

Wallasey School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105108
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	377179
Inspection dates	4–5 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Joan Davis HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
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	952
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	212
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Geoff Dunn
Headteacher	Philip Duffy
Date of previous school inspection	24 November 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Teaching and learning were observed in 42 lessons and 37 teachers were seen. Meetings were held with groups of students, staff and members of the governing body. The inspection team examined the school's self-evaluation of its work, the school development plan, students' work and data on their current performance, minutes of meetings, and policies. Inspectors also considered an analysis of 119 parents' and carers' questionnaires as well as those from students and staff.

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

- The effectiveness of the school's work in tackling underperformance overall, and particularly in mathematics.
- The effectiveness of the school's actions to improve attendance.
- The impact of the school's work in improving retention and performance in the sixth form.

Information about the school

Wallasey School is slightly larger than the average secondary school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well above the national average, as is the proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is below the national average, as is the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language. Wallasey School has received many awards, such as the 'Rights Respecting School' award from UNICEF.

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

Wallasey School is a satisfactory school. There has been a rising trend in performance since the previous inspection. Nevertheless, attainment remains low. Learning and progress for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are good. However, for most groups of students, learning and progress are satisfactory though improving. Students' achievement is therefore satisfactory overall but numeracy skills for the majority of students are underdeveloped.

The school has many good, and some outstanding, features. The school provides an excellent climate for learning, with a high standard of display in classrooms and inspirational art work in evidence throughout the school. The very large majority of students say that they feel safe and procedures for safeguarding are outstanding. Students make an outstanding contribution to the school and the wider community. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, because the school encourages every student to look beyond their immediate environment, reflect on their values and embrace diversity. Behaviour is good in lessons and movement around the school is orderly. Attendance is average and rising. Students are welcoming and courteous. They say there is very little bullying and when it occurs it is dealt with effectively. The school is a harmonious community, in which all individuals are valued.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Good practice exists, particularly in English, but opportunities are missed to share this effectively and thereby drive improvements across all departments. For the most part, teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively to support students' learning.

The use of assessment to support learning is satisfactory. However, marking is inconsistent and students do not always receive clear advice on how to improve their work. Teachers do not always use to best effect the assessment information available when planning lessons and therefore activities are not always matched sufficiently to the needs and abilities of students. As a result, lessons often lack sufficient challenge to ensure that students make good or better progress.

The curriculum is good and enriched by a number of highly-effective partnerships. For example, as a result of the school's work with Creative Partnerships, students have many opportunities to enhance their appreciation of the arts and other cultures.

Leadership, management and governance are good overall. The headteacher has communicated a clear vision and ambition for school improvement which is shared by all members of the school community. Many areas of underperformance have been tackled. However, the leadership and management of teaching and learning are only satisfactory. There has been insufficient focus on improving teaching and procedures to monitor the quality of provision lack rigour, leading to inconsistency of practice. There has been substantial investment in developing leadership capacity at all levels and self-evaluation is broadly accurate. Improvements that have been implemented are starting to have an impact on outcomes for students and therefore the school's capacity for sustained improvement is good. The school provides satisfactory value for money and deploys resources effectively.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is outstanding. The annual 'culture week' enriches the lives of students, providing a wealth of memorable experiences. The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination is good.

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory. Leadership and management are good. The school is increasing the range of courses available to better suit the needs of learners and outcomes for students are improving steadily. Students appreciate the care, guidance and support they receive, which is of high quality.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit from an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment further by:
 - driving improvements in the quality of teaching by disseminating existing good practice and developing more rigorous procedures for monitoring the quality of provision in order to ensure that a higher proportion of lessons are good or better
 - ensuring that all teachers use assessment information to plan lessons that better meet the needs, abilities and interests of all students, thereby accelerating their rates of progress
 - developing numeracy skills for all students across the curriculum
 - designing and implementing a whole-school marking policy, so that all students receive clear information on how to improve their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students enter the school with prior attainment that is below the national average. They make satisfactory progress as they move up through the school. Nevertheless, attainment for most key indicators has remained low for the three years prior to this inspection. There has been a rising trend in performance but the school recognises that its efforts to improve learning and progress in mathematics have been slow to

