

Weston Favell School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122075
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	340086
Inspection dates	7-8 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Ruth McFarlane

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1305
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Roger Webb
Headteacher (Acting)	Mr Alun Rees
Date of previous school inspection	23-24 May 2007
School address	Booth Lane South Northampton NN3 3EZ
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by six additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 25 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils, representative of the local authority, the National Challenge adviser and a leadership consultant currently assisting the school. They observed the school's work, and looked at attainment records, progress records, reports of consultants and others, plans and other documentation and 60 parental questionnaires.

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

- the impact of initiatives to raise attainment
- the impact of strategies to improve teaching and the use of assessment
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels in driving improvement.

Information about the school

Weston Favell School is a larger than average comprehensive school. It has specialist technology college status. The former split site united in new buildings which opened in September 2008. Over a quarter of students come from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds with no particular minority ethnicity predominating. A small proportion is at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average mostly with moderate learning difficulties, or difficulties on the behavioural, emotional or social spectrum. The proportion of students joining or leaving the school other than at the usual times is higher than average. The school has been led by four different headteachers over the last five years. An acting headteacher took up his appointment at the beginning of this term, having been deputy headteacher at the school since 2006. The school is currently being assisted as a National Challenge school and has the services of a part-time leadership consultant appointed by the local authority. There are current proposals for the school to become an Academy.

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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its students an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing and governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Safeguarding is inadequate because governors, leaders and managers have not ensured that all the safeguarding requirements are met. Care, guidance and support offered to students is also judged inadequate.

Students enter the school with levels of attainment that are below the national average. By the time most of them leave, in Year 11, attainment is low and students' achievement is inadequate. This includes those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students achieving five GCSEs with A* to C grades including English and mathematics improved to 30% in 2009 but is still low. Attainment in the sixth form is below average. The sixth form has shortcomings overall but inspection evidence shows that students make satisfactory progress. However, students in Years 7 to 11 do not make the progress they should. Attendance is low and this is holding some students back. During the inspection, a quarter of the Year 11 students were absent. Behaviour is satisfactory. Students say they feel reasonably safe in and around the site. The failure of the school to provide a satisfactory education means that the majority of students do not attain the competency in basic skills that would prepare them adequately for the future.

Students do not make the progress they should because of the considerable variation in the quality of teaching. The identification of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is not secure and the school recognises this, so their needs are not provided for well enough in the classroom. Teachers' marking often fails to explain the next steps in learning. Some lessons are good, with teachers effectively engaging and motivating students. However, teaching and the use of assessment are inadequate in too many lessons. In these lessons, planning is weak and does not provide challenge for students; the different abilities within the class are not given enough attention and, as a result, progress slows. Late arrival to lessons is tolerated by teachers and this reflects the current culture of low expectations and aspirations. The curriculum is satisfactory, enhanced by the school's specialist technology status that has strengthened the use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the school and added to the opportunities available. However, the below

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average examination results demonstrate that the impact of the school's specialist status is limited.

Governors have not used all the advice available from the local authority to best effect, such as information about statutory requirements. A number of other aspects of leadership and management are also inadequate. Although the school knows its weaknesses, self-evaluation overall is weak because the school interprets its performance too positively. There are several reasons why leaders have not demonstrated the capacity to bring about the improvements required. They have been slow to tackle persistently weak teaching. Current initiatives for school improvement are not being implemented consistently because middle managers vary in their expertise. Several senior leaders are in temporary posts. Recent support from the National Challenge has resulted in a new enthusiasm to tackle problems within the school. Nonetheless, the effect of the work has yet to show significant impact on achievement, which is still inadequate. The numerous significant weaknesses in provision, leadership and outcomes for students mean that the school does not provide satisfactory value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Immediately put in place an accurate and complete centralised staffing register that complies with statutory safeguarding requirements.
- By September 2010, raise students' attainment and achievement, especially in English and mathematics, by:
 - improving teaching so that the large majority is good or better and none is inadequate
 - using assessment information to ensure higher expectations in lessons and good challenge for all students
 - improving the accuracy with which pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified and their needs addressed
 - using assessment information and better marking to ensure that all students are aware of how they can improve.
- By January 2011, improve attendance so that it reaches the national average.
- Improve the effectiveness of governance, leadership and management, by:
 - strengthening the ways in which the governing body works with the local authority to provide effective governance for the school
 - developing a stable leadership team that works effectively without extensive external support
 - improving the consistency and quality of middle leaders' effectiveness by embedding the systems recently developed.

