciable improvement. Students say that there are few incidents of bullying now and on the rare occasions where it does occur the college takes firm and prompt action. The new behaviour management policy is clearly understood and used by all and the number of exclusions has fallen appreciably. As a result, students feel very safe in college and can concentrate on their learning. Relationships are positive and students enjoy school which has led to improved attendance. Their moral, social, cultural and especially spiritual development is good.

Students respond well to teaching about healthy lifestyles and a significant number take part in sporting activities outside college hours. The community awareness of students is good and they readily participate in activities to raise funds for charities such as 'Children in Need'. The college council meets regularly and its suggestions are acted upon, for example in relation to a new summer uniform and improvements to the courtyard. The senior prefects are excellent ambassadors for the school making a valuable contribution to college life by helping younger students, for example, by assisting those who find reading difficult to improve. Students say they gain a lot from work experience as it builds up their confidence about life after school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection and are now satisfactory. Good and outstanding teaching represents an increasing proportion of students' experience. Regular and accurate monitoring has identified weaknesses and subsequent useful support and training have improved areas such as planning. However, departments do not yet use available assessment information in an effective way to determine how best to meet the needs of all individuals.

Staff and students enjoy mutually respectful relationships which are leading to more enjoyable learning. Behaviour is well managed and students confirm that disruption seldom hinders learning now. Boys are keen to learn and are prepared to do their best, especially if they are actively involved in tasks. As one boy commented following a highly engaging and practical lesson on dissection, 'A lovely lesson!' However, a narrow range of teaching styles in many lessons results in a very tightly controlled environment leading to too few opportunities for students to learn independently.

Progress is speeding up partly because teachers are using available data about students' potential. Most know their targets and there is some useful evaluative marking which helps students understand how to improve. This is inconsistent though, so not all students are clear about their targets in all subjects and what they need to do to achieve them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The current curriculum is satisfactory. It has been enhanced recently, but many prior and residual weaknesses in staffing, teaching, facilities and accommodation have led to provision which the college recognises is not ideal but which makes best use of resources. Secure plans for further improvement are already in place. A wider curriculum at Key Stage 4 this year, including

vocational opportunities at local colleges in construction and motor vehicles, now matches many students' needs and aspirations better. This will improve further next year with the collaboration between all schools on the campus to widen the range of possible vocational and academic options for students.

Although very recently strengthened by the inclusion of food technology, opportunities in the college's specialist areas of technology are very limited. Modern languages provision is narrow because of staffing limitations, but improvements are in place for next year.

Many students participate in the good range of extra-curricular sports, supporting the college's emphasis on healthy living and there is a satisfactory variety of other enrichment opportunity.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The college places great emphasis on caring for its students and creating a secure environment in which they can learn. Students say teachers give willingly of their time to help with academic or pastoral problems. Heads of House make a good contribution to students' social and personal progress and speak highly of the support from outside agencies in assessing students' needs. Increasingly, they are developing a more detailed overview of academic progress and are becoming more involved, with form tutors, in helping students improve academically. As a result, most students know their targets and many are more confident in knowing what to do to improve.

Safeguarding procedures are firmly in place and meet statutory requirements. The provision for students with learning difficulties is good. Such students are identified before they enter the school so planning can be done in advance and this, together with the very good links with parents, is leading to good achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The incisive and resolute principal has a clear vision for the college and has overcome major barriers to bring about swift, but sustainable, improvements in the quality of education provided. In the last year he has been very well supported by a reorganised and increasingly effective senior and extended leadership team who are each responsible for specific areas of improvement. Staff are highly supportive of the changes and spirits are high. As one commented, 'The atmosphere has totally changed, this is a good place to be!'

Self-evaluation is precise and comprehensive, leading to well focused actions that have improved important aspects of the college's provision. Progress on the improvement plans put in place at the time of the last inspection is regularly evaluated using a detailed range of quantitative and qualitative information including student and parents' views. This has led to students' increased academic outcomes and their positive attitudes and enjoyment of school. It increasingly involves managers at all levels who understand that they too are accountable for raising standards and achievement. Most subject leaders have a clear understanding of their role and responsibility. In particular, they have rapidly improved their understanding and use of data to track students' progress and implement intervention for those who are underachieving.

The college has been active in the last year in collaborating and working with both the two other schools on the site and a wider range of other organisations, including the local authority,

to improve provision for the students. The impact of the specialist technology status is beginning to impact on the work of the college. Governance has improved and governors are committed, know the college well, and give good support and challenge. The budget is skilfully managed, although there remains a deficit and many resources, including the school's accommodation, are poor.

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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?	3
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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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
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	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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?	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	1
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
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

13 June 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Wyvern College, Salisbury SP1 1RE

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your college. We enjoyed meeting you and listening to what you had to say. Your responses were honest and open and we agree with you when you say, 'This is a much better school.' Our main finding is that the Wyvern College provides you with a satisfactory education. It has improved since the last inspection and your principal and staff are dedicated to improving the college and your levels of achievement further.

Many of you were very eager to tell us how much better behaviour is now and that you feel safe in school and are keen to do as well as you can. We were impressed with the positive relationships that we saw both between students and between students and staff. You are very well cared for and looked after during your time at school. Your academic progress is now tracked well and you now know what levels and grades you should be aiming for. Teaching is also much better and much is good and, at times, outstanding. All of these things have contributed to improved GCSE results and the progress that you make.

- In order to bring about further improvements we have asked staff to focus on the following:
- increase the amount of good teaching and learning so that you make faster progress and reach higher standards
- continue to improve the curriculum and in particular increase the emphasis on your technology specialism
- use a wider range of information and data to refine planning and teaching to match each student's needs.

Your principal and teachers are committed to getting things right for you and we are sure you will continue to support them in this. Thank you again for helping us with our work and making our visit to Wyvern so enjoyable.

With best wishes

Maria Dawes Her Majesty's Inspector

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