take effect. As a result, attainment in this subject continues to have a detrimental impact on overall outcomes for students. Data provided by the school during the inspection demonstrate that current attainment in mathematics is now improving strongly and students are on course to meet challenging targets in forthcoming examinations. The learning and progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are good because the school has highly-effective systems in place to support these students. Learning and progress in lessons observed during the inspection were satisfactory overall.

Most students say that they feel very safe in the school. They trust staff and know exactly who to turn to should problems arise. Behaviour is good, allowing lessons to proceed productively. Students have a good appreciation of the need to adopt healthy lifestyles and there is a higher than average take-up of school meals. Students speak highly of the wide range of activities available. Students assume responsibilities willingly and the school acts upon suggestions for improvements from students, such as, introducing a range of salads to the menu in the canteen. Students play a substantial role in the local community by, for example, raising money for charity and acting as ‘singing leaders’ in local primary schools. Students have a high regard for, and commitment to, the school, which is seen locally as ‘a beacon for the community’. Workplace skills are only satisfactory because attendance is average and numeracy skills remain weak for many students. Punctuality, as observed during the inspection, is good overall. Students’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students have the opportunity to debate ethical issues in religious education and philosophy lessons, and the school encourages them to reflect and arrive at reasoned judgements. Both the performing and visual arts’ departments contribute very effectively to enriching the lives of students; for example the school’s production of ‘Grease!’ won a national competition.

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	4
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	1
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. In the better lessons, teachers plan activities to engage and intrigue students. For example, in a good music lesson, observed during the inspection, students enjoyed using bags of rice and plastic bottles to improve their understanding of musical notes and rhythm. However, too many lessons lack sufficient pace and challenge to ensure that students make better than satisfactory progress. Procedures to share good practice are limited and therefore the quality of provision remains inconsistent.

The use of assessment to support learning is satisfactory. Again, good practice exists, but opportunities are missed to share expertise and ensure that all departments adopt a consistently good approach in this respect. Marking in English is particularly effective, with clear advice to students on how to improve their work. However, this is not the case in all subjects and there is no whole-school policy to establish an agreed standard. Teachers do not always use assessment information to inform their planning and therefore activities are often not correctly pitched to suit students' needs.

The school has developed a good curriculum which is increasingly adapted to the interests and abilities of learners. There is a wide range of traditional and vocational courses. Many extra-curricular activities are available, ranging from sports clubs to theatre visits and trips abroad.

The school has highly effective arrangements in place to offer care, guidance and support to students. The school reaches out to students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, helping them to overcome significant barriers to their education. The school has worked particularly effectively in reducing the number of students that are persistently absent and also in ensuring that these students gain qualifications. The school's efforts to improve overall attendance are now having an impact and rates of absence have reduced steadily since the previous inspection.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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?

The headteacher has inspired the school to share his vision for improved outcomes for students. Robust systems are in place to tackle underperformance and there is a growing culture of accountability. The school has developed an increasingly sharp focus on improving students' achievement, while maintaining its caring ethos. The school sets challenging targets for improvement and planning for further development is fit for purpose.

The leadership and management of teaching and learning are satisfactory, although efforts to improve the teaching of mathematics are now beginning to have an impact as attainment in this subject is rising. The school does not provide sufficient opportunities to model and share best practice in both teaching and the use of assessment to support learning. Procedures to monitor the quality of provision lack rigour and feedback to teachers on their lessons lacks consistency.

The governing body is astute, knowledgeable and supportive. Governors have become increasingly confident in holding the school to account and have worked effectively with the school in tackling areas of underperformance. Governors ensure that statutory duties are met. Procedures for safeguarding are outstanding and the effectiveness of the school’s work with external agencies is exemplary in this regard.