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Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

Attainment is low and the achievement of students is inadequate. On starting in Year 7, the attainment of students is below average. Students make inadequate progress through the school so that in Year 11, GCSE examination results are low and in two of the most recent three years they have been exceptionally low. In 2009, as a result of intervention through National Challenge arrangements, the school achieved its National Challenge target, having made a significant improvement on its 2008 performance. However, the proportion of students achieving five or more A* to C grades at GCSE including mathematics and English is not high enough. This includes students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, who also do not make the expected progress and consequently underachieve. The progress made by students in lessons is too often held back by poor teaching and poor attendance. Because of this and their low attainment, students are not prepared well enough for the next stage in their lives. The school's work with outside agencies promotes the safety and health of all learners, and students pay satisfactory attention to living healthy lifestyles through being involved in competitive sports and physical exercise. Through this, through the opportunities provided to visit local places of interest, and in other ways, students contribute satisfactorily to the school and wider community. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory and some positive examples of students' social development are evident, for instance through being involved in decision-making. The lack of challenge students experience in lessons limits their enjoyment of school, although they say that they enjoy a range of extra-curricular activities.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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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How effective is the provision?

The school's overall judgement of the quality of teaching and assessment is too generous. While some teaching is good, too much is inadequate. It is this inadequacy that is at the root of the underachievement evident. In the most successful lessons, expectations are high, the pace is brisk and lively, and a variety of well-planned activities engage and sustain students' interest. In these lessons, teachers regularly check students' progress towards clear learning objectives. As a result, some students, but not all, understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work. Many of the least effective lessons are characterised by a slow pace and work that is not well matched to students' different abilities. It is not made clear to students what it is they have to do. The range of teaching methods is too narrow and fails to motivate students. As a result, their interest wanes. Lesson planning does not draw sufficiently on available assessment information to prepare for and meet the needs of individual students. Consequently, students are not sufficiently challenged. Marking frequently does not guide students on how to improve their work.

Specialist school status has had a positive impact on the curriculum by broadening the range of courses and resources available, but the impact on attainment has been limited. The provision of personal, social, health and citizenship education is satisfactory, and basic ICT skills are promoted effectively. The range of vocational and other options is satisfactory. Students are satisfied with the additional activities and they are enthusiastic about the creative opportunities offered which are a good feature of the curriculum. *'Hairspray'* is in rehearsal, being the latest in a list of productions that includes *'Bugsy Malone'* and *'Grease!'*.

The care, guidance and support offered to students are inadequate for a number of reasons apart from the safeguarding shortfall. Systems for the promotion of attendance are ineffective in bringing about sustained improvement in Years 7 to 11. A range of multi-agency professionals work closely with the school's own staff to provide satisfactory levels of pastoral and emotional support to a number of students whose circumstances make them vulnerable, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, but the school's methods of identification of those who may need help with their learning are imprecise. As a result, staff cannot be sure they are offering students exactly the help that is needed.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	4

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How effective are leadership and management?

A number of significant staffing and recruitment issues, major reorganisation and other proposals for the school have been allowed to deflect leaders, managers and all staff from other key priorities. In addition, the school has undergone several management changes in recent years. These facts have limited the school's capacity to increase quickly the rate of students' progress which is still too slow. With good support from the local authority, and the National Challenge arrangements, a culture of accountability has been introduced to the school, and results in 2009 improved. However, leadership has not yet been effective in embedding action and driving the school forward on a sustained trajectory that would secure at least satisfactory standards once the outside help comes to an end. Engagement with parents is inadequate overall. For example, roughly a quarter of parents did not attend a recent target setting day. The school does not provide equality of opportunity for all. Significant groups of students under achieve and action taken to secure a greater consistency in progress and attainment is having limited impact. However, the school is a largely cohesive community. There are increasingly close links with the local and wider community, but the impact of the school's promotion of community cohesion is only just beginning to be assessed. Governors have failed to ensure that an appropriate single centralised register is in place to ensure that students are safeguarded. Senior leaders now have a clear understanding of the challenges the school faces. However, systems to tackle underachievement are not being applied consistently or monitored well enough, and thus are having insufficient impact. In particular, the school's leadership has been slow to challenge persistently unsatisfactory teaching, poor attendance and low aspirations.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	4
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	4
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	4
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

