

# Washwood Heath Technology School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	103489
<b>Local Authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	336093
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 October 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Davinder Dosanjh 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
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1409
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	100
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Peter Anstey
<b>Headteacher</b>	Beverley Mabey
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 June 2007
<b>School address</b>	Burney Lane Stechford Birmingham
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 33 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, and groups of students. They observed the school's work and inspected a range of documents including key policies, the school development plan, and analysis of examination results. They also analysed 116 parent, 57 staff and 200 pupil questionnaires.

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

- the effectiveness of the school's strategies have been to improve teaching
- the progress made by all pupils in lessons
- the extent to which the curriculum has improved sufficiently since the last inspection to cater for the needs of all students
- the impact of the school's specialist technology status on the students' experiences and outcomes
- the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation undertaken by middle leaders in order to promote improvement.

## Information about the school

Washwood Heath Technology College is larger than average. It was re-designated as a Specialist Technology College in 2004. Over two thirds of the student population are boys and the majority of students come from a range of minority ethnic groups, with the largest group from Pakistani backgrounds. Although few are in the early stages of learning English, there is a high proportion whose home language is not English. Thirty-two home languages are spoken. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is significantly above average as is the percentage entitled to free school meals. The school serves an area with a high level of economic deprivation.

**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?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

### Main findings

Washwood Heath Technology College is an improving school with an increasing number of good aspects. This school is not complacent and has continued on its journey of improvement. Outcomes for students have shown considerable improvements since the previous inspection. The school achieved its best ever GCSE results in 2009 with 82% of students obtaining five good GCSEs. This was partly due to the introduction of more appropriate vocational qualifications to meet the needs of students and successful targeted interventions. An important success is that all students left the school with at least one level 2 qualification in 2009. Systems for tracking the progress of students are robust and accurate. The school's efforts in promoting equality of opportunity have led to reduced gaps in the achievement of different groups. However, the proportion of students who achieve GCSE grade C or above in both English and mathematics is still not high enough. Students' weak literacy skills are not always sufficiently developed across different subjects.

The school has an extremely positive ethos; most students enjoy school, feel that they learn well and feel safe in the 'family atmosphere in the school'. There is an ethos of mutual respect at the heart of relationships within the school. Older students comment on the many improvements over the last few years. The quality of care, guidance and support is a very positive feature of the school. Support for all students' well-being is particularly strong and is embedded across all aspects of the school. This is evident in relationships in lessons, as well as from the high quality of support systems and the school's work with a wide range of agencies. All students benefit from this, but especially those who are vulnerable or who have particular needs.

Students' learning and progress was good or better in more than half of the lessons observed. In these lessons, the students were clear about their current levels of achievement, their targets and what they needed to do to make further progress. In too many lessons, though, students' learning and progress remain satisfactory. Insufficiently challenging teaching and a lack of skilful behaviour management mean that learning is slow. The extent to which work in lessons is closely matched to individual needs of students varies too much and marking does not provide clear enough targets or guidance for what students need to do to improve their work.

Specialist status is an emerging strength of the school. Achievement in 2009 was mixed in the technology subjects with not all targets being met but current data is more encouraging. Technology subjects play a key role in 'Dimension Days' with teamwork and enterprise activities. The links with primary schools and the community have helped to enhance awareness of healthy eating. Specialist status is not always celebrated sufficiently as a significant feature across the school.

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The headteacher provides very strong leadership and direction, and is well supported by extremely able senior leaders and committed staff. The school has good capacity to secure and sustain the further improvements required. It has a good track record in raising achievement, improving attendance and successfully working with targeted groups of students. The school has worked effectively to eradicate inadequate teaching and increase the proportion of good and better teaching. Good role models are in place and are working with staff to improve teaching further. Robust current data indicates that present Year 11 students are on course to continue the trend of strong improvement. Good quality monitoring and evaluation enable senior leaders to have an accurate view of the school's performance. They are clear about what needs to be embedded more widely and about what needs significant improvement.

