

# Woodhouse High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124421
<b>Local Authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	329606
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8 – 9 December 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Graham Sims

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11-18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	1067
Sixth form	104
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Iain Dougall
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Phil Hogg
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 February 2007
<b>School address</b>	Highfield Avenue Amington Tamworth Staffordshire B77 3JB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01827 301800
<b>Fax number</b>	01827 475636

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<b>Age group</b>	11-18
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	8 – 9 December 2008
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Woodhouse High School is a specialist college for business education and enterprise. Its students are drawn from a wide range of social backgrounds, but there are very few from minority ethnic backgrounds.

When the school was last inspected at the end of February 2007, it was failing to give its students an adequate standard of education and was deemed to require special measures. The school's senior leadership team and middle management structure have changed completely over the last four terms. The current headteacher took up post in an acting capacity in June 2007 and in a permanent capacity in May 2008.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

**Grade: 3**

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. Under the excellent leadership of the current headteacher, Woodhouse High School has improved hugely over the last four terms. The school's overall effectiveness is now satisfactory, and much of the school's provision is good.

The headteacher's drive and determination, her very clear focus on improving the quality of education, and her ability to motivate staff have resulted in significant improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, systems of assessment and academic guidance, the quality of leadership and management and, hence, on students' achievement. Although a few complain that some of the work they are given is still too easy for them, the students are overwhelmingly positive in their views of the school. They speak appreciatively of the improvements in teaching, their better understanding of how well they are progressing and the care provided by the staff. The staff are equally enthusiastic as they talk about how much better the school now is. They are pleased that their hard work and response to guidance from senior staff and the local authority's consultants have been crucial factors in this transformation.

Students of all abilities have made good progress in most subjects over the last year. They have caught up lost ground so that their overall achievement is now satisfactory and much closer to where it ought to be. Standards of attainment are just below the national average when students enter the school and remain at this level in most year groups. The proportion of students achieving five GCSE passes at grades A\* to C has risen dramatically over the last two years and was just above the national average in 2008. However, the progress of some students in English, and to a lesser extent in mathematics, is still of concern and remains a priority for improvement. Useful initiatives have been introduced to improve the literacy levels of those who are furthest behind in English, but not enough is done in other subjects to reinforce and develop literacy skills through oral work in lessons and students' written assignments.

A much clearer focus on key aspects of teaching, such as consistent lesson planning and the formulation of clear objectives for each lesson, has been a crucial element in securing better achievement. The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Much of the teaching is now good, although some lessons still lack the pace, challenge and interest which is characteristic of the better lessons. Students are assessed regularly in each subject, and the resulting information provides senior staff and heads of faculty with a very clear picture of how well students are progressing in each subject and identifies any who are underachieving. Not all staff, however, make full use of this information when planning their lessons to ensure they meet the needs of their students.

The students have also played their part in improving the school, and their personal development and well-being are now good. Behaviour in lessons has improved markedly, and students really do not like their lessons being interrupted by inappropriate behaviour now. The great majority of students show a real desire to learn and improve. Many students play a very full part in the life of the school,

contributing well to the school's good efforts to play a central role in the life of the local and wider communities. This is seen to very good effect in the outworking of the school's status as a specialist college for business education and enterprise. Meaningful and engaging business activities not only permeate many subjects of the curriculum, but also result in whole-school enterprise days and very good partnerships with feeder primary schools and the local community.

Good leadership and management have been much in evidence from the school's senior staff, heads of faculty and governors. Their self-evaluation has been rigorous and there has been a purposeful drive to deal with the main issues which faced the school following its last inspection. Term by term, the development plans have been refined and improved, and there has been a real drive to reach very challenging targets. Through all of the changes that have been made, the rising standards, the improving behaviour and the purposeful ethos, there is now ample demonstration that the school has good capacity for further improvement.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

## **Grade 3**

The effectiveness of the sixth form, outcomes in terms of students' achievement and personal development and well-being, and the quality of educational provision mirror what is found in the rest of the school. The sixth form is part of a consortium of schools and colleges which gives students access to a very broad range of examination courses and experiences. Students feel very happy with their chosen courses and the support they receive.

