

Wymondham College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121208
Local Authority	NORFOLK LA
Inspection number	313920
Inspection date	21 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Ian Seath HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
College	1055
6th form	363
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Rout
Headteacher	Mr Melvyn Roffe
Date of previous college inspection	1 March 2004
College address	Golf Links Road Wymondham Norfolk NR18 9SZ
Telephone number	01953 609000
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector over a period of one day.

Inspectors investigated the following areas in detail: achievement and standards, teaching and learning, leadership and management, and the sixth form. Evidence was evaluated from a number of sources which included classroom observations, the school's self-evaluation form (SEF), published assessment data, interviews with students and staff, and completed parental questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence that the school's own judgements as given its self-evaluation form were incorrect, and these have been included in the report where appropriate. The school has a large boarding provision which was not specifically inspected, although actions which have resulted from the recent Commission for Social Care (CSCI) inspection were evaluated.

Description of the college

Wymondham college is a large school. It has a large boarding provision with around half of its students living on site during term time. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is low. The proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities is low, and the number from minority ethnic groups is much lower than the national average. Attendance rates are very high, and the proportion of unauthorised absences virtually nil. The school has specialist status in technology and languages.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the college

Grade: 1

'It's cool to learn at Wymondham College,' said one student; a comment echoed by many parents. Wymondham College is an outstanding school which, for many years, has created an ethos in which students and staff have high expectations and work very successfully to achieve them. Outstanding support, good teaching, and excellent learning combine with an environment which is well resourced to enable students to demonstrate excellent progress at all stages of their school life. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and the many completed questionnaires received by inspectors gave many accounts of individual success. Students feel safe and well cared for. They have good relationships both with their peers and with teachers. An extensive extra-curricular provision enables good team-building and enjoyment outside normal school hours. The few areas for improvement identified in the recent CSCI inspection have now been rigorously addressed.

Achievement and standards are outstanding, within the top few per cent nationally. Students enter the school with higher than average prior attainment, and high aspiration. They achieve standards well above expectations and successfully meet challenging targets. Progress is excellent in all key stages, and improved further in 2007. In this year all students achieved five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, and 90% when English and Mathematics are taken into account. The proportion of students achieving the highest grades A* and A is well above the national average for all subjects. These successes continue into the sixth form, though the variability between the success gained in individual subjects is much more pronounced than in GCSE. Students benefit from the school's specialist status.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Pastoral guidance and support for boarding and non-boarding students are extensive. A very effective tutor system helps teachers and staff get to know students very well and is highly regarded by students. Regular progress reviews and performance tracking systems further extend information about how well students are doing and what type of specific help and support they may need. Additional support can be provided for students' emotional and physical welfare through college counsellors and by liaison with a range of other local authority agencies and health authorities with whom the college has close contacts. Excellent medical support and health advice is provided by the onsite medical centre and through the links with a local medical practice. Very good procedures ensure child protection and health and safety. Greater emphasis is being given to supporting the transition of younger students from their primary schools to the college. The college offers exceptional support to students in finding university placements, but more could be done for students who are not seeking this pathway in their careers.

Students' personal development is outstanding. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. Students are polite and smart and take full responsibility for their own learning. Students are made aware of how to lead healthy and safe lives through an effective programme of physical education and personal, social and health education. They have strong moral values and a good understanding of other cultures. The school has a large chapel and resident chaplain.

Teaching and learning are good. Many lessons challenge students well and offer a range of activities that are interesting and motivating. They are very highly motivated and learn very well. Lesson planning prepares students well for how they will learn, however there is much inconsistency across the school. Plans do not always cater for different abilities and often place too much emphasis on the teaching rather than learning. Assessment practice is too inconsistent

across the school. Opportunities for students to assess their own progress and that of others are increasingly used as teachers become aware of the need to focus more strongly on progress. In the most successful lessons the use of target setting has been embedded. Excellent relationships and teachers' good knowledge of students helps to give them the confidence they need to reach their potential. Students and staff have high expectations and excellent behaviour ensures that students concentrate well on their learning. The school's evaluation of its own teaching and learning is extensive. However the lesson observation system does not pay sufficient attention to the learning which takes place rather than the teaching. Though some aspects of good practice are shared across the school this could usefully be extended further.

The curriculum is outstanding. It reflects very well students' aspirations for academic success. Students have access to an extensive range of subject options taught to GCSE and A level. All national requirements are met. Curriculum planning provides activities that students enjoy and helps to ensure students' safety and improve their awareness of healthy lifestyles. The school has well developed links with other institutions, particularly through its specialist technology and languages status. Links with local further education colleges are less well developed.

Leadership and management are outstanding because they successfully instil clear values in students which result in outstanding achievements and standards. The school has been through a period of senior leadership change in recent years, and the appointment of the new head has done much to give the school a new direction. He is well supported by staff and ably assisted by senior managers. However some aspects of management, particularly concerning some elements of quality assurance are too variable. For example, at departmental level, targets for improvement are sometimes too vague or not defined at all. The school's self evaluation form (SEF) is accurate and recognises the issues facing the school.

Governors are well informed about the school and bring a number of strengths to their roles. Governance is very effective and has successfully guided the school through a period of major building improvement whilst maintaining good financial management. The school has demonstrated outstanding capacity to improve. Most of the issues identified in the last report have been addressed, although some inconsistencies of assessment remain. Value for money is outstanding

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Provision for the large number of sixth form students is outstanding. Most students from Year 11 stay on at the school, to be joined by many from other schools. Standards of care and support are very high, and accommodation and study facilities very good. Sixth form students take their studies very seriously and demonstrate outstanding commitment to success resulting in excellent progress and achievements. Almost all students progress to university, most to their first choice institution. Sixth form students are very extensively involved in the life of the school, and provide excellent role models for younger students. Academic support is excellent, and is supported by an effective tutorial system which bridges the divide between GCSEs and A levels well. The sixth form is well managed. An excellent range of activities, visits, and sports enriches students' experience.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 8

What the college should do to improve further

- Improve target-setting and self-evaluation at departmental level.
- Develop the extent to which best practice in teaching and learning is identified and shared across the school.

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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	College 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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the college work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of boarding provision	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	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	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	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.

Annex A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the college's self-evaluation	2	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 college require special measures?	No	
Does this college require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

22 November 2007

Dear Students,

Inspection of Wymondham College, Norfolk NR18 9SZ

Recently I spent a day in your school with another inspector. We visited many of your classes, looked at your work and talked with some of you. Throughout our day you were courteous and helpful, and I would like to thank you for this.

Your school has many strengths and one of them is you. We were impressed with your attitudes to learning and the maturity and determination with which you approach your studies. Because of this the vast majority of you succeed and achieve very high standards in examinations.

You told us many good things about the school. You said you feel safe and well cared for and that you enjoy your time at the school. You told us that it was cool to learn at Wymondham College, and that you enjoyed the extensive sports and extra-curricular activities. Those of you who are boarders were also happy with the standard of care. There is a feeling of community in the school and your parents were overwhelmingly supportive and pleased with the progress you make.

We have asked the school to make two improvements to help you succeed even better. We have suggested that the school improves the ways that it shares good teaching practice between subjects, as well as the ways in which it monitors its own success.

One of the most important things you told us is that the amount of bullying is low, and that it is dealt with effectively when it is reported. You can help to keep it low by talking to a teacher if you are affected, or see anybody who is suffering because of it.

We wish you every success, and thank you once again.

Yours sincerely

Ian Seath Her Majesty's Inspector