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Sixth form

Most Year 11 students do not continue into the sixth form and a number join from elsewhere, saying they were attracted by the new buildings and technology status. Outcomes for students are satisfactory in terms of their achievement and in personal skills' development overall. However, teaching is inadequate because it is often pitched too low to help students achieve well and it is often based on methods which do not help them to develop their skills of enquiry and independent learning and so does not prepare them well enough for the future. As students' attitudes to learning are positive, and attendance has improved dramatically from the 2008 low of 78%, success rates and attainment are broadly in line with expectations, given students' abilities. Checking the effectiveness of sixth form provision and planning have been weak until recently. The curriculum overall is too limited to meet the needs of all learners. Partnerships with other groups exist; they expand provision but are not as well-developed as they might be. Information about students' prior learning is not used well enough to plan for individuals. The safeguarding shortfall in the school contributes to the inadequacy already evident in provision and in leadership.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	4
Taking into account:	3
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	4
The quality of provision in the sixth form	4
Leadership and management of the sixth form	4

Views of parents and carers

A very small minority of parents responded to the questionnaire. Most responses are supportive of the school. Nine out of ten are happy with the overall school experience and feel that their child enjoys school. However, about one in seven disagrees with some of the statements. A few parents have concerns about the quality of teaching and the lack of progress they consider their child is making. A few feel that the school does not help them to support their child's learning, or take account of parents' views. A few feel the school does not keep their child safe, or deal with unacceptable behaviour well enough. Inspectors investigated these concerns and agree that teaching is not good enough for students to make sufficient progress. Recently, the school has involved parents more in their children's learning, for instance by holding a target setting day. The school does not take enough care in making sure its students are safe. However, records of students' unacceptable behaviour show that incidents are dealt with promptly.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Weston Favell 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 60 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1305 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	31	52	24	40	3	5	2	3
The school keeps my child safe	27	45	27	45	6	10	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	33	55	23	38	4	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	28	47	23	38	7	12	2	3
The teaching is good at this school	21	35	30	50	8	13	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	24	40	27	45	9	15	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	38	32	53	5	8	0	0
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)	23	38	31	52	6	10	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	23	38	28	47	9	15	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	40	26	43	8	13	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	42	28	47	6	10	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	31	52	21	35	6	10	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	31	52	23	38	5	8	1	2

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 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
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 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 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.



10 December 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Weston Favell School, Northampton, NN3 3EZ

I am writing to let you know the judgements we have made following our visit to your school in December. Thank you for your help and taking the time to talk to us during the inspection. Your comments were important in enabling us to come to our conclusions.

You told us that your new buildings are inviting and there are lots of well-equipped spaces to learn. Sixth formers' attendance has improved dramatically this year. That is not the case in the rest of the school where too many of you are absent from school, and too often. This means some of you miss important lessons and lose track of learning.

Your school provides an inadequate standard of education. Many of you are not making the progress you should on your courses, despite some improvements last year. You told us that things are unsettled at school and there is lots of uncertainty about the future.

We have made your school subject to 'special measures' and inspectors will visit regularly to check on how well the school is improving. In order to do this, we have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to increase attendance, to make all your lessons better quality, and to improve several aspects of how the school is led and managed. We have asked them to ensure the special checking documents needed to keep you safe are fully in line with requirements.

It is going to be very important that you all work with your teachers in order to improve your school. We are asking you to do your part by attending and working hard, so as to accelerate your progress and raise attainment. This is particularly necessary in English and mathematics, because these are the subjects you will need most in your daily lives beyond school.

We wish you all the very best with your future studies.

Yours sincerely

Ruth McFarlane
Lead inspector

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