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

- Increase the proportion of teaching which is good or better by ensuring that:
  - all teachers plan lessons to take account of the full range of students' individual needs and ability levels
  - lessons have pace and challenge
  - marking of work clearly includes specific guidance and targets to help students to improve
- Keep a relentless focus on improving the outcomes in English and mathematics by:
  - directing intervention strategies to students in English and mathematics
  - improving the standards of literacy across the curriculum by increasing the planning of literacy tasks in lessons
  - devolve responsibilities to middle leaders for raising attainment
  - raising attainment through the specialist subjects, in particular technology and science.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****3**

Students' enter the school with below-average attainment and make satisfactory progress through Years 7 to 11. Overall standards have continued to improve. The school's GCSE results at five or more A\* to C have risen sharply over three years and were well above average for the first time in 2009. Students who are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. The gap is closing in the achievement of different groups of students including Pakistani students. Notable successes include students taking up free school meals and Black African students who achieve well. Most students enjoy lessons and adopt a positive approach to learning, as demonstrated

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by their improving attendance. In the lessons observed, the pace and quality of students' learning varied too much. When learning was good, students worked conscientiously, in pairs and groups and behaviour was good. In lessons where students' learning was satisfactory, a lack of suitable resources, challenge and lack of skilful behaviour management led to a lack of focus by students. Students feel safe and bullying is rare. Students adopt healthy lifestyles willingly and all study food in technology. The school does a good job in helping students understand the dangers created by smoking and drugs. Students are active in the school and local community, involving themselves in projects with local schools and taking on roles such as prefects. Charity work led by students through the house system focuses on a local, national and international context. The development of work-place skills is sound with helpful links with small business. The development of literacy skills is less effective across the curriculum. Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good and the school is a harmonious community. The school is justly proud of its work on cultural awareness.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>3</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>3</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>

## How effective is the provision?

<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.

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Teaching has a satisfactory impact on learning. Inspectors saw good and outstanding lessons in which students were making faster progress, but there is too much inconsistency so this quality is not yet the norm. In many lessons, good relationships are evident between students and teachers. Key features of the most effective teaching include planning for the full ability range within the class and skilful use of questioning to assess students' understanding enabling good progress to be made. Thoughtful planning of lessons made learning intentions clear with successful use of starters and plenaries. A majority of lessons include a variety of activities that enable students to learn and enjoy. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and the majority of students show interest in their work. Assessment information is used to inform planning, although this is not done consistently well across all subjects. Consequently, tasks and activities are not precisely matched to the needs of different groups of students. In a few cases the work is planned at one level only, and is therefore too difficult for some students, whilst not providing enough challenge for others. Marking is often constructive, but its quality varies between teachers, and does not always give students clear guidance on how to improve their work.

Monitoring of teaching is well established and accurate. There is a wide range of mechanisms in place including department reviews and focus weeks. The Learning Group enables good practice to be shared and provides appropriate support and guidance to colleagues.

The school has a well-organised curriculum, providing learners with a wide range of opportunities. The curriculum is enhanced by a range of 'Dimension Days' that provide good opportunity for the students to develop a wide range of cross-curricular skills. There is a growing range of vocational courses in both Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. This improved provision more effectively meets the needs of the students than was the case in the previous inspection. Specialist subjects are central to the school's curriculum development. All students study technology at Key Stage 4, from a wide variety of choice. There is a broad range of extra-curricular activities, which over half of the students participate in. Examples include sport, music, food and Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) activities.

Students are well cared for and good relationships with a range of external agencies are used to support students' personal development, particularly those of vulnerable students. A strong mentoring system supports academic progress and behaviour increasing well. The new house system and vertical tutoring is working well in nurturing students and building good relationships between those of different ages. Good transition arrangements are in place for Year 6 and Year 11 with strong links with primary schools and very effective advice and guidance about future choices.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<p><b>The quality of teaching</b></p>	<p><b>3</b></p>
<p>Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning</p>	<p>3</p>

<b>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</b> Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
<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?

Senior leaders communicate a clear vision for the future based on challenging targets. Systems to monitor the work of the school are robust and rigorous and have led to improvements in key areas such as achievement, a reduction in exclusions and higher levels of attendance. Staff morale is high and strategic actions have contributed to improved outcomes. Middle leaders have clear lines of accountability and play a key role in monitoring and evaluating their subject areas. Strong department heads in some subjects have turned around unsatisfactory departments, leading by example and providing good role models. The school accurately judges the quality of teaching and learning and there is regular effective monitoring of teaching. The school has made progress since the last inspection in improving teaching with a more consistent approach to the planning of lessons, elimination of inadequate teaching and increasing the proportion which is good or better. Subject heads are not always clear about the priorities for teaching and learning for the whole school or their subjects. Governors are supportive to the school and recognise the journey the school has been on over the last few years. They discharge their statutory duties but as yet there are no formal links with departments or systems for seeking the views of parents.

