

Winchcombe School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115768
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	338659
Inspection dates	25–26 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Andrew Harrett HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	475
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr P Grimshaw
Headteacher	Mrs L Cooke
Date of previous school inspection	6 September 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 25 lessons, and held meetings with the chair of governors, staff, students and the school improvement partner. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation including strategic planning, assessment data, safeguarding records and school policies, 50 parental questionnaires and questionnaires from staff and students.

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

- whether progress at Key Stage 4 has improved securely and matches progress at Key Stage 3
- how effectively teaching engages the interest of all groups of students, involving them in their learning so that good progress is made and good attitudes and behaviour prevail
- behaviour in lessons and around the school
- whether the quality of leadership and management is consistent throughout the school.

Information about the school

The school is much smaller than most secondary schools. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than average. The proportion of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. A very small proportion of students have a first language other than English. The school has Healthy Schools status and is a specialist college for science and leadership.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

In this good school, students make good progress in their learning because of the good quality of teaching and the curriculum. Excellent leadership and management have further improved the high quality of many aspects of the school noted in the last inspection report. Outstanding care, guidance and support ensure that students feel safe and secure and enjoy their education. The school has acted swiftly and decisively to rectify concerns that it identified about behaviour. This is now excellent in lessons and around the school. The students respond very well to the many opportunities for them to contribute to the smooth running of the school, making a superb contribution through the school parliament, acting as student mentors and taking an increasing role in the school's evaluation systems. The views of parents and carers are regularly sought and carefully considered by the school's leadership team in strategic planning for the future. Parents have lots of confidence in the school. As one typically wrote, 'Both my children have benefited from the individual attention that is at the core of this small but superb comprehensive school.' Specialist status in science and leadership has enriched the curriculum, helped to improve the quality of teaching and assessment, and provided opportunities for staff and students to enhance their leadership skills. Nevertheless, the school acknowledges that there is scope for providing a broader range of courses for the less able at Key Stage 4.

The quality of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

From 2006 to 2008, attainment and progress dipped in GCSE examinations, particularly in mathematics. Outstanding leadership and management of teaching and learning reversed this trend in the results in 2009 when attainment was above average and progress was good. Lessons observed during the inspection showed continuing improvement. The school's rigorous and accurate self-evaluation acknowledges that although teaching and assessment are good, a lack of consistency prevents them from being excellent. In particular, assessment information does not always inform lesson planning in a way that tailors activities to suit the needs of students. There are sometimes insufficient opportunities for them to reflect on the quality of their work during lessons. Although there are examples of superb marking in some subjects, the quality is patchy with considerable differences in approach. This pattern of excellent and good practice being evident but not entirely consistent is also found in teaching. For example, in a minority of lessons, teachers tend to dominate with overlong explanations rather than providing activities in which the students can learn for themselves, whereas in the large majority of lessons the range of activities is a real strength.

Leadership and management have sustained the excellent quality of many aspects of the school, resulting, for example, in outstanding personal development and superb

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community links. Swift and decisive action to reverse a downward trend in achievement has ensured that this is now good and improving. The capacity for sustained improvement is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of assessment from good to outstanding by:
 - providing more opportunities during lessons for students to reflect on their learning
 - sharing the criteria used to assess work so that students can gauge their progress more precisely
 - ensuring that marking points out precisely what has been achieved and the specific steps that students should take to improve their work in the future.
- Raise the quality of teaching from good to excellent by:
 - ensuring that all lessons have objectives that clearly describe the learning that will take place, that these are shared clearly with students and referred to throughout the lesson
 - using assessment information to establish the precise strengths and weaknesses of cohorts, groups and individuals and make sure that lesson planning and learning objectives take into account the needs of individuals and groups
 - using a range of questioning techniques to probe the students' understanding, explore alternatives and encourage students to reflect on their progress.
- Review the range of courses and qualifications available at Key Stage 4 to ensure that all students are enabled to achieve the broad range of qualifications already experienced by the large majority.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Students enter the school with attainment which is broadly average. They make good progress in their learning and attain standards by the end of Year 11 that are above average. Significant improvement in 2009 resulted in attainment that was well above average in some respects, such as the proportion attaining at least five good GCSE grades including English and mathematics. All groups of students make similarly good progress in their learning and the school has identified and successfully closed the gaps where these have been apparent, such as between boys and girls. Learning has improved at Key Stage 4 so that students in Years 10 and 11 now make similar progress to those in Years 7 to 9. In lessons, behaviour is excellent and only dips when teaching does not capture the students' interest. Students show commitment to their work in lessons and have excellent attitudes to learning. Students of all abilities and from all backgrounds are very appreciative of the excellent relationships between students and adults in lessons and around the school. Their excellent attendance demonstrates their confidence in the quality of the education that they receive.

