

Wombwell High – A Humanities College

Inspection report

Unique reference number	106650
Local authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	384880
Inspection dates	24-25 January 2012
Lead inspector	Sara Morrissey HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11-16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	810
Appropriate authority	Interim Executive Board
Chair	Graham Lund
Headteacher	David Hudson
Date of previous school inspection	30 September 2010
School address	Roebuck Street Wombwell Barnsley S73 0JU
Telephone number	01226 752551
Fax number	01226 274802
Email address	d.hudson@wombwell.org

Age group	11-16
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Introduction

Inspection team

Sara Morrissey

Her Majesty's Inspector

Pankaj Gulab

Additional inspector

Michael Cooper

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out at no notice. Twenty-eight lessons were observed and shorter visits were made to nine additional lessons over a period of two hours; 33 teachers were seen. Meetings were held with groups of students and staff, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at assessment information, the school's records of lesson observations, monitoring of students' performance by subject leaders, procedures for safeguarding students, data relating to students' attendance and behavioural incidents. A questionnaire for parents and carers was not issued as part of this inspection but inspectors took into account informal feedback and correspondence received from parents and carers. There were no responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).

Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average sized secondary school. Almost all students are White British and the proportion that speaks English as an additional language is low. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than average. The proportion of students with disabilities and those with special educational needs is above average, although the percentage that has a statement to meet their special educational needs is below the national average. The school meets the current government floor standards.

The school is scheduled to close in July 2012 and will amalgamate with a neighbouring school to reopen as a new school in September 2012. New buildings to accommodate all students in the new school are scheduled to open at the same time. The number of students on roll has fallen since the previous inspection. The school has also experienced significant changes to staffing at all levels. Since November 2010, the school has been led by an executive headteacher who is a National Leader of Education and headteacher of a National Support School in a neighbouring local authority. He will leave the school at the end of March 2012. The associate headteacher was absent at the time of this inspection.

At the time of the previous inspection, the school was judged to require special measures. Since that time, inspectors have monitored its progress at regular intervals.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.
- This is a satisfactory school which is improving quickly because of improvements in the quality of teaching and the positive impact of structures put into place to track the progress made by individual students and close gaps in their prior learning.
- Attainment is rising and by the end of Key Stage 4 is broadly average. This represents satisfactory achievement and reflects the positive impact of strategies used to counter past underperformance. In lessons, the pace of learning is accelerating because planning is tailored effectively to meet the needs of different groups of students.
- Students' behaviour and attitudes are generally positive both in lessons and around school. Attendance has risen and is broadly average. However, the proportion of persistent absentees is high when compared with the national average. Most students attend school regularly but too many do not arrive punctually at the start of the day.
- Teaching is satisfactory but improving swiftly as a result of a good programme of continuing professional development. Strengths of teaching that have contributed to better learning include: a good variety of activities that engage and enthuse students; and the helpful feedback to students that identifies what they have done well and the precise next steps to secure better progress.
- The executive headteacher has empowered leaders at all levels to take the necessary steps to ensure that students make the progress that they should. Accurate self evaluation has informed planning well so that key priorities have been tackled effectively. Although the quality of leadership is satisfactory

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overall, it is improving rapidly as the capacity of senior and middle leaders to drive improvement strengthens.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before the next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the pace of learning to raise attainment further by:
 - ensuring that all students are challenged sufficiently in their lessons
 - increasing students' confidence to take risks in their learning so they can make full use of their prior knowledge and skills
 - empowering all students to take full responsibility for their learning.

- Improve attendance and punctuality of targeted groups of students by:
 - reducing the number of students who are persistently absent
 - emphasising the need for all students arrive in school on time every day
 - extending analyses of attendance and punctuality data to identify trends and evaluate the impact of interventions.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The pace of learning is accelerating and progress over time is satisfactory because previous underachievement has been tackled systematically and rigorously. Attainment is broadly average and has risen since the time of the previous inspection, particularly in the proportion of students attaining five GCSE passes including English and mathematics at grades A* to C. Some variations remain in the performance between different groups of students, in particular those who are disabled or who have special educational needs and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals. However, assessment information indicates that gaps are closing for these students, particularly at Key Stage 4. In the majority of lessons, students are making more rapid progress because activities are tailored well to meet their needs. For example, in a Year 9 mathematics lesson, more-able students made good progress in tackling challenging GCSE questions; the teacher provided good levels of challenge through a variety of tasks that tested and extended their understanding. Learning also proceeds briskly in lessons where activities engage, enthuse and promote active participation. For example, in a Year 7 German class, low-attaining students grew in confidence through activities which enabled them to talk about different hobbies and interests. The pace of progress remains uneven where the intended learning outcomes in lessons lack sufficient challenge. At times, students do not have the confidence to take risks and remain passive when