Effective working relationships among the participating schools, underpinned by good communications and by good academic tracking, support and guidance, are helping to improve students' progress. Over the last four terms, there has been a noticeable improvement in overall standards, which are broadly average and reflect satisfactory achievement. The quality of teaching and learning, whilst satisfactory overall, is also improving, reflecting the changes in methodology and teachers' growing awareness of their accountability for the progress of each student which are evident in the main part of the school.

The students' visibility and presence around the school, their engagement in enterprise activities, and their participation in school councils makes them good role models for younger students. The students are very pleased to be included in decision making.

Despite undergoing a number of changes over the last two years, the leadership and management of the sixth form have been good. Areas for improvement have been correctly identified, and effective action has been taken to address them. Students speak very positively of their life in the sixth form and appreciate the efforts made by the school to cater for their needs and to be responsive to their suggestions.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Help students to develop their literacy skills through the teaching of all subjects, by developing students' oral responses in class and improving the quality of their written assignments.

- Identify where the pace of lessons, and the level of challenge and interest for the students are lacking, and then provide the necessary support to improve the quality of the teaching to match what is seen in good and outstanding lessons.
- Ensure that all teachers take account of assessment data when planning lessons, to identify where groups of students need further support or greater challenge.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 3**

Students have made much better progress over the last four terms than they were making prior to the school's last inspection. As a result, they have caught up lost ground and their achievement in all key stages is now satisfactory.

Data from the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2008 is still incomplete, but the school's own assessments show that standards at the end of this year have risen slightly since the last inspection and are broadly average.

The picture of improvement is much more marked at the end of Year 11. In 2008, 68% of students achieved five GCSE passes at grades A\* to C compared with 40% in 2006. This was just above the national average. However, although the proportion gaining five such passes including functional English and mathematics rose significantly in 2008, this proportion was still below average. Science results have improved dramatically since the implementation of a new BTEC course. Mathematics results, whilst still below average, improved for the second year running. English results also improved, but are still much lower than they ought to be given students' prior attainment.

Although still below the national average, standards in the sixth form showed a marked improvement in 2008.

The school is determined to continue the improving trend and has set itself very challenging targets in every subject and at every level. Progress against these targets is measured six times a year and corrective action is taken when it is perceived students are not making sufficient progress in a given subject. In 2008, the most able and those with learning difficulties were the most successful in meeting their targets. In a number of subjects, notably science, art and various aspects of design and technology, students exceeded their targets. However, despite the improvements, they failed to meet them in English and mathematics. In terms of the school's specialist subjects, students were particularly successful in office applications and leisure and tourism, but they fell below the challenging targets for business studies and mathematics.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 2**

Students' attitudes to, and enjoyment of, school have improved significantly since the last inspection and are now good. Students' moral and social development is good.

The students have opportunities to influence school policy as they discuss issues and take decisions in the school and year councils, and their views are taken seriously. They also help teachers by analysing strengths in lessons from the learner's point of view. Older students help younger students by acting as prefects or peer mentors. Students' cultural development is strong, for example in the well supported drama and music events, although their understanding of the diversity of cultural and religious traditions in contemporary society is more limited. Opportunities to develop their wider understanding of spirituality are underdeveloped.

Students' behaviour in lessons has improved significantly. It is good because teachers are consistent in their approach and there are good systems to help students who find it difficult to settle. Attendance levels now match the national picture, having improved as a result of rigorous procedures to make some parents more aware of their responsibilities as well as through the celebration and reward of good attendance. Students enjoy good relationships, both with each other and with staff. As a result, they take good advantage of lessons where collaboration or teamwork is encouraged to help them learn.

