

Wade Deacon High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111435
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	364568
Inspection dates	29–30 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Jane Austin 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,597
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Woodroofe
Executive headteacher	Pamela Wright OBE
Head of School	Jan Gormley
Date of previous school inspection	14 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 39 lessons taught by 39 teachers, as well as seven sessions delivered by visitors as part of a special day focused on citizenship. They held meetings with senior leaders, staff, members of the governing body, parents and carers, students and the School Improvement Partner. Inspectors also met with representatives of schools and organisations with which the school works in partnership. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation, including data regarding students' progress, departmental self-evaluations and procedures for safeguarding students. Inspectors analysed 352 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, as well as 66 completed by staff and 157 responses from students.

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

- The progress and attainment of students were analysed, focusing on whether these have improved for students who joined the school from its federated partner in September 2010.
- Teaching and the use of assessment were evaluated to check whether the school's view that these have improved in quality and effectiveness since the previous inspection, is accurate.
- The success with which the school is melding into a cohesive community was explored.

Information about the school

The school, which is much larger than most secondary schools, is currently over-subscribed. Almost all students are White British, with a very small number from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Almost all students speak English as their first language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is slightly higher than average. The percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the proportion with a statement of special educational needs, are below average. The school makes specialist provision for hearing impaired students. It has specialist status in technology, mathematics and computing and is a Training School. It has gained a very wide array of awards in recognition of strengths across many aspects of its work. For instance, the school is acknowledged as a High Performing Specialist School, an Investor in People and an Investor in Community Engagement. It holds International School and Healthy School status. It has reached the diamond Cultural Diversity Quality Standard and, as well as Sportsmark, has been awarded Artsmark gold.

As a consequence of the executive headteacher's role as a National Leader in Education, the school works in partnership with a significant number of primary and secondary schools in the region.

Between 2008 and 2010, the school was in a hard federation with a local high school which closed in July 2010 due to falling rolls. Students from this school joined Wade Deacon at the beginning of this academic year. The school currently operates on two sites and this arrangement will continue until the completion of its new building, planned for 2013.

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? 1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement 1

Main findings

Wade Deacon High School provides an outstanding education for its students and lives up to its aim of being 'committed to excellence' in all aspects of its work. Students' attainment is high and their achievement is outstanding, not only in academic terms but also in the way they develop into mature, well-rounded young people who work hard and enjoy all that the school has to offer them.

Very careful planning, with an exacting attention to detail, has enabled the two school communities to come together as one with the minimum of disruption to students' learning. Students say they feel safe and very much part of a single school where all are valued and have equal opportunities to participate and succeed. This smooth transition exemplifies the outstanding way the school promotes community cohesion, not only internally but also through its extensive local, national and international partnerships. Far from losing ground as a consequence of the changes, progress has accelerated for a significant number of students. This is the result of outstanding teaching, a stimulating curriculum tailored to students' needs, and regular tracking of all aspects of students' progress.

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The executive headteacher and head of school are relentless in their pursuit of excellence for the school and its students. They have imbued the school with a strong sense of moral purpose and been successful in fostering an ethos where the very best is always expected and continuous improvement is a watchword. Leadership at all levels is strong and very well supported by extensive, well-targeted professional development – a hallmark of the school's work. The school's self-evaluation is rigorous and its planning robust. As a consequence, the school has improved markedly since its previous inspection and has no major areas for improvement at this time. Governance is outstanding. The governors, now constituted as a new governing body, have seen the school smoothly through its period of change and are working assiduously to bring the new build to fruition. The school has outstanding capacity to improve and provides outstanding value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

The school's outstanding performance means that there are no areas requiring substantial improvement. Highly effective self-evaluation, rigorous planning and outstanding capacity to improve have resulted in very sharply targeted actions to

develop its work even further. Consequently, no areas for improvement are identified in this report.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

From attainment which is broadly average when they join the school in Year 7, students make outstanding progress to reach high standards. All groups of students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make excellent rates of progress. The school's very robust data show that the well-established trend of high attainment and outstanding progress for Wade Deacon students has been sustained and extended to all students. A number of factors combine to secure this success. The school has very high expectations of its students and sets extremely demanding individual targets for them in all subjects. Regular, accurate checking of students' progress towards these allows any difficulties to be identified quickly and support put in place to help them get back on track. In addition, the school successfully fosters in its students extremely positive attitudes to learning. In lessons they work hard, showing high levels of concentration and application as well as a willingness to take responsibility for their learning. This determination to do well can be seen too in the high levels of attendance at revision sessions and extra classes offered after school, in holidays and on Saturday mornings.

Students are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their lives. Their behaviour is considerate, polite and courteous and their attendance is high. Their very well-developed skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology provide an excellent platform for further study, training or employment. These skills combine very effectively with their high levels of oracy, good listening skills and very well-developed ability to collaborate on tasks and projects. Students make an outstanding contribution to the school and local community: for instance as members of the community cohesion task force; as junior sports leaders; through charitable fundraising; and organising events for pupils at a local special school. These responsibilities contribute very effectively to their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students have a well-rounded understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle, and participation in extra-curricular sports and performing arts activities is high.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1

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

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

How effective is the provision?

Outstanding teaching and a very rich curriculum combine to ensure that students' learning is outstanding. Common features of lessons are: tightly focused plans which encapsulate high expectations of students; teachers' very good subject knowledge; and the very positive relationships both between students and between teachers and students. Opportunities for peer- and self-assessment combine well with consistently effective marking to ensure that students know how well they are learning and what they need to do to improve. In the very best lessons, in-depth, focused questioning helps students to develop their understanding in small, sequential steps. Where lessons are slightly less successful, students have insufficient time to reflect on their learning and too few opportunities to work independently.