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Discussions with students and their responses to the questionnaire showed that they feel safe in school and have an outstanding understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles. They participate in sporting activities enthusiastically and appreciate the healthy diet offered in the school canteen. The school prepares them excellently for their future economic well-being. Students reported how much they enjoyed and benefited from special days in the curriculum for developing enterprise skills and from participating in the Winchcombe Enterprise Group. Such activities enrich the many opportunities in lessons to develop skills that are essential for their future. The vast majority of students continue in education, employment or training when they leave school and speak of their futures with confidence and ambition.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Parents and students rightly have confidence in the teaching in the school, a large majority of which is good or better. Teachers' thorough subject knowledge informs their teaching well. Lessons are carefully structured and briskly paced, containing a variety of engaging tasks linked carefully to clear learning objectives. In the very best practice,

¹ 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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questioning is skilfully used to probe students' understanding of how to solve problems rather than simply asking for correct answers to factual questions. In the majority of lessons observed, assessment to support learning was good or better, providing students with ample opportunities to reflect on their learning and that of their peers in activities that were seamlessly linked with their learning. However, there were also occasions where students were not provided with these opportunities and were led through activities without space for reflection. In some subjects, marking provided detailed and clear information on precisely what the students had achieved and what they should do next to improve their work. On other occasions, marking was brief and expressed a short view of overall standards without helpful detail.

Specialist status in science and leadership makes an excellent contribution to the curriculum. The majority of students take three sciences at GCSE and the school has introduced courses in science tailored specifically for the needs of the less able. Students benefit from the opportunities to develop their leadership skills through the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and the junior sports leadership programme. A large majority of students participate in a wide range of sporting and cultural opportunities. Students' views and preferences are carefully matched to curriculum provision with a range of subjects offered after school and support provided in all year groups for those in danger of underachieving.

Parents and students speak highly of the excellent support provided by the school when students join the school, make subject choices and prepare for their future as they leave. The school knows the students and their families well, working effectively with them and with other agencies when appropriate to ensure that they are able to thrive and achieve well.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides excellent leadership, setting a clear agenda for improving achievement and using rigorous strategic planning to respond swiftly to detailed monitoring of the quality of provision. She is ably supported by a leadership team which in this small school also has responsibilities more commonly held by middle leaders, such as leading subjects and year groups. They straddle their senior and middle leadership roles superbly, providing clear direction to the whole school while being directly responsible for improving performance in subjects, such as English, mathematics

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and history. The leadership and management of teaching and learning are rigorous and detailed. They had a positive impact on results in 2009 and account for the continuing improvement of the present quality of teaching and progress. Accurate monitoring has ensured that leaders are well aware of the areas where the quality of teaching and learning is less well established as in the school's best practice. Strong links between senior and middle leaders and clear communication to staff and students have embedded ambition, consolidated excellent practice and driven improvement in teaching and achievement. Rigorous and challenging targets for achievement, the specialist areas and attendance are met and have been instrumental in driving improvement.

The excellent governing body has close and regular links with the school, providing rigorous support and challenge. They have worked well with the school to ensure that safeguarding procedures are rigorous and regularly reviewed. Excellent in many respects, these procedures are not as well developed in ensuring that the school contributes to the students' awareness of using the internet safely. The role of the governing body in working with the school to promote community cohesion has been particularly impressive. The school has a thorough and detailed knowledge of its students and their backgrounds, using this excellently to plan opportunities and experiences at local, national and global levels. For example, assemblies regularly give the students the chance to consider different religions that are important in the national context and a very successful visit to the school by a group of Chinese students had a particularly strong and positive impact on the school and the local community. Linked to the inclusive nature of the school and the rigorous way in which monitoring and planning takes account of the needs and achievements of different groups within the school, community cohesion contributes to the excellent way in which the school promotes equality between students and tackles discrimination. Parents, students, staff and governors are justifiably proud of this good school.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1

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The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money

2

Views of parents and carers

A relatively small proportion of parents responded to the questionnaire, but the school demonstrated that their own questionnaires had previously resulted in a larger response. A very large majority of the responses were positive, with parents commenting particularly on the high quality of the school's care for the students, the good teaching and the confidence that they have in the school's leadership. Concerns were expressed by a small minority, particularly in relation to the quality and frequency of school reports and some other issues. In all cases, the inspection team investigated these issues and agreed with the large majority of parents that provision in all areas was good or better.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Winchcombe School 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 50 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 475 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	24	48	25	50	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	25	50	24	48	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	19	38	25	50	6	12	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	21	42	25	50	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	22	44	24	48	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	16	32	29	58	3	6	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	32	31	62	3	6	0	0
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)	21	42	22	44	3	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	19	38	27	54	1	2	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	23	46	25	50	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	36	28	56	4	8	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	26	52	21	42	2	4	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	25	50	25	50	0	0	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"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



27 November 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Winchcombe School, Winchcombe, GL54 5LB

Thank you for the welcome that you gave us when we inspected your school and for the help that you gave us in our meetings and discussions.

The school provides you with a good education. Students from all sorts of backgrounds make good progress and your attainment is higher than average when compared with other schools in England. Your behaviour around the school and in lessons is excellent. There are also some excellent aspects of the school. You are exceptionally well cared for. Specialist status in science and leadership provides you with excellent opportunities to develop skills across the curriculum. Links to your local community and to other countries are exceptional. Teaching, assessment and the curriculum are good.

Even in a school like yours, where everything is judged good or better, there are things that can be improved. Because the leaders and managers of the school want to make things absolutely excellent, they agreed with us that some aspects of teaching and assessment should be more consistent. We want the school to make sure that teaching is always planned to address your individual needs, involves you in your learning and provides you with time to reflect on how well you are doing. We want the school to look carefully at how your work is assessed in lessons and marked, and establish a more consistent approach. We also think that at Key Stage 4 a few of you would benefit from a broader choice of subjects and qualifications.

You make an excellent contribution to running the school through your membership of the school parliament and other groups. I am sure that you will continue to play your part in making Winchcombe an even better school.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Harrett

Her Majesty's Inspector

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