

Wrenn School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 122123 |
| Local Authority | Northamptonshire |
| Inspection number | 340094 |
| Inspection dates | 16–17 September 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Clive Kempton HMI |

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

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| Type of school | Comprehensive |
| School category | Foundation |
| Age range of students | 11–19 |
| Gender of students | Mixed |
| Gender of students in the sixth form | Mixed |
| Number of students on the school roll | 1517 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 272 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Shirley Chapman |
| Headteacher | William Thallon |
| Date of previous school inspection | 25–26 April 2007 |
| School address | London Road Wellingborough NN8 2DQ |
| Telephone number | 01933 222039 |
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|--------------------|----------------------|
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 31 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of students and parents. They observed the school's work, and looked at various school documentation including development plans, school and national data and the schools own evaluation of its effectiveness. 276 parent questionnaires, 92 staff and 667 student questionnaires also provided additional evidence for inspectors.

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

- attainment in English, mathematics and science, especially at Key Stage 4
- underachievement, especially that of girls
- the quality of teaching in the core subjects
- the quality of improvement planning at all management levels
- how governors have ensured that the provision continues to improve
- attainment in the 6th form
- the capacity of leaders and managers at all levels to drive improvement.

Information about the school

Wrenn School is a relatively large school located on a split site. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly above average. The numbers of students from minority ethnic groups and those identified as learning English as an additional language are similar to that of most schools. The school was awarded specialist science college status in September 2004. The school has the Healthy Schools Silver Award.

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

Wrenn is a popular school with parents and has an outstanding sixth form. One parent commented, 'It is a brilliant school. I would definitely recommend it'. Students enjoy coming to school, behave well, develop active healthy lifestyles and say they feel safe. The transition from primary school to Wrenn and from the main school to the sixth form are well managed and students settle quickly. A strength of the school is that staff really care for the students and they have developed good partnerships with outside agencies to make sure that students get all the support they need.

The school was judged to be satisfactory at its last inspection in 2007 and this remains the case. Whilst standards are high in many curriculum areas the overall rate of progress by the end of Year 11 since 2007 has been too slow. The management of the school identified this issue through its accurate self-evaluation and implemented remedial action which succeeded in improving attainment at GCSE, including girls in 2009. Outcomes are only satisfactory at the moment as there is still work to do to further improve attainment in mathematics at Key Stage 4, which is why attainment is judged to be low overall. Staffing issues in mathematics have now been resolved. The good work of the specialist science college staff is raising attainment and improving the profile of mathematics and science in the school, the community and in local primary schools.

Another reason for the slower progress in some subjects is due to the variability in the quality of teaching. During the inspection, whilst none of the teaching observed was unsatisfactory, too much did not contain sufficiently engaging or exciting learning activities to motivate and inspire students. However, this was not the case in the sixth form where teaching was consistently better.

The management of the school at all levels has demonstrated that it has the capacity to act on identified issues and make the necessary improvements. For example, the headteacher took on a substantial mathematics teaching commitment in 2008/09 and successfully helped to raise attainment in mathematics. However, this reduced the time he had to strategically manage the school and as a result, some essential documents such as the school development plan are insufficiently robust.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Raise attainment in Key Stage 4 to at least the national average by increasing the percentage of students attaining 5 A* - C grades, including English and mathematics.
- Improve the overall quality of teaching and learning to at least good in the main school by ensuring that learning activities are more exciting, challenging and engaging.
- Create a strategic development plan with measurable targets and regular milestones that identifies the few key areas that will raise attainment and can be used by governors, staff and parents to measure the progress the school is making.

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 students

3

In recent years, attainment has been below the national average for students in Year 11, particularly in mathematics, although in many subjects, for example, history and dance, attainment has been above average. Test results show that boys have consistently performed better than girls. Provisional results for 2009 indicate that mathematics has improved considerably, the percentage of students making the expected rate of progress having doubled. These 2009 provisional results also show that girls are now doing as well as boys. This represents a satisfactory improvement in progress although attainment is still low overall, particularly in mathematics and English.

Students with different ethnic backgrounds or with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar rates of progress to other students. There is no significant variation in the progress between different groups of students although more able students have attained better than others given their relative starting points.

Students are enthusiastic about school and state that they enjoy lessons, particularly where they are presented with a range of suitably challenging, varied activities. Students across all years benefit from the variety of activities and experiences which the school provides, locally, nationally and abroad. Students show that they have an increasing awareness of and respect for others' beliefs.

The school has worked hard to make improvements in students' behaviour, and as a result, it is now consistently good throughout the school. The school manages attendance more effectively now and several strategies are in place to support students whose attendance was previously poor. Attendance is now broadly average compared with other schools. The school's flexible approach has enabled

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arrangements to be tailored to suit the needs of each individual student. A particular strength is students' awareness of how to stay safe and the way in which they also show concern for each other on and between the two school sites. Students say that any issues concerning threats to personal safety are rare, readily reported and dealt with swiftly, either by members of staff or by older students in positions of authority.

