

Great Wyrley Performing Arts High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124402
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	359659
Inspection dates	11–12 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Davinder Dosanjh HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1090
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	150
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dixon Wilton
Headteacher	Chris Leach
Date of previous school inspection	16 January 2008
School address	Hall Lane Great Wyrley Walsall WS6 6LQ
Telephone number	01922 419311
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 34 teachers, visiting 34 lessons, and observed two assemblies. Five of the lessons were observed jointly with a senior leader. Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, groups of students, representatives of the governing body and staff. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation including improvement plans, the analysis and tracking of students' progress, records of lesson observations, students' work, and a wide range of other policies and school documents. The inspection team received 339 completed questionnaires from parents and carers and scrutinised questionnaires completed by students and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Is student's learning and progress improving securely?
- How effective is teaching in meeting the differing needs of students?
- How effective is leadership and management in tackling underperformance and sustaining improvement over time?

Information about the school

Great Wyrley is a larger-than-average comprehensive school. The great majority of students are from White British backgrounds with a few from other minority ethnic groups. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The proportion with a statement of special education needs is average. The overall number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, and increasing. The school achieved specialist status for performing arts in September 2006. It works collaboratively with other local schools and a further education college for its sixth form provision.

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

3

Main findings

Great Wyrley is a satisfactory school. It has a considerable number of strengths in its provision for students' personal development and the promotion of performing arts. Students learn in a supportive and inclusive environment where behaviour is good. Students feel safe and make a good contribution to the school and local community. Much of this involvement is through the school's specialist subjects of art, drama, music and media. Students are involved in numerous activities, such as a community band and an art group. The specialism brings many benefits to the curriculum and plays a vibrant role in the school, thus leading to good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The quality of students' care, guidance and support is good, as are procedures for safeguarding. Students from potentially vulnerable circumstances are served well by the close attention the school gives to their needs. There are many strong partnerships with local schools, colleges and other agencies, all of which enhance the provision available for students. There is an improving wide range of curriculum options available, which is increasingly meeting students' needs and aspirations.

Attainment is broadly average. There has been an uneven pattern of performance over the last three years, where the percentage of students obtaining five GCSE grades at A* to C declined in 2009, but improved in 2010. Students make satisfactory progress by the end of Key stage 4 and in the sixth form, but there is too much inconsistency in learning across subjects to secure a good level of achievement for all students. Teaching is satisfactory overall, as it remains variable in quality. Not all teaching activities meet the needs of students sufficiently because lessons sometimes do not contain sufficiently engaging learning activities to motivate and inspire students.

Leaders demonstrate a satisfactory capacity to drive the school forward through their determination and ambition. The tracking and monitoring of students' performance are rigorous and the current Year 11 students are on track to show improvement from previous results. Generally accurate self-evaluation by the school's leaders and the success of actions since the last inspection to improve the curriculum, increase information provided to parents and carers and ensure safeguarding procedures are secure, indicate the school can make the necessary improvements. Monitoring information from lessons is used increasingly to provide intervention and support. Nevertheless, the quality of planning, monitoring and evaluation undertaken by middle leaders and senior leaders is as yet too variable to have a full impact and,

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consequently, good practice is not yet fully shared and embedded. The pace of change has been slow in this area, thus leading to the variation of performance across different subjects over time.

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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement by increasing the proportion of good and outstanding teaching through:
 - embedding good practice so that all teachers learn from the outstanding teaching that exists in the school
 - ensuring teachers plan work to match student's different needs and abilities, in order to inspire and motivate their learning
 - targeting 80% of teaching to be good or better by summer 2012.
- Increase the pace of change by strengthening the planning, monitoring and evaluation undertaken by senior and middle leaders by:
 - ensuring good practice is modelled and shared effectively
 - evaluating the impact of the new senior leadership team
 - providing a quality assurance framework for middle leaders with clear set of responsibilities and timescales
 - driving forward improvement by implementing the necessary changes more swiftly.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students enter the school with attainment which is broadly average. In 2010, nearly all left with some form of qualification. The pattern of attainment between subjects varies year to year and this has led to a mixed set of GCSE results. This pattern is also reflected in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Compared with most secondary schools, a larger-than-average proportion gained a qualification in a modern foreign language. Students make satisfactory progress overall, with the achievement of middle-attaining girls and boys a continuing priority for the school. The current performance of Year 11 shows that students' achievement has improved. This is reflected in the success of early entry GCSE passes in mathematics. Improved use of performance data and the detailed individualised tracking of students show that the large majority of students are now making the expected levels of progress. The progress of different groups is tracked carefully, with an increasing range of effective intervention strategies to remedy underachievement. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress as a result of effective support.

