

# William Farr CofE Comprehensive School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	120711
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lincolnshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	327350
<b>Inspection date</b>	11 February 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Pam Haezewindt HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	1501
Sixth form	281
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Angela White
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Paul Strong
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 January 2006
<b>School address</b>	Lincoln Road Welton Lincoln Lincolnshire LN2 3JB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01673 866900
<b>Fax number</b>	01673 862660

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school, and investigated in detail: the decline in progress in 2008; whether issues raised in the previous inspection had been improved, including teaching and learning; and the extent to which the curriculum continues to meet students' needs. The inspection also focused on the school's contribution to community cohesion. Evidence was gathered from the school's data; lesson observations and three 'learning walks'; students' work and school documentation; meetings with students and staff including the school's senior leadership team, the chair of governors and the school council. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and some of these have been included where appropriate in the report.

## Description of the school

The William Farr Church of England Comprehensive School, situated to the north-east of Lincoln, is much larger than the average secondary school with a large sixth form. It has an almost equal number of boys and girls and almost all students are White British. It is a very popular, over-subscribed school. Students' attainment on entry is above average overall. The number of students eligible for free school meals is low, as is the number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The number with statements of special educational needs is in line with the national average. Very few students speak English as an additional language. The school changed specialist status in 2007 to become a science college. It is also a Leading Edge Partnership Programme school and a Raising Achievement Partnership Programme school and continues to be designated as a High Performing Specialist School. It has several awards including Careers Mark, Arts Mark, Healthy Schools and Sports Mark. The school has independently run pre-school provision. This was inspected at the same time as the school and a separate report generated.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

William Farr is an outstanding school. Students enjoy coming to it and parents are exceptionally supportive. Students feel very safe and very well supported. Their attendance is outstanding. Before students arrive at the school in Year 7 they are made aware of the high expectations of them in terms of behaviour and learning. They respond to this outstandingly well. One parent wrote: 'The Year 6 induction programme is fantastic.' In lessons, corridors, classrooms at break and lunchtimes, the dining hall and in bus areas, their behaviour is excellent. Part of this is due to the trust the school puts in their young people with no 'locked doors' in school. It is an open environment and inspectors were impressed to see students enjoying lunchtime with their friends, chatting in classrooms. Lunchtime is also when a huge variety of extra-curricular activities take place which have very good uptake, many contributing to students' healthy lifestyles. Teachers give very willingly of their time, a factor appreciated by students who say 'there is something for everyone'.

The vision for the school is based on getting the very best for and from each student; students are aware of this and again they appreciate it. It is encapsulated in the outstanding care, guidance and support students receive and the celebration of achievement that is so prevalent throughout the school.

Students attain standards in all three key stages that are well above average. Overall, students did very well in their GCSE examinations in 2008, with 82% achieving five or more A\* to C grades, and 71% including English and mathematics. Results in science, the specialist subject, were excellent. GCSE results in mathematics have improved over time to 80%, well above those reported in the previous inspection. Progress over time (2006 to 2008) between the end of Key Stage 2 and the end of Key Stage 4 was significantly better than the national average. However, in 2008 progress was average and boys did less well than girls, an aspect the school had tackled successfully previously. In mathematics, students made satisfactory progress between the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. The school is working very hard through thorough tracking and mentoring to ensure that this 'dip' does not happen again and there is evidence to show good progress is being made and that the challenging targets for 2009 can be well met. Key building work in progress during 2008 caused some disruption.

Overall, teaching is good with many lessons that are outstanding. Students are very interested in their lessons. Working relationships are excellent. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good. There is some good use of information and communication technology (ICT) by teachers, and by students when the lesson requires it. Teaching assistants worked very well with students in lessons observed. Some good collaborative work was observed; there is scope to broaden this further. Just occasionally planning does not recognise the need to support a range of student needs or include how students' learning will be assessed. The school has worked hard at monitoring and evaluating teaching regularly. Senior leaders and middle managers monitor lessons and the school also has a system of teacher self-evaluation that encourages discussion about what makes a good or better lesson. The form used for lesson observation does not focus sufficiently on learning and the progress students make in a lesson, a crucial judgement to improvement. The school is developing independent work with Key Stage 3 students and is in the process of researching independent learning further.

There is a clear system for monitoring by middle and senior management and almost all middle managers are doing this very well. Where it is not yet thoroughly in place, there have been

recent middle management changes; monitoring should be fully embedded very shortly with the support and guidance of senior leaders. Governance is now excellent. Since the previous inspection, much training has been undertaken, and there are several new members of the governing body. It is clear that the governors spoken to know the school very well. They have been challenging about the school's 2008 results and are clearly holding it to account in a variety of ways. They realise that they must look to the future of the school and have this in their sights. Governors have set up an equalities and disabilities working party to evaluate the current policy, including students and talking to parents, and this is resulting in some exceptionally good developments to support inclusion.