These are the grades for students' outcomes

| | |
|--|---|
| Students' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning | 3 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Students' attainment ¹ | 4 |
| The quality of students' learning and their progress | 3 |
| The quality of learning for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress | 3 |
| The extent to which students feel safe | 2 |
| Students' behaviour | 2 |
| The extent to which students adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which students contribute to the school and wider community | 3 |
| The extent to which students develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 3 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Students' attendance ¹ | 3 |
| The extent of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |

How effective is the provision?

An overall satisfactory rate of learning for students from Year 7 to Year 11 masks significant variations. Some outstanding lessons were seen during the inspection where students made excellent progress because:

- a wide range of methods and resources were used, including computers and practical activities
- students were encouraged to interact with each other, through discussion, debate and role-play
- teachers asked probing questions, listened carefully to students' responses and used their ideas to adjust and develop the lesson.

In the less successful lessons:

- the pace of delivery was slow and unenthusiastic

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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- there was little variety in the teaching methods used
- students were too passive, having limited opportunities to discuss their ideas
- teachers missed opportunities to assess the students' understanding and use their ideas to move learning forward.

Excellent relationships in the classroom help students get the most out of lessons, and behaviour is good and sometimes outstanding because of this. Some good quality marking in students' books gives useful pointers for improvement but too often it is simply ticks and crosses, offering no guidance. The use of assessment data to improve progress is also inconsistent.

The curriculum offers a broad range of learning opportunities within and beyond lessons, with plenty of opportunities for students to engage in sport, drama, music and the arts. As one parent said: 'the school has offered my daughter so many opportunities to improve'. Residential trips, for example a recent rugby tour to South Africa, also offer good personal enrichment opportunities.

Recent steps have been taken to remedy the weaknesses in citizenship and design and technology identified by previous subject inspection visits. Improved curriculum plans are in place for both subjects, but it is too early to judge their impact on learning and personal development.

The school provides a good standard of care for all its students and has gone to exceptional lengths to help the most vulnerable students and disadvantaged families. This has resulted in some students who would otherwise have been totally disaffected with school becoming fully engaged, increasing their chances of personal fulfilment and success.

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 students' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships | 3 |
| The effectiveness of care, guidance and support | 2 |

How effective are leadership and management?

The leadership team is committed in its drive to improve the quality of provision. New appointments have been made to key senior roles, for example an assistant headteacher post has been created to improve the consistency of middle management. Sharing of good practice between departments is becoming more embedded. Through systematic departmental review with a member of the senior leadership team, middle managers at all levels are identifying areas for improvement

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and being held to account. Current development plans are not sharp enough and do not identify enough measurable success criteria.

Governors are becoming more confident in their roles and are beginning to provide increasing challenge to the leadership team, especially concerning attainment in mathematics. The school has been strongly committed to equality of opportunity for a number of years, ensuring that the performance of different groups of students is monitored carefully and subsequent support is provided to students and their parents. The Black and Asian support group is a good example where parents meet to discuss how they can best support their child. Safeguarding procedures meet current requirements and effective systems are in place to ensure the safety of students. All staff are appropriately trained and execute duties and responsibilities effectively. Child protection issues are very well managed, although governors are not sufficiently informed about these matters. Inter-agency collaboration is strong. One external stakeholder remarked, 'Wrenn never gives up on its students'. Students whose circumstances cause them to become vulnerable are carefully identified and receive amended and appropriate provision.

The school's work to promote community cohesion in the wider community has been established for a number of years although the school does not sufficiently monitor the effectiveness of its actions on the different groups represented throughout the community. The school communicates effectively with parents and carers and actively seeks their views.

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 | 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 | 3 |
| 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

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This is an outstanding sixth form and increasing numbers of students choose to continue their education in the school. The school's commendably inclusive approach means that some students enter the sixth form with below average standards. Due to the outstanding teaching, students learn very well and make rapid progress during their time in school. Students speak highly of the excellent teaching and feel teachers go out of their way, often giving up their own time, to support their learning needs. Teachers make lessons stimulating and challenging by involving and encouraging students to develop their independent learning skills and to take responsibility for their own learning. Students believe this helps them become confident, mature and responsible adults who have the skills and abilities to progress easily into higher education or work.

Overall, the students' personal development is outstanding. They enjoy school, behave in an exemplary manner and make an excellent contribution to the school and wider community. They act as excellent role models and younger students appreciate their support and guidance. Students value the outstanding care, guidance and support they receive, especially the way the school monitors their progress and helps them improve their work. Support with the university application process and transition arrangements to higher education are exemplary.