The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers is good. The school has a commitment to educating all members of the school community. For example, the school runs ‘let’s get cooking’ and ‘fun with mathematics’ classes to which parents and carers are invited, along with their children.

The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being is good. Links with other schools and training providers have enabled improved provision and a wide range of interesting opportunities for students.

The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion is outstanding. Activities to encourage students to embrace cultural diversity are imaginative and deeply-embedded in many aspects of the life of the school. The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination is good. Racist incidents are very rare and when they do occur they are dealt with effectively.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

Achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory overall as most students make the progress expected of them, given their starting points. Students taking applied and vocational subjects generally make better progress than those studying more traditional courses. There has been a rising trend in performance, demonstrating that strategies to raise attainment are beginning to have an impact on improving outcomes for students. Attendance is above average and levels of retention are now high. Almost all students go on to further or higher education, employment or training. Students make a strong contribution to the life of the school and the wider community. They demonstrate mature attitudes to learning, relate well to each other and have high aspirations.

Teaching in the sixth form is good overall. The curriculum is tailored to meet the needs and aspirations of students, with an increasingly wide range of courses on offer. There is a variety of enrichment and extra-curricular activities, which students enjoy and appreciate. Care and support for students are highly effective and systems to monitor their performance and provide appropriate guidance are improving.

The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Leaders have a clear grasp of strengths and weaknesses. There has been a sharp focus on driving further improvement and effective development plans are in place in order to do so. As a result, actions that have been taken are now beginning to have an impact on improving outcomes for students.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth Form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

There was a lower than average return to the Ofsted questionnaire. Parents and carers are supportive of the school and most say that their children enjoy school and that it meets their children's needs. The very large majority feel that the school informs them well of their children's progress and that their children are making enough progress. Most parents and carers feel that the teaching is good at the school and that the school helps them to support their children's learning. A very small minority of parents and carers expressed concerns about behaviour. Inspectors observed behaviour in lessons and around the school, held discussions with staff and students and scrutinised behaviour records. They found behaviour to be good during the inspection and that the school has appropriate systems in place to manage poor behaviour should it occur.

Most parents and carers feel that the school takes account of their suggestions and concerns and prepares their children well for the future. Most parents and carers feel that the school is led and managed effectively and a very large majority are happy with their children's experience at Wallasey School.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Wallasey 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 119 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,176 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	44	37	66	55	5	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	51	43	59	50	6	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	50	42	51	43	15	13	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	45	38	53	45	15	13	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	45	38	62	52	5	4	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	50	42	50	42	16	13	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	41	34	63	53	8	7	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)	51	43	56	47	5	4	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	50	42	57	48	10	8	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	51	43	51	43	9	8	4	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	38	32	65	55	7	6	5	4
The school is led and managed effectively	50	42	59	50	6	5	3	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	55	46	54	45	5	4	2	2

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 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.



6 October 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Wallasey School, Wirral, CH46 1RB

Thank you very much for the warm welcome we received during our inspection of your school. We were impressed by your friendliness and the way you respect each other. We found that your school provides you with a satisfactory and improving quality of education. We feel that you make an outstanding contribution to your local community, raising large amounts of money for charity. You are keen to learn about other cultures and many of you take part in the wide range of activities on offer. You make satisfactory progress as you move up through the school and attainment at the end of Years 11 and 13, although low, is improving.

Teaching is satisfactory overall. We noticed that you enjoy lessons that are stimulating and challenging. Your behaviour is good and you are very polite. The school cares for you well and you know who to talk to if you have a problem.

We have identified a number of areas where we think the school should make improvements. We have asked the headteacher to make sure that good teachers assist others in improving their lessons. We have also asked him to ensure that all teachers mark your work frequently and give you clear advice on how to improve. We have also asked the school to help many of you improve your numeracy skills.

All of you can help in the further improvement of your school by attending regularly, continuing to work hard and taking advantage of the many opportunities available to you.

We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Joan Davis
Her Majesty's Inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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