Students learn well about the importance of healthy lifestyles and safe practices, and this is reflected in their enthusiastic take-up of numerous opportunities to take part in teams or pursue health-related fitness activities. However, their choice of food at lunchtime demonstrates a conflict between their theoretical understanding of healthy eating and their practice. Students make a good contribution to the community, for example in the drama and music performances, by helping pupils in local primary schools and in numerous fund raising projects for charities at home and abroad. The school's specialist expertise ensures that students develop good enterprise skills, for example through special enterprise project days and close contacts with local and national businesses. However, there are still too many students who lack sufficient skills in English and mathematics to help secure their future economic well-being.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 3**

The quality of teaching and learning in the main school and in the sixth form is satisfactory, although it has improved significantly since the last inspection. A significant proportion of the teaching is now good or better. Through careful monitoring and well focused staff development, lesson planning is now more consistent and of higher quality. As part of the school's specialism, enterprise training has been delivered to staff and staff are more confident in delivering enterprising lessons which is helping to raise standards in the classroom.

Good relationships between teachers and students motivate the students to learn. Teachers have good subject knowledge and, in most lessons, their interest and enthusiasm engage students' interest. Lessons have clear learning objectives, so students understand the purpose of the lesson. In the best lessons, a variety of activities, including group and paired work, and a range of learning styles ensure students enjoy their learning. Students' behaviour is generally managed well. The day-to-day assessment of students' work has become much more rigorous. Marking

provides clear information to students on the next steps they need to take and, in many lessons, students assess their own and others' work with confidence. Support for students with learning difficulties is targeted effectively and has helped many students to reach challenging targets.

In a small and diminishing proportion of lessons, there is still a lack of pace and challenge, especially for the most able students. Activities and learning styles do not engage and interest all students, and questioning does not always stimulate students to extend the depth and quality of their responses. Sometimes, this is because teachers do not take enough note of the available assessment information which would enable them to plan lessons more closely to the needs of specific groups of pupils.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

The curriculum meets the needs and aspirations of most students well. It is particularly strong in relation to the diverse provision, including vocational courses, offered to students in Key Stage 4. Sixth form students also have a wide range of subject choices through partnerships with other schools and colleges. Regular monitoring and review ensure that provision continues to improve. A particular strength is the way the formal curriculum is enhanced through a variety of additional activities, to which the school's specialist college status and the effective partnerships formed with local businesses make significant contributions. Students particularly appreciate the excitement offered by 'Deep Learning Days', such as the recent occasion when they devised and made games to play with pupils in Year 6 in local primary schools. Extra-curricular provision is also good, and students enjoy the opportunities they provide, such as the choir singing in the Festival Hall.

Good provision for personal development promotes the growth of self-esteem and confidence. Intervention to help students who have been identified as underachieving or those who are significantly behind their age group in reading, for example, have become increasingly effective. However, the lack of well developed literacy skills still poses a barrier to learning for some pupils. In this respect, not enough use is made of the opportunities available in the day-to-day teaching of all subjects to develop students' oral skills or to improve their writing through the correction and development of their written assignments.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

Students benefit from learning in a calm, well ordered environment and particularly appreciate the care, guidance and support provided by their teachers, learning mentors and support staff. Students who are new to the school value the help they are given to enable them to settle and adapt to secondary school life. Older students are vehemently supportive of the measures that have been taken to improve the learning environment and the teaching they receive.

Staff are suitably trained and vetted to protect students from risk. Adequate procedures ensure that suitable risk assessments are carried out in the school premises as well as for school trips and visits. There is a low incidence of bullying,



and students report that incidents are dealt with promptly and decisively when they do occur.

The subject-specific guidance students receive on how well they are doing and what they should do in order to improve is both helpful and well focused. Students' books are marked with the sort of clear cut, tailor made written advice which helps them move on to reach their potential. The school has developed an excellent system for tracking students' progress and uses the information well to set targets, explain them to students and their parents, and to provide challenge and accountability for staff. The information is not always used as effectively as it might be when planning individual lessons to ensure that they matched as closely as possible to the needs of different groups of students.

Vulnerable children and those who find learning difficult are tracked so that their needs are met, making use of a range of outside agencies where appropriate. Exclusions have been reduced greatly by better care for those who find it difficult to behave well, and rapid, firm intervention to ensure that they learn what is expected of them.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

The headteacher has shown outstanding leadership. She has skilfully steered the school through difficult and challenging times to a point where the school is now considerably stronger than it was and able to demonstrate improvements in all areas. There is a real buzz around the school that suggests students and staff share common goals and are working together to embed the changes and secure continued academic success.