Students are also highly supportive of each other, the result being a caring, working environment where they can thrive and do their very best. Expectations are high and a good proportion of students progress into higher education and employment. The leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding. Leaders have a clear vision, a commitment to continual improvement and are responsive to the needs of students who, in return, feel valued and respected.

These are the grades for the sixth form

| | |
|---|---|
| Overall effectiveness of the sixth form | 1 |
| Taking into account: | 1 |
| Outcomes for students in the sixth form | 1 |
| The quality of provision in the sixth form | 1 |
| Leadership and management of the sixth form | 1 |

Views of parents and carers

276 parental questionnaires were received by the inspection team. The response of parents was that the school is generally doing a good job. One commented, 'The school always listens to any concerns and acts upon them'. Parents are happy to send their children to Wrenn School and are particularly impressed with the care they receive and the opportunities provided such as extra-curricular clubs and activities. Many expressed how their child had grown in confidence since attending Wrenn. There were 225 totally positive questionnaires and 51 parents who disagreed with one or more of the statements. Of the negative responses the largest area of

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concern was bullying. Inspectors investigated this area of concern thoroughly through discussion with students and parents, who all reported that bullying is rare and when reported is very well dealt with by the school. In such cases, support is provided to parents as well as students.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of students registered at Wrenn School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received and read 276 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. There was not tremendous variance between views expressed. A sample of 160 questionnaires was used to produce the data below. Responses to some questions were left blank, so numbers will not round. In total, there are 1517 students registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|-----|-------|-----|----------|-----|-------------------|----|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 56 | 35% | 95 | 59% | 8 | 5% | 1 | 0% |
| The school keeps my child safe | 47 | 29% | 108 | 68% | 3 | 2% | 1 | 1% |
| The school informs me about my child’s progress | 63 | 39% | 91 | 57% | 3 | 2% | 1 | 1% |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 48 | 30% | 102 | 64% | 6 | 4% | 2 | 1% |
| The teaching is good at this school | 41 | 26% | 107 | 67% | 8 | 5% | 2 | 1% |
| The school helps me to support my child’s learning | 39 | 24% | 104 | 65% | 12 | 8% | 2 | 1% |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 36 | 23% | 111 | 69% | 10 | 6% | 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) | 42 | 26% | 107 | 67% | 7 | 4% | 2 | 1% |
| The school meets my child’s particular needs | 38 | 24% | 110 | 69% | 7 | 4% | 2 | 1% |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 43 | 27% | 95 | 59% | 16 | 10% | 2 | 1% |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 36 | 23% | 111 | 69% | 4 | 3% | 2 | 1% |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 53 | 33% | 99 | 62% | 5 | 3% | 1 | 1% |
| Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school | 65 | 41% | 86 | 54% | 6 | 4% | 1 | 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 students' needs. |
| Grade 2 | Good | These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its students well. |
| Grade 3 | Satisfactory | These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its students. |
| 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 students. 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 |
| Student referral units | 7 | 55 | 30 | 7 |
| All schools | 15 | 49 | 32 | 5 |

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 student in their learning, development or training. |
| Attainment: | the standard of the students' 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 students 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 students.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets students' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support. |
| Progress: | the rate at which students are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the students' 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.

18 September 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Wrenn School, Wellingborough NN8 2DQ



Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave to the inspection team when we visited your school in September. We enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work and watching you learn. I thought you would like to know the outcome of the inspection and what you could all do to further improve the school.

It was clear that you and your parents were all proud of the school. When the school was inspected in 2007 inspectors judged it to be satisfactory and this is still the case. The main area of concern for the inspection team is in Key Stage 4 where many of you could do a lot better, especially in English and mathematics. These are very important subjects and all employers would like you to have these two subjects as well as some others too. The sixth form is outstanding and very popular in the area. A lot of sixth formers take on leadership roles and this helps them give something back to the school community. More of you should offer to take on a leadership role. You were well behaved in class and told us how you enjoy coming to school. Your attendance has improved over the last few years and for the first time is nearly the same as the national average. You must all try to attend regularly, as absence from school means that you will get behind with your work and find it hard to catch up. There are lots of opportunities for you to join in with clubs after school, like sport and the arts, and all of you should consider joining at least one.

We were impressed with how hard so many people work on your behalf - all the adults in the school as well as outside professionals. They all make sure you get a lot of help if you need it.

In order to improve Wrenn School, I have asked your headteacher and senior staff to do the following things:

- improve your GCSE results in English and mathematics
- improve the learning activities in lessons so they are more exciting and challenging
- write a plan with targets and dates that shows how the school is going to improve your exam results. The plan should help governors and parents measure the progress being made.

I wish you all the best of success in your future time at Wrenn.

Clive Kempton HMI
Her Majesty's Inspector

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