

Wimbledon College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	102681
Local Authority	Merton
Inspection number	335949
Inspection dates	9–10 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Meena Wood HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	1250
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	241
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Andrew Kennedy
Headteacher	Fr Adrian Porter SJ
Date of previous school inspection	2–3 May 2007
School address	Edge Hill Wimbledon SW19 4NS
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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

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 50 lessons, and held meetings with the chair of governors, staff and students. They observed the school's work and looked at the school development plan and departmental reviews, a range of school policies, local authority reviews, governing body minutes, internal teaching and learning observations, students' work, 256 parental questionnaires, 126 pupil questionnaires and 32 staff questionnaires.

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

- Whether teaching and assessment practice are sufficiently tailored to students' abilities, levels and prior attainment.
- The learning and progress of individual students in lessons.
- Outcomes in the sixth form.
- Students' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- The capacity of leaders and managers to make sustained improvements.

Information about the school

Wimbledon College is a large Roman Catholic school that has been run by the Jesuits since 1892. The sixth form operates as a partnership with Ursuline High School, Holy Cross School and Richard Challoner School. The school has specialist status in science and mathematics. The school roll has reduced over the last three years. The number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with national averages, although the proportion who have a statement of special educational needs is high. The number of students from a minority ethnic background is high; White Other, Black African and Caribbean are the largest groups. The number of pupils who speak languages other than English is high. A low number of students are eligible for free school meals.

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Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Wimbledon College, a satisfactory school with a good sixth form, has improved significantly in some respects since the last inspection. In particular, senior leaders and managers have successfully raised standards and achievement for students in the sixth form, so that outcomes are now good. Moreover, the robust and timely analysis of performance data by senior and middle managers now ensures the early identification of potential underachievement for all students across the school, including in the sixth form. However, the school's internal observation processes have not focused sufficiently on learning in lessons to ensure that all students make the progress they are capable of.

A good academic curriculum, strengthened by a range of highly enjoyable extra-curricular sporting, cultural and academic activities, along with the satisfactory teaching and assessment, develop students into well-rounded individuals. Students make satisfactory academic progress by Year 11, attaining standards that are above national averages. Students who are at risk of not achieving their potential are offered well-structured interventions, such as additional tuition out of lessons that is tailored to their needs. Learning and progress in lessons are generally strongest in science, mathematics, Spanish, art, drama, design and technology and physical education, where good teaching and assessment and high levels of enjoyment in learning were observed by inspectors. In some lessons, especially in English, teachers' planning does not take students' prior attainment into account and the tasks set do not sufficiently challenge the more-able students. In addition, students are not offered sufficient opportunities for independent and collaborative learning and development of higher order thinking skills, and teachers do not always check the knowledge and skills students are acquiring in lessons. Another area of inconsistency lies in the marking of students' written work: the quality of feedback is too variable, so that significant numbers of students do not know how to improve against their targets. Students receive good academic guidance on their next steps in Years 9 and 11 and are able to sample courses they may wish to undertake in the sixth form so that they make the right choices.

The headteacher has provided strong leadership in developing a learning environment of mutual consideration and strong moral purpose. Students are very well-behaved in lessons and the majority are respectful, courteous and highly motivated and take responsibility for their own safety. This helps to promote a cohesive and welcoming community for students and staff. As one parent reported, 'My sons are growing into happy, independent and confident young men under the

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excellent guidance and tutorage of the teachers; the school has a strong pastoral ethos, all boys thrive in a safe community and we, as a family, are proud to be part of the school.'

Leaders and managers are now prioritising the need to address weaknesses and inconsistencies in teaching and assessment, so as to drive students' learning and progress further. Based on the track record of sustained improvements in addressing weaknesses, leaders and managers now demonstrate good capacity for achieving this.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve learning and progress in lessons so that students make good progress from Years 7–11 and outstanding progress in Years 12–13 by July 2010:
 - matching activities and tasks consistently well to students' abilities by making use of data on students' prior attainment
 - checking more closely all students' knowledge and acquisition of skills during lessons
 - providing consistently effective marking, and ensuring students redraft their work and catch up on work missed
 - informing students of how to improve on their targets through more precise and focused guidance
 - ensuring a tighter focus on learning, progress and assessment during internal lesson observations.

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

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Over the last three years, students' standards have risen and are well above national average levels. Progress is satisfactory in Key Stage 3, with students making slightly better progress in Years 10 and 11. Even though the number of GCSE high grades A*–A have increased in 2009, a significant number of students who are more able do not consistently make the progress they are capable of. Moreover, there is some variability across subjects and across key stages, in terms of progress and attainment. During lessons students were making slightly better progress in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3, and making the most progress in the sixth form. The work seen in lessons and in students' books confirms that standards are above average. In the best lessons students were responsive, actively contributed to their learning and visibly enjoyed their work. In one science lesson students displayed responsible cooperative relations with one another, researched topics of revision and presented these to their peers, leading to good levels of independent learning and peer assessment. In the core subjects students, especially the more able, attain better results in mathematics and science than in English, where in general they make slower progress, with too many not achieving their potential.