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In the majority of lessons observed, progress and the quality of learning were satisfactory, with an increasing number where they were good. Learning was strongest in lessons where there was an element of independence for students and collaborative learning, alongside good advice and feedback on how to improve work. Students responded enthusiastically when learning opportunities take account of prior learning and promote their personal development. In satisfactory lessons, learning tasks did not meet the needs of students sufficiently well. Learning was not checked to identify students who needed further explanation before moving onto the next task.

Students are sensible, orderly and calm around school. The school has put in place more robust approaches to manage behaviour. It has introduced a number of methods, such as the behaviour ladder, behaviour log and the Student Support Centre, which have shown a strong impact in reducing exclusions. The strong adult presence around school at breaks and lunchtimes is welcomed and recognised as helping students to feel secure and know they have someone to go to if they need assistance. Students are aware of the need to eat healthily and take regular exercise. Students take up a wide range of opportunities to take responsibility or to support the community, such as charity work and the school council. Students embrace opportunities to reflect on the world they live in and consider deeper issues. For example, in a drama lesson, the chosen script created a poignancy and insight into the feelings and emotions of dealing with alcoholism within a family. Students pursue arts, cultural or sporting activities with enthusiasm. They show respect for the needs of others in the high level of take-up for roles of responsibility in the school and engage well with each other around school and in the classroom. Students are developing a good knowledge of the world of work through vocational courses and enterprise challenges. Punctuality is good and attendance is broadly average.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will	2

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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contribute to their future economic well-being	
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

When teaching was good, it was because teacher subject knowledge was strong and resulted in careful explanations to help students to understand. The choice of activities motivated students to find out more about what they are learning, through discussion or group work. Information and communication technology is used effectively to reinforce learning visually. The pace of the lessons was well managed, ensuring a good balance between teacher explanation and student activity. As a result, students did well because they succeeded through manageable sections, in which they took responsibility for learning, before the teacher intervened to take them onto the next phase of success. Positive relationships were visible and teachers encouraged, praise and built self-belief. When teaching was less secure, it lacked the ability to drive learning and progress forward because there were too few opportunities for students to manage their own learning. Tasks did not take sufficient account of individual student needs, resulting in too much dominance by the teacher. Sometimes, students were not challenged enough to elaborate on answers, use key words or explain their meaning.

The curriculum has undergone considerable change since the last inspection, with the introduction of a broader range of courses and is better placed now to meet the needs of the majority of students. Increased school-based vocational options run alongside college placements, young apprenticeship schemes and work experience placements to provide a more engaging curriculum for less academic students. Within subjects there is an increased understanding of the need to offer a broad range of qualification pathways, for example three courses in science, and the chance in mathematics for students to follow a modular, linear or early entry route. There is a wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities available to students. At Key Stage 4, students' experience is enhanced by an additional period each fortnight to take part in an activity to do with the performing arts. This opportunity involves local adults sharing their skills with students, such as costume design and lighting.

The level of pastoral care provided is a strength of the school. The school's individual attention to students who are potentially vulnerable and others is good. Transition arrangements from Year 6 to Year 7 are well thought out. The Student Support Centre provides considerable help and guidance and, therefore, enables the school to make good use of the expertise provided by outside agencies. A dedicated team of staff provide high-quality care and work closely with parents and carers.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders at all levels are promoting a shared drive towards ambitious targets. The senior leadership team has been restructured to improve capacity and is a balance of new and experienced staff. Whole-school assessment and tracking systems are rigorous and are able to identify any underachievement and allow appropriate intervention. Middle leaders, too, have a good understanding of performance data and priorities within their subject areas. The whole-school improvement plan provides a manageable set of priorities, with clear timescales. However, department plans are variable in quality, with a lack of precision and do not identify measurable criteria for judging success. Good practice is not yet shared fully and embedded across the school, therefore too much inconsistency remains in the performance of departments. Senior managers judge the quality of teaching accurately through lesson observation. The proportion of good or better teaching is improving but at a slow pace.