Staff show a good understanding of their management roles and responsibilities and, at all levels, there is greater accountability – for students' achievement, meeting academic targets and for financial resources. The wider community and governors support the school well and, at the same time, they challenge and share the aspirations of school leaders and managers in their drive for improvement.

Specialist status has been instrumental in bringing about improvements by, for example, providing additional resources and encouraging curriculum innovation, whilst also providing the impetus to widen the scope of parental and community involvement. This work has helped to promote community cohesion and build closer links with partner institutions and local businesses. Sixth form students have made a significant contribution by raising the profile of the school through their community based work. They are good ambassadors for the school.

The school's self-evaluation accurately identifies strengths and areas for improvement. This is a school that has high aspirations and expectations and where staff and students have been enthused and motivated to work together to achieve success and secure improvements over the longer term. The vastly improved systems to collect data, which is analysed to see where improvements can be achieved, is still relatively new but has begun to have a significant effect on the way leaders and managers carry out their work. The good quality of leadership and management provide the school with a good capacity for continued improvement.

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**Annex A**

# Inspection judgements

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.</b>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16–19</b>
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## Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
The effectiveness of boarding provision		
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>

## Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	<b>3</b>	

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	<b>2</b>	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	<b>2</b>	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	<b>2</b>	
How well learners enjoy their education	<b>2</b>	
The attendance of learners	<b>3</b>	
The behaviour of learners	<b>2</b>	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	<b>2</b>	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	<b>3</b>	

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	<b>2</b>	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	<b>2</b>	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	<b>2</b>	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion	<b>2</b>	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	<b>2</b>	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	<b>2</b>	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Yes</b>
Does this school require special measures?	<b>No</b>	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	<b>No</b>	

## Annex B



10 December 2008

Dear Students

### **Inspection of Woodhouse High School, Tamworth B77 3JB**

My colleagues and I would like to thank you for making us feel welcome on our recent visit to your school. We particularly enjoyed our discussions with you on the first day of the inspection when you gave us a very clear message that Woodhouse has improved tremendously since its last inspection. You were emphatic that the school no longer deserved to be in special measures – and we agree with you. The school is now giving you a satisfactory education, and much of what the school provides for you is good. These are the main findings of our visit.

- Over the last year, you have made good progress in your work, so that you are now closer to achieving the level of results of which you are capable.
- Your behaviour in lessons and around the school, and the general atmosphere of the school, have improved significantly since the last inspection.
- You have a good understanding of how to keep yourselves healthy and safe. Many of you enjoy your involvement in sports and physical activity, although you do not always make the healthiest choice of food at lunchtime.
- There is a lot of good teaching now, although there are still a few lessons which are rather slow and do not challenge or interest you enough.
- The school provides a good variety of subject choices, interesting enterprise activities, and a good range of extra-curricular activities and special events.
- The staff take good care of you and have devised a very good system for setting challenging targets and keeping track of your progress.
- Over the last four terms, the headteacher, governors and staff have worked very hard to improve the school, and they have greatly appreciated your positive and helpful response to making Woodhouse High School so much better.

The senior staff have a very clear idea of what needs to be done to continue the improvements. We have asked them to ensure that as many lessons as possible provide you with the level of challenge and interest you need to help you achieve your best. Sometimes, there is a need to consider more closely what your assessments are saying, so that teachers can give you more challenging work or provide additional reinforcement if you have not understood certain concepts. We still have some concerns over your progress in mathematics and, in particular, English. We have, therefore, asked all staff, regardless of what subject they teach, to do what they can to help you develop good speaking skills and to improve the quality of your writing.

You can help your school to continue its journey of improvement by becoming even more involved in your learning, letting the staff know what works well and what hinders your learning, and by showing the determination to make Woodhouse the best school it can possibly be.

We wish you every success and happiness in your future education.

Yours faithfully

Graham Sims  
Lead Inspector