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The school has put effective support and interventions in place for students who have been identified as underachieving, including those identified with moderate learning difficulties, specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, and those with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Outcomes for these students are good; owing to the well-targeted, inclusive support they receive, and they make good progress.

Students report that they feel safe in the school and adopt healthy lifestyles. The uptake of sporting activities, including swimming, is high. A weekly physical education lesson is dedicated to health fitness with all boys benefiting from regular fitness tests and the on-site studio facilities. With regard to students’ diet, inspectors agreed with the concerns expressed in some parents’ questionnaires on the lack of healthy variety provided by the school’s refectory.

The school Caucus followed by all students has resulted in a strong sense of acceptable and morally correct behaviour. Fund-raising activities, links with international communities, culturally themed assemblies and a Chaplaincy programme of reconciliation services all serve to develop good moral, cultural and spiritual awareness in students. However, the school has relied too heavily on a stringent code of sanctions to enforce good behaviour and this has led to increasing levels of internal and fixed-term exclusions. The school is now aware of the negative impact on learning and progress of students missing lessons, albeit for a short period.

Students have an effective level of involvement in shaping school activities through the student newspaper and debates. Their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills are good and they are able to demonstrate the wider skills and aptitudes needed for further education and the world of work.

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	2
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	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	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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The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

In the best lessons teachers use their strong subject knowledge effectively to inspire learning. In a Spanish lesson challenging and high expectations of students, along with excellent use of the target language by the teacher, encouraged students to develop good oracy skills and to visibly enjoy their learning. Good assessment techniques, such as open-ended questioning, checked students' understanding and ensured a better understanding of the grammatical rules being taught. Where learning is slowed, it is usually because too much time is spent on teacher input and whole-class activities, where too few students participate in question and answer work or discussions and very little use is made of assessment activities that sufficiently check students' learning before moving on to the next activity or input. Teachers' regular assessments provide a helpful and detailed analysis of individual students' strengths and weaknesses in each unit, but they do not use this formative information and the excellent data they have on students' prior attainment in planning tasks and activities to meet individual needs. Marking of students' work is inconsistent. But even where marking is helpfully detailed, teachers do not ensure that students catch up on work missed or redraft work as necessary. The school has developed 'The Knowledge' website with an impressive array of homework and support tasks, much valued by parents and students.

Targets are regularly reviewed but are not always sufficiently aspirational, and students do not always know what they need to do to improve to reach their targets in individual subjects. Careful tracking of students' progress ensures that those who fall behind are offered good support through booster classes and assertive mentoring. The inclusion centre, a pupils' panel and a youth awareness project on site effectively support students at risk of exclusion, vulnerable students and their families.

Students and their parents receive good guidance on options in Years 9 and 11. The school offers a wide range of academic GCSEs that meet most students' needs, along with triple science, AS critical thinking and GCSE statistics for the more-able students. The school is rightly broadening subjects in Key Stage 4 to include BTEC level 2 science courses and rotating foundation subjects in Years 7 to 9, and this has especially benefited lower-ability students. Younger students are encouraged to read for pleasure and inspectors observed the impact of this in Years 10 and 11 English lessons, where students demonstrated a mature appreciation of poetry. Students enjoy diverse extra-curricular activities, including a large army cadet force that provides good opportunities for older students to take on responsibility for younger students.

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The school’s specialist status in science has led to successful initiatives such as ‘Figure It Out’, which enhances students’ learning to learn skills. The school has good links with primary schools and provides challenging science and mathematics lessons for students identified as gifted and talented.

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 is a strongly motivated leader who has effectively focused the school’s efforts on its priorities. Exemplary analysis of performance data by the deputy headteacher has supported detailed academic monitoring by teachers, leaders and managers. As a result, target-setting for students at whole-school level is based on accurate assessment. Departmental plans contain highly detailed analyses of performance data, but managers do not provide a sufficiently wide evidence base that includes a realistic appraisal of teaching. Moreover, little contribution is made to this process by teaching staff. This term senior managers are ensuring that internal lesson observations have a greater focus on assessment, learning and progress.

The robust challenge and support provided by the governors have been successful in driving achievement and outcomes in the sixth form. However, the governing body has not challenged the school sufficiently in improving the quality of teaching and learning in the main school. Staff questionnaires and interviews by inspectors revealed a significant number of teachers who expressed a desire for more structured professional development opportunities. Staff development has been enhanced through sharing students’ views of their learning with teachers; however, sharing of good practice across subjects has not been facilitated, and is now recognised as the way forward by managers and teachers.