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presented with work with which they are unfamiliar. Opportunities are also missed to give students greater responsibility for their learning or to reflect on their work and extend their thinking or understanding about a particular topic.

A trend of improvement is becoming embedded across the school. Students have generally responded positively to the higher expectations of them and have benefited from the adaptations made to the curriculum to improve their rates of progress. More-able Year 9 students spoke confidently about the challenges presented by early entry to GCSE courses including mathematics and German. Students with weaker literacy skills have also benefited from targeted support in reading and writing that has promoted better progress across different subject areas. The sample of feedback from parents and carers reflects satisfaction with the support for their children that has enabled them to make better progress in their learning.

Quality of teaching

Improvements in teaching since the previous inspection have narrowed gaps in learning and enabled students to make the progress that they should relative to their starting points. While teaching is satisfactory overall, the proportion that is consistently good or better is rising. This improvement has been aided by detailed lesson planning that takes students' needs into account and includes opportunities for regular checks on progress to be made. Teachers work together collaboratively to develop and share good practice and to embed agreed strategies, for example, in providing feedback to students. The consistency with which teachers apply new ideas is illustrated by the recently introduced 'SPOT' strategy that is beginning to increase students' independence across all subjects and reducing their reliance on the teacher. Changes to the curriculum structure since September 2011 have ensured that classes are almost always taught by subject specialists and shorter lesson periods have contributed to a swifter pace of learning. Teaching contributes to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in a variety of ways. Most frequently, opportunities are provided to promote students' social skills through group work to develop independent learning skills. For example, in a Year 10 food technology lesson, students worked collaboratively to follow a recipe for choux pastry. The complementary skills of each group member ensured that progress was brisk and the quality of the end product was high. In the best lessons, activities inspire students and increase their curiosity about learning.

Teaching that is good or better includes a wide variety of tasks that provide challenge for different groups and individuals within a class. Teachers review progress regularly and adapt activities to ensure that the pace of learning proceeds at a good pace. In an outstanding Year 11 English lesson about the use of symbolism, students were engrossed in their work and a sense of urgency was created by timed exercises and questioning that challenged and extended their thinking. In a good Year 10 mathematics lesson, students supported each other well in tackling problems on probability and good use of mini whiteboards was made to check progress as the lesson proceeded.

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Where teaching is less effective, opportunities are missed to build students' resilience and confidence to participate. At times, teachers do not adapt their practice sufficiently to enable all students to achieve as well as they might. Occasionally, activities fail to inspire and students become passive or distracted from the task in hand. Inspectors observed a number of occasions when students were removed from the class briefly to reflect on inappropriate behaviour before being readmitted to resume their lesson. Students responded positively to this strategy and disruption to learning was brief. The small sample of feedback from parents and carers included messages of thanks to individual teachers for helping their child to overcome problems with their learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students' behaviour and attitudes are generally positive. Where teaching captures students' interest, they adopt very positive attitudes and are keen to learn. At times, however, students are content to remain compliant and do not always respond to new challenges. The higher expectations communicated through the code for behaviour are understood clearly and welcomed by students who report that disruptions to lessons have been reduced. Incidents of poor behaviour are not tolerated and consequently, there has been a substantial increase in exclusions and referrals for behavioural issues compared with the previous year. A range of strategies provide support for those students who are referred more frequently for behavioural issues. However, it is too soon to evaluate the impact of interventions on students' personal development in the longer term.

