

Wilson's School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103007
Local Authority	Sutton
Inspection number	286549
Inspection dates	6 - 7 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Michael Chisnall (HMI)

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

Type of School	Grammar (selective)
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11 -18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School	989
6th form	263
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr S Wisson
Headteacher	Mr D M Charnock
Date of previous school inspection	10 March 2003
School address	Mollison Drive Wallington SM6 9JW
Telephone number	020 8773 2931
Fax number	020 8773 4972

Age group	11 -18
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Inspection Date(s)	6 - 7 June 2007
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors. At the time of the inspection, Years 11, 12 and 13 were on examination leave.

Description of the school

Wilson's is an average sized school that draws its students from a very wide area. On entry to the school, students' attainment is well above average, representing its selective nature. The proportions of students with learning difficulties or disabilities and those eligible for free school meals are well below average. Around half the students are from minority ethnic heritages. About one in three has English as an additional language although none is at an early stage of language acquisition. The school has specialist status for mathematics and computing and, very recently, for the arts (media).

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Wilson's is an outstanding school that deserves its high reputation. This is how the school sees itself, a view shared by the vast majority of the large number of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire. One parent summed up the school well by noting of their son, 'Wilson's has helped him realise his potential and given him a life-long love for learning'.

There are several features that contribute to this very strong picture, not least of which is the excellent leadership provided by the headteacher and the senior management team. Together with very effective middle managers, they have made sure that there is a constant drive for improvement, both in academic standards and in the personal development of students. The school has been successful in providing a teaching team of a high standard. With high levels of subject expertise, teachers provide students with lessons that are interesting, enjoyable and intellectually challenging. As a result, students make excellent gains in their learning, enjoy school and attend very well indeed. Their attitudes to school are very positive; as one student commented, 'I am proud of my school, its history, tradition and heritage'. The behaviour of almost all the students is excellent and they are developing into very well-rounded young citizens with a strong commitment to service in the community.

The curriculum in all parts of the school has been very well designed to meet the needs and aspirations of students. The accelerated Key Stage 3 programme and the broad range of study in Key Stage 4 give students first-class opportunities to extend their knowledge and skills across a range of subject disciplines. The excellent programme of extra-curricular opportunities enables students to pursue interests to a significant degree, whether in sports, music, drama or public speaking. Students' progress is tracked very carefully so that high quality support can be provided for those at risk of not reaching their potential. Students recognise that some of the marking of their work is not as helpful as it might be. There is room for improvement in the consistency with which feedback and advice is given to them.

The many excellent features of provision have brought about a school in which students' attainment is exceptional. They reach standards that are outstanding, especially in mathematics, demonstrating the impact of the school's specialism in this area. The progress they make is excellent, showing a determination to learn that is tangible. At the last inspection, the school was found to be 'outstandingly effective'. It has continued to improve since then, with higher academic standards and still stronger teaching. Weaknesses in information and communication technology (ICT) and accommodation have been fully addressed. The school offers outstanding value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Attainment on entry to the sixth form is very high and includes a small number of students who join from other schools. The sixth form provides a broad, flexible curriculum with a well-judged balance of academic and applied options that meets the expressed needs of its students to enter higher education or the world of work.

Excellent support and guidance are provided for students, almost all of whom stay to complete GCE A levels. Teaching in the sixth form is outstanding. Students make excellent progress and achieve results that are among the highest levels nationally. Almost all of them continue into higher education. Sixth formers take on a very wide range of responsibilities and make a highly valued contribution to the life of the school. They develop personal skills and a sense of responsibility

both to themselves and the wider community. The school has a clear vision for reviewing and further developing its provision to meet the developing needs of its students.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure greater consistency in the way that students are given advice and feedback on their work

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Students make excellent progress and attain standards that are exceptionally high. Their achievement is outstanding. Following a two year Key Stage 3 programme, Year 8 students achieve very well in the national tests for 14 year olds with most achieving the highest levels. Attainment is impressive in science and exceptional in mathematics. Although standards in English have not been quite as high, they are improving; students are making good progress and far more of them are reaching the highest levels.

Exceptional progress is made by Key Stage 4 students with the majority gaining A* and A grades at GCSE. Standards and achievement in mathematics and the sciences are particularly strong. In the sixth form, students continue to make excellent progress and standards are very high. Almost all students go on to higher education, the majority being accepted by their first choice of universities. The school's thorough analysis of attainment shows that all groups of students make excellent progress through each key stage. Students achieve well because of the high quality teaching, effective examination preparation and the students' very positive attitudes to learning. When teaching does not result in the highest grades the school acts quickly to identify any issues and takes action to effect rapid improvement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. Students are articulate, responsible and polite and are a credit to the school and their parents. Their attendance is excellent and they enjoy coming to school because, as they remarked, 'School is fun. We meet friends and enjoy learning!'. The school is a harmonious community and friendships across racial groups are strong. Relationships with adults and each other are of high quality, showing mutual respect. Lunch and break times are enjoyable social occasions when students spend time together chatting and participating amicably in games, demonstrating their very well developed social skills.

Students know how to live a healthy lifestyle and choose healthy lunches and snacks, supported by excellent catering facilities. They also take part in a large number of sporting activities. Their behaviour is excellent in lessons and around the school. Students feel safe in school and acknowledge that bullying or name-calling is rare. They are proud members of the school community and make a major contribution to it in many ways, such as acting as prefects or sixth form mentors. Students are very well aware of those less fortunate than themselves and take a lead in collecting funds for

charities. For example, they raise money for a multiple sclerosis centre through the Tough Guy competition. They are well prepared for the world of the work, through outstanding skills in numeracy, very high attainment in other areas and high levels of personal responsibility.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding overall, including the sixth form. The school's senior leaders demonstrate an excellent knowledge of the quality of teaching in each department; their judgements are accurate. Almost all the lessons observed by inspectors were either outstanding or good. Teachers are passionate about their subject, demonstrate excellent subject knowledge, make very good use of the available resources and have very high expectations of students. They present students with real intellectual challenge that spurs them on.