Safeguarding procedures are satisfactory. Robust risk assessments are in place, although the school has not ensured that a sufficient range of staff have received child protection training. The promotion of community cohesion is good. The impact of the school’s activities has yet to be fully analysed, but the school has established good links and a range of partnerships with schools, universities and other organisations, including Jesuit schools. One such project involves assistance for building schools for Dalit in India. A police officer permanently on site provides good support for students through conflict resolutions. A strong parents’ forum is consulted upon a range of issues and this informs subsequent school actions.

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The promotion of equalities is good as the school rigorously monitors students’ outcomes at both individual and group level, and much emphasis is placed on valuing differences through cultures and religions. Both parents and students say that bullying and racist incidents are generally dealt with swiftly.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
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	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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

Students make good progress and leave Year 13 with well-above-average standards at General Certificate of Education (GCE) A level. Students make better progress and reach higher standards in GCE A2 lessons than in GCE AS lessons, and there is some variation between subjects with significantly above-average results in mathematics, chemistry and physics, but with lower outcomes in English and the vocational subjects.

The quality of teaching and assessment is good. Inspectors observed examples that encouraged students to develop higher-order thinking skills, although in some cases students’ ability to analyse and express their findings were more limited, as teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for independent learning and group interaction. Students are articulate and their behaviour and attitudes to work are excellent. They are very well motivated and display a high level of personal responsibility. This has a significant impact on their academic outcomes and the progress they make.

The GCE A-level curriculum matches the needs of current students, although the school recognises that a number of potential entrants could be more successful in pursuing BTEC qualifications at level 3 in vocational subjects, and is revising the

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curriculum accordingly.

Students benefit from excellent care and guidance, owing to the robust tracking systems that monitor their progress and clear feedback from teachers on how to improve. Opportunities for enrichment, including fund-raising activities and mentoring for younger students, are good and students are enthusiastic about them. A dedicated parents’ support association provides effective help for both students and parents.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Improvements have taken place owing to successful teamwork among senior managers and good planning and support from all teaching staff.

These are the grades for the sixth form

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

Views of parents and carers

The majority of parents and carers report very favourably on the extent of their involvement in school life, the high levels of students’ involvement in sporting and other extra-curricular activities, and the excellent pastoral and academic support received by their sons. A significant number of comments were received from parents who expressed a desire for more homework and better communication with the school on the progress of their children. Some also expressed concerns at the disproportionate severity of punishments in relation to students’ actions, resulting in fixed-term exclusions and students missing lessons.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Wimbledon College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 256 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1250 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	111	43	130	51	6	2	5	2
The school keeps my child safe	119	46	122	48	6	2	2	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	124	48	114	45	13	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	116	45	118	46	13	5	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	109	43	128	50	10	4	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	100	39	125	49	19	7	3	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	93	36	133	52	22	9	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)	93	36	129	50	12	5	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	101	39	124	48	18	7	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	127	50	103	40	14	5	4	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	83	32	141	55	12	5	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	133	52	109	43	6	2	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	133	52	107	42	8	3	3	1

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 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>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.



11 December 2009

Dear Students,

Inspection of Wimbledon College, Edge Hill, Wimbledon, SW19 4NS

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed being in your lessons, looking at the work in your lessons and talking with you, and were impressed by how courteous and polite you were.

These were the main things we found out about your school.

- Wimbledon College provides you with a satisfactory educational experience and the majority of you leave at the end of Year 11 and in the sixth form with high standards in your GCSE and A-level examinations.
- The care, guidance and support you receive are good and help you develop into well-behaved, considerate and responsible young men. Additional support in your studies is good and you are able to make informed choices about which courses to follow in Years 9, 10 and 11.
- The headteacher and staff have worked effectively to improve your standards through monitoring your progress regularly and creating a caring and respectful school community.
- The school provides you with a curriculum that meets your needs and helps you excel in some areas, particularly mathematics, science, sports and a range of extra-curricular activities.
- The sixth form provides you with a good standard of education.

To help the school improve further, the school's leaders have agreed to ensure that:

- teachers match lesson activities more closely to your abilities, consistently mark your class and homework and ensure that, wherever possible, you are given precise feedback on how to improve, how to correct your work and catch up on work missed, to help you do even better in your studies
- managers observing your lessons focus more on your learning and progress and how teachers assess this, so that the best teaching practice can be shared and all of you are helped to make greater progress and achieve higher standards.

You can do your part to help by continuing to behave well and to excel in your studies. We wish you all the best for your future.

Yours sincerely

Meena Wood
Her Majesty's Inspector

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