Students feel safe and are confident to turn to adults to resolve any concerns should they arise. Bullying is uncommon but managed effectively by staff when it occurs. The records of a small number of recent racist incidents highlight the school's determination to ensure that all students are treated respectfully and any discrimination is tackled robustly. Samples of feedback from parents and carers were positive about the impact of support given to their child to help overcome particular concerns. The curriculum supports students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development appropriately. For example, in a Year 9 citizenship lesson, students considered the implications of youth crime and the arguments for and against punishment or reform for young people who have been involved in crime. The arts subjects also increase students' experiences of other cultures through different media. Students have good opportunities to participate in fund raising for charities and an active student council increases opportunities for students to make an active contribution to the school community.

Attendance is broadly average and is improving overall. However, the attendance of some groups of students, for example, Year 11 students attending offsite provision, remains too irregular. Furthermore, too many students do not arrive punctually at school and lack urgency in their progress to registration at the start of the day. A small number also require encouragement from duty staff to ensure prompt movement between lessons.

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Leadership and management

Significant and ongoing changes to leadership roles and responsibilities have been managed well by leaders at all levels to sustain progress in tackling key priorities. The Interim Executive Board has contributed to the improvement process by monitoring rigorously the progress made by the school since it was made subject to special measures.

The excellent support and challenge provided by the executive headteacher and other senior leaders from the National Support School were pivotal in securing early improvement following the previous inspection. The introduction, by the executive headteacher, of simple-to-use systems to track progress and target strategies to raise achievement has acted as a catalyst for change and improvement. In response, the capacity of Wombwell's senior and middle leaders to drive improvement has strengthened significantly in recent months. The positive impact of their work is evident in the rigorous programme of monitoring and evaluation has sharpened the whole-school focus on raising attainment. An innovative approach to professional development involving all staff has ensured that improvements to the quality of teaching are becoming embedded. This is reflected in the consistency in application of agreed procedures across the school, for example, in the quality of feedback given to students in their work books to help them improve. Leaders ensure that arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and that students are well cared for. Behavioural incidents and attendance data are monitored regularly so that support can be provided for those who may be vulnerable. However, analyses of these data are not as effective in identifying trends or evaluating the impact of interventions.

The executive headteacher has underpinned the drive to raise achievement by instilling a stronger sense of self-belief amongst students that aspirational subject targets are within their grasp. A strong commitment exists amongst all staff to ensure that equality of opportunity is promoted throughout the school. During a period of uncertainty associated with the school's closure, staff are working hard together to ensure that students are not disadvantaged. The curriculum is satisfactory. It has been restructured to more closely reflect students' needs and to take into account the changes that will arise from the amalgamation with the neighbouring school.

Warm relationships between adults and students reflect a cohesive school community which places suitable emphasis on promoting students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Examples of correspondence from parents and carers highlight positive views about the way in which staff support and help their children both in their personal and academic development.

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	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



26 January 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Wombwell High – A Humanities College, Wombwell, Barnsley S73 0JU

Thank you for the welcome you gave us during the recent inspection of your school. As many of you will know, I have visited your school on a number of occasions to check the progress that has been made since it was judged to require special measures. I am delighted to tell you that, as a result of the improvements made by leaders and staff teams, your school now provides you with a satisfactory education and no longer requires special measures. Congratulations to everyone!

A number of factors helped us to make this judgement. Teaching has improved so that you have been able to catch up on ground lost in your learning in the past. This is because teachers know your strengths and weaknesses and are able to track your progress more effectively through regular checks. You told us how helpful you found the 'two stars and a wish' in identifying what you can do well and how you can improve your work further. We also noticed how well you use assessment criteria in some lessons to identify for yourselves the next steps in your learning. Behaviour is satisfactory and improving as more of you get involved in your learning. Some of you told us that the behaviour code has reduced the number of times when lessons are disrupted.

We have agreed with Mr Hudson that there are a number of things that the school can do to improve further over the forthcoming months. These include:

- ensuring that you are always challenged in your learning and encouraged to take risks when trying a new type of activity for the first time
- increasing opportunities for you to take full responsibility for your learning
- reducing the number of students who do not attend school regularly as this limits their progress
- making sure that everyone arrives at school punctually and gets to their lessons on time.

You have an important part to play in helping the school to improve by arriving on time at school each day and being prepared to take a risk in your learning to help you achieve your challenging personal learning targets.

Yours sincerely

Sara Morrissey
Her Majesty's Inspector

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