Teachers also know their students thoroughly and plan lessons that incorporate a variety of approaches that meet students' needs and aspirations very well indeed. Overall, marking is good but can vary between subjects; occasionally, teachers do not give students enough constructive feedback on their work. Students respond very positively to the high proportion of outstanding teaching, displaying much enjoyment and interest. They make exceptional gains in their skills, knowledge and understanding, leading to outstanding achievement and a love of learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum throughout the school is outstanding and shows thoughtful and innovative approaches in meeting the needs and aspirations of students. For instance, the shortened Key Stage 3 curriculum allows the school to provide greater depth and enrichment in Key Stage 4, leading to greater intellectual challenge. In addition, the breadth of study is an excellent feature, enabling students to study classics and business studies, for instance. Careers education and guidance are very good and support students in making informed choices about further education and subsequent careers.

In the sixth form, courses are provided in response to students' interests, resulting in a choice of over 50 programmes. All students follow a course in either general studies or critical thinking that widens their academic understanding. An effective personal development programme produces young citizens with highly developed personal qualities.

The outstanding extra-curricular programme, including the combined cadet force, provides a wide range of sporting and artistic endeavours as well as the opportunity for service to the community both at home and abroad. This is complemented by an impressive programme of visits linked to the curriculum. For instance, the residential visit to Talybont field studies centre in Year 7 enables students to build inter-personal skills at the same time as undertaking practical work in geography and many other subjects. The curriculum has benefited greatly from the mathematics and computing specialist status; for example, ICT is used very well to enhance learning across subjects. It is too early to judge the impact of the very recent arts designation.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support offered by the school are outstanding. The school's robust systems ensure that excellent academic and personal guidance go hand in hand. Monitoring and tracking of students' progress is highly effective and the school uses the information rigorously to improve standards still further. Students throughout the school are set challenging targets and supported effectively to achieve them. Those identified as underachieving are appropriately challenged and are offered additional support. Needs of the small number of students who have learning difficulties are identified early and excellent intervention supports their learning and progress extremely well.

Extensive steps are taken to ensure students' safety, with rigorous staff vetting procedures. Risk assessments are rigorous and child protection procedures are firmly embedded. Vulnerable students and those at risk are sensitively supported; students have a range of adults, including a school counsellor, to whom they can turn if they experience problems. A few parents expressed a view that the school does not take enough account of students' views. Students did not feel that this was the case. They are given an increasingly strong voice through the school and year councils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding and are key factors in the school's success in enabling the students to achieve so well. The headteacher's leadership is excellent and complemented by a first-rate senior management team. Although the school is highly effective, they are not complacent and demonstrate a relentless focus on improving provision and standards of achievement still further. This drive for continued excellence is shared by middle managers, such as heads of department and year managers. Between them, their knowledge of how well students make progress and develop as individuals is exceedingly thorough, so that they are able to set an agenda to target potential underachievement. For instance, staffing and curriculum changes in English are enabling more students to gain the highest levels in Key Stage 3 and more A* and A grades in GCSE examinations.

The management of the sixth form is outstanding because every student is effectively supported and the curriculum is being constantly reviewed and developed. The range of activities both in and out of school enables students to develop their personal skills and attributes very successfully.

The mathematics and computing specialism has enabled the school to extend its work in these areas and to demonstrate excellence in achievement. For example, there are good mathematic links with local primary and secondary schools. ICT has become an integral part of the work of all departments, an improvement since the last inspection. The school has set itself challenging targets for this specialism, which it is meeting, and for the new arts specialism.

The governing body provides very good support to the school and holds it to account for its performance very well indeed. It is an active 'critical friend' to the school and its senior managers. The budget is managed prudently and used effectively to bring about significant improvements to the accommodation. The school has a robust track record of development and is extremely well placed to bring about further improvements.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	NA	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interest of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Annex B



Letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection.

18 June 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Wilson's School, Wallington, SM6 9JW

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you extended to the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed our visit and very much valued the opportunities we had to talk with you in lessons and around the school, although we were sorry not to have met the sixth form or Year 11. Your views were very helpful to us as we made our judgements. I want to tell you about these judgements.

Wilson's is an outstanding school in every way. Firstly, this is because you work very hard in lessons, make rapid gains in your learning and achieve standards in SATs, GCSEs, AS and A levels that are very high and among the best to be found anywhere. Not only are your academic standards very high, but also the standard of your personal development is also excellent. We found you to be very polite and confident. Behaviour in and around the school is excellent. We were also impressed by the commitment you show to learning; you take it seriously and endeavour to do your best. That is excellent preparation for university and the world of employment.

The headteacher and the senior team lead the school very well indeed. They, and other managers in the school, track your progress very thoroughly and know exactly what to do if any of you need help. They also know where improvements can be made to help you learn even more effectively, such as helping more of you get higher grades in your English tests and exams. They and the governors have worked hard to make sure that the mathematics and computing specialism makes a real difference to the curriculum. The shortened Key Stage 3 programme and the enriched Key Stage 4 curriculum help you to make the most of your abilities, whether in lessons or in other activities such as sport and music. The range of sixth form options is very good.

Your teachers are very skilled and provide you with lessons that are interesting and challenging; they expect you to work hard and you do. You told us that some of the marking of your work is not as helpful as it might be. We agree and have asked the senior staff to look at ways of making that more consistent for you.

Many of you and your parents told us how proud you are of the school. We think that you are entirely justified in your views. We wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Chisnall HMI