A range of strong partnerships contributes to good well-being for students, improving achievement and motivation. The school is a very active partner in local networks and the community. Safeguarding procedures exceed current requirements and the school has a good awareness of child protection issues in its care for students. Training for staff is well-structured and good security arrangements exist around the school buildings. The school has a very inclusive ethos and actions to promote equality of opportunity have been very effective, the gaps between different groups are closing with improved achievement for most groups in the school. Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the characteristics of the local community. Audits of action and impact shape planning to ensure that students understand and contribute, not only to the local community but also to national initiatives and increasingly international projects. Students from different backgrounds get on well together.

*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	3
<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>3</b>



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<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</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>2</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**

At the time of the inspection, the sixth form was in a stage of transition, reducing the number of mainly academic courses and offering more vocational or applied courses. Given the relative low starting points of many of the students, this move is appropriate. It is designed to ensure that all students in the sixth form are on courses where they can achieve well and this is increasingly the case.

In 2009, attainment in A level examinations was broadly in line with national averages. Progress in the A level courses taken in 2009 was satisfactory and in the vocational courses it was good. The progress of students has increased significantly over the past year largely due to the changes in curriculum. Teaching is satisfactory in the sixth form. It is good in vocational subjects. Teachers have good subject knowledge and provide good opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning. Students respond well to the active learning involved particularly in the vocational courses.

The focus on achievement is giving rise to a strong learning ethos where the students become mature and purposeful learners. Students are well cared for and guided by their tutors and the head of sixth form. Objective guidance is given to ensure that students are on the right course, succeed and move onto suitable higher education courses, employment or training. For some students, this advice is not given early enough to aid decisions about higher education opportunities. However, through the support of the school, students are well prepared for the next stage in their lives and the percentage of students not in employment, education or training is very low.

The leadership and management of the sixth form has recently been reorganised and roles and responsibilities have been redefined. The monitoring and evaluation of provision and outcomes in the sixth form is patchy and lacks consolidation. Leaders have put in place effective tracking systems to monitor the progress of students and weaknesses are steadily being addressed.

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*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

## Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers who returned a response to the questionnaire was low. The majority of those who did were supportive of the school, in particular the recent improvements. A very small minority raised concerns about different areas of the school's work and inspectors found that these had all been acted upon.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Washwood Heath Technology 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 116 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1409 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	51	44	64	55	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	45	38	69	59	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	61	52	46	39	7	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	44	38	70	60	2	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	45	39	67	58	4	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	41	35	66	56	8	7	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	39	33	70	60	6	5	1	1
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)	47	40	61	52	7	6	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	38	32	72	62	4	3	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	48	41	62	53	6	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	44	38	62	53	9	8	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	46	39	70	60	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	54	46	58	50	3	3	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 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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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 pupil's 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.**



16 October 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Washwood Heath Technology College, Stechford, B8 2AS

Thank you for making the inspection team so welcome at your school. We all enjoyed talking with you and you helped us to find out about the school. The strengths of the school are:

- the school is continuing on its journey of improvement
- results at GCSE in 2009 were the best ever and well above the national average
- strong partnerships with local schools and agencies have helped support your good well-being and personal development
- the school has an extremely positive ethos and most of you enjoy school and feel safe
- your social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good, so the school is a harmonious community and rightly proud of its work on cultural awareness
- attendance has improved and is above the average
- the quality of the care, guidance and support you receive is good
- changes to the curriculum have been very beneficial, so courses meet your needs better and are helping you make improved progress
- the school's leaders and managers, dedicated and committed staff have been very successful in improving the quality of education you receive.

We have asked the school to make the following improvements so it can be even better:

- increase the proportion of teaching which is good or better
- keep a relentless focus on improving the how well you do in English and mathematics.

The headteacher and school staff are already working hard to improve these areas and you can help them by continuing to work hard in all your lessons. We would like to wish you all the very best in your studies and every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Davinder Dosanjh

Her Majesty's Inspector

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