The outstanding curriculum is exceptionally well matched to students' needs from the moment they join the school in Year 7. Excellent transition arrangements mean that the school has ample information about students' learning so additional support is provided immediately in literacy and numeracy for those who need it. In Years 7 and 8 strong cross-curricular links, such as those developed through the 'New World' project, support the development of students' skills very well. Students are highly motivated by such relevant learning experiences. At Key Stage 4, students follow a range of pathways, including vocational courses, which are very well tailored to their needs and aspirations. The curriculum is enriched through a very broad range of visits, visitors and links, such as those with the Widnes Vikings. Additionally, five citizenship and enterprise days each year allow students to focus intensively on issues such as human rights and fair trade, and to learn in different ways. The level of participation in the school's extensive range of extra-curricular activities and study opportunities is high. Students appreciate the numerous links with schools abroad, including sustained contacts with schools in Ghana and China, and the opportunities these bring for visits and for learning Mandarin.

The outstanding care, guidance and support for students make a very significant contribution to their first-rate achievement. The robust tracking and analysis of students' behaviour, attendance and effort, as well as of their progress, enable staff to identify any potential barriers to learning quickly and match help to students' needs. For example, one-to-one support for a small number of students has had a positive impact on their learning. Students receive excellent support and guidance as they approach each new stage of their education. The school is very effective in liaising with agencies to gain the appropriate specialist help for students who need it. Links with families are strong and parents and carers of vulnerable students speak movingly of the positive impact of the school's support on their child and family.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The executive headteacher and head of school are expansive in their vision for the school and successful in embedding a culture of self-belief. The school is outward-facing, and works with a wide range of partner schools and universities. This has a positive impact on the partners' provision and performance, as well as bringing a wealth of opportunities for Wade Deacon's staff and students.

Senior leaders' ambition for the school and their drive for improvement are underpinned by thorough-going self-evaluation. Highly coherent, well-integrated and consistently implemented systems for tracking students' progress, performance management and quality assurance ensure an accurate, detailed diagnosis of strengths and any comparative weaknesses. Exemplary planning at all levels helps to drive improvement at pace. There is no complacency about the school's performance, as is evident from the school's extensive programme of professional development. This is the lynchpin of the culture of continuous improvement. There has been a very successful focus on succession planning through, for example, developing leadership at middle level.

Governors are highly committed to the school and bring a wide range of expertise and experience to their roles. The governing body provides a high level of challenge to the school. Procedures for safeguarding students are outstanding. The school's promotion of equal opportunities is also outstanding. Thorough analysis of students' performance, and intervention where required, ensure that all groups perform equally well. The school is proactive in identifying areas of potential inequality and taking action to prevent discrimination and promote inclusion. The school's promotion of community cohesion is outstanding because it has a thorough grasp of its context and is very successful in ensuring that students have opportunities to expand their horizons beyond the mono-cultural community in which they live. Contacts with schools in contrasting areas nationally, as well as extensive, sustained international links make a significant contribution to this.

The school uses a broad range of methods for keeping parents and carers informed about their child's performance. Most recently introduced is web-based access to their child's progress check. The school regularly gathers parents' and carers' views and takes these into account. There are a variety of opportunities for parents and carers to find out what and how their children are learning, including an occasional Saturday morning 'back to school class' taught by students.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
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	1

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers who returned questionnaires is a little higher than average. Their responses to all questions were more positive overall than found nationally. A very small number expressed concerns about the guidance available to parents and carers to help them support their child’s learning; the provision for healthy lifestyles; and the way in which the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found that the school offers a broad range of sessions for parents and carers about learning in various subjects. The very wide range of opportunities for sporting activities, as well the good selection and promotion of healthy options in the school’s cafeterias, contribute very well to students’ well-being. Inspection evidence shows that the school is highly effective in dealing with unacceptable behaviour.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Wade Deacon High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

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

The inspection team received 352 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,597 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	143	41	196	56	10	3	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	191	54	158	45	2	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	230	65	115	33	7	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	176	50	165	47	8	2	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	172	49	169	48	7	2	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	152	43	173	49	23	7	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	102	29	218	62	22	6	2	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)	134	38	191	54	13	4	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	152	43	186	53	9	3	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	152	43	172	49	20	6	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	100	28	220	63	19	5	1	0
The school is led and managed effectively	184	52	153	43	10	3	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	188	53	159	45	2	1	1	0

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 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.



31 March 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Wade Deacon High School, Widnes, WA8 6TE

Thank you very much for making us welcome when we visited your school recently. We are particularly grateful to those students who gave up their time to talk to us about school life. Your views helped us reach our judgement that all aspects of your school are outstanding.

The way in which you have all come together this year as one school is a significant success. The joint activities the school arranged to help you get to know one another, and the very careful arrangements to ensure there has been no disruption to your learning, have worked extremely well. Overall, you make outstanding progress and reach high standards because your teachers are expert at matching work very closely to your learning needs. The 'P2S' system, as well as thorough marking, ensure you always know how well you are doing and can get help if you are falling behind. All the students we spoke to were very appreciative of the many extra sessions your teachers provide to help you do as well as you can. The school provides an outstanding level of care for you and is very good at ensuring that those of you who are experiencing particular difficulties in your lives get the help you need.

You enjoy rich and varied experiences which help you to enjoy and rise to the challenge of learning. There are sometimes special days, such as the one during the inspection focusing on citizenship, which offer different ways of learning including from a wide variety of outside speakers. You can choose from an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, trips and visits. The school's far-reaching international links help to expand your horizons and enrich school life, for instance, through visits to China and opportunities to learn Mandarin. It is evident from your high attendance that you value all the school has to offer you.

We hope you will continue to work hard and do your very best and wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Jane Austin
Her Majesty's Inspector
On behalf of the inspection team

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