The governing body is supportive of the school and discharges its statutory duties appropriately. It understands the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Its involvement in the evaluation of the school's progress is not yet sufficiently widespread. All safeguarding arrangements are met. The school has very clear policies, strategies and procedures, which ensure the safeguarding and welfare of students rigorously. The school has a generally positive relationship with parents and carers, with frequent information to parents and carers. There are good partnerships to promote students' learning and well-being. This strength is evident in care, guidance and support, regular contact with a wide range of external agencies and curriculum links.

There is an active promotion of equality of opportunity through the curriculum and the progress of different groups is tracked and monitored carefully. Concerns about the achievement of middle-attaining girls and boys are being addressed appropriately by the school. The school has taken forward its work on promoting community cohesion effectively, but evaluation of its work is patchy. The school has forged some useful international and curriculum links to broaden students' cultural experience.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and	3
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driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

Students enter the sixth form with attainment that is broadly average and make satisfactory progress. While results at 'AS' and 'A' level have been inconsistent over the last two years, evidence from lessons and analysis of modular examination tests from January 2011 indicate an upward trend from previous years. Students make a good contribution to the school and local community by acting as reading mentors and working with the elderly to improve computing skills. Attendance is good. Teaching and learning are now good in some subjects. The best lessons showed good use of challenging questions which required students to think, discuss and apply prior learning to new situations. However, where learning was satisfactory, rather than good, lessons were often overly directed by teachers and there were too few opportunities for independent learning. The school offers a modest range of vocational and academic subjects and the curriculum meets the needs of students. Students say that they are well supported in their choices for courses post-16 and beyond. Students expressed great satisfaction in the way they were supported by the tracking procedures, both academically and personally, so they have a clear overview of the progress they are making.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. The head of sixth form ensures that the day-to-day running of the provision is effective. Tracking procedures, which monitor the progress of students against their targets, are good and identify underachievement quickly. Monitoring of provision provides leaders with accurate information, although it has yet to focus closely on the quality of teaching and learning and extend the partnership between subject heads to improve the achievement of students.

These are the grades for the sixth form

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Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	3
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 number of responses from parents and carers was much higher than is typically found in secondary schools. A very large majority of parents and carers reported favourably that the school keeps their children safe and informs them about their children's progress, and express themselves to be happy with their children's experience of school. A few parents and carers consider that the school takes insufficient account of their views and raised issues about behaviour and healthy lifestyles. During the inspection, inspectors found behaviour to be good and the extent to which students adopt healthy lifestyles satisfactory. The school's liaison with parents and carers has improved since the last inspection and senior leaders and the governing recognise that this work still has further to go.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Great Wyrley Performing Arts High 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 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 339 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1090 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	71	21	212	63	40	12	13	4
The school keeps my child safe	93	27	216	64	22	6	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	102	30	199	59	30	9	4	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	95	28	195	58	38	11	5	1
The teaching is good at this school	71	21	206	61	35	10	6	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	62	18	199	59	57	17	7	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	38	11	208	61	68	20	5	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)	61	18	216	64	37	11	3	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	73	22	218	64	27	8	8	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	69	20	173	51	61	18	24	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	52	15	192	57	59	17	10	3
The school is led and managed effectively	68	20	210	62	28	8	18	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	101	30	191	56	27	8	10	3

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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



13 May 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Great Wyrley Performing Arts High School, Walsall, WS6 6LQ

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 school provides you with a satisfactory quality of education overall. Here are some good things we found out about your school.

- You feel safe and behaviour is good.
- The specialism in performing arts brings many benefits to you and plays a vibrant role in the school, thus leading to good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- You make a notable contribution to the school and local community through activities such as the school council, the Africa Link to Life project and a community band.
- The quality of care, guidance and support you receive is good, as are procedures for safeguarding. The Student Support Centre provides you with high quality support.
- There is an improving wide range of curriculum options available, which are increasingly meeting your needs and aspirations.
- There are many strong partnerships with local schools, colleges and other agencies supporting your personal development.

We have asked the school to make the following improvements.

- Increase the number of lessons where teaching is good or outstanding to improve the progress you make at school and in different subjects.
- Increase the pace of change by strengthening the planning, monitoring and evaluation undertaken leaders and managers.

You too can help the school to improve by attending regularly every day and focussing on what you need to learn in lessons. We wish you all the very best in your studies and every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Davinder Dosanjh
Her Majesty's Inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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