While the curriculum remains a predominantly academic one, it suits extremely well the students at William Farr. It is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. The core requirement in Key Stage 4 includes a modern language. Students say they have plenty to choose from at options time with very good guidance and the options booklet confirms this. The school has introduced two vocational qualifications this year. It is taking a cautious approach towards the new diplomas, investigating the way forward, taking into account the rural location of the school. A very large percentage of students go into the school's academic sixth form, others receive very good advice about further education and the school has strong links with Lincoln College. The curriculum is enriched by excellent extra-curricular opportunities and very many visitors to the school.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is outstanding. Leadership and management clearly understand the context of its own community and seeks to ensure that its students have a very large range of experiences which will help them understand their own and a range of communities beyond school. As yet, not all students understand exactly what community cohesion means as well as they might, but they contribute with gusto. The very many school contributions, visitors to the school and the links beyond school, have at their heart developing an understanding of faith, ethnicity and culture, and the socio-economic dimension. Students contribute generously to an exceptionally large and ever-increasing range of charities. Mostly they decide the ones to contribute to. They have a strong sense of fairness and justice and they are 'indignant' about those who are less fortunate than themselves. The very good Year 8 assembly demonstrated their zeal as they presented a large cheque to an organiser of LEPR.

A lot of community cohesion is organised through the school's various specialist designations. For example, supporting primary schools by providing ICT technical support and a range of teaching, and funding for parenting classes; helping other secondary schools to raise attainment in science; and sharing resources, including loaning its facilities. The school's timetable provides a vast array of multicultural and diverse activities both on and off site. A good proportion of sixth formers contribute to the international community through the World Challenge and many are involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Award. The badminton club supports a project to fund a sports facility in the Gambia and Gambian students were in school last week. These are merely a flavour of school's exemplary contribution. The school is beginning to measure the impact of its contribution, for example, of its extensive primary school links.

Leadership and management remain outstanding as the previous inspection reported but aspects are even better because more middle managers are monitoring and evaluating effectively and because governance is now outstanding. Leadership and management remain at the heart of the school's drive for improvement and are very significant in its excellent capacity to improve. They are exemplary in promoting the ethos of the school and contributing to the community, which leads to excellent attitudes to learning and to personal development and well-being, and care, support and guidance, including that for the sixth form. Students, parents and

stakeholders have very good opportunities to contribute their views and the school council is excellent; it is extremely well organised, driving for improvement in its own right. Opportunities for staff professional development are very good. Accommodation is mostly new and welcoming. There are insufficient computers but a new batch is expected next term. The move to science specialist status, capitalising on the strengths of the science team to lead initiatives, has been a very successful move. The school's other specialisms support the continued drive for improvement at school and community level.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 1**

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is outstanding. Retention rates are high at 97% in Year 13 and 95% in Year 12. Completion rates are similarly high. Standards reached on the basis of student point scores are well above average; their progress overall is good because they are required to enter the sixth form with above average attainment; GCSE grades B and above. Progress to higher education is exceptional with high numbers moving onto Russell Group Universities. Almost all students progress onto university from the sixth form with small numbers choosing to take 'gap' years or moving into the world of work.

There is excellent leadership and management that is a result of a secure knowledge of each individual student. Tutors have known their students for a full five years before they continue into the sixth form. Progress is monitored closely throughout the year and identifies underachievement early with intervention arrangements responsive to each student's needs. Sixth form students are an integral part of the school: mentoring younger students, contributing to community cohesion very well, and leading and managing the very effective school council. Sixth form students are excellent role models for younger students.

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

- Raise the quality of teaching to consistently good or outstanding through refining the monitoring of lessons, focussing more on the quality of learning and the progress students make, and implementing measures for improvement where necessary.
- Ensure that all students understand the meaning of community cohesion.

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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	<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>	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

**Achievement and standards**

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2	

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<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.

<sup>2</sup>IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	
The extent to which 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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2	IE <sup>2</sup>
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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
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****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

12 February 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of William Farr Church of England Comprehensive School, Welton, LN2 3JB

I am writing to you on behalf of the inspection team who inspected your school to thank you for your help and cooperation throughout the day. It was a real pleasure to meet you and to talk to you about your school. We judged it to be outstanding.

All of you, in the groups we spoke to and in some lessons, were very positive about William Farr and think that it is a super school to go to. Your parents were overwhelmingly positive too; please pass on to them our thanks for all the very many questionnaires that were returned. You find that staff are very helpful and care for you very well so that you feel safe and supported. You also feel they are interested in you and one Key Stage 3 student summed this up very well when he said that 'it feels like they are interested in what you do outside of school'. Your behaviour in and around the school is excellent.

Your results in examinations are well above average and this is particularly good where it includes English and mathematics because it ensures that you are better equipped for the future. There was a dip in progress at the end of Year 11 last year, compared with previous years, but staff are taking steps to ensure this does not happen in 2009. Staff want the very best for you. There is an excellent ethos for learning including learning about different communities and contributing to them. Across all years, you contribute to this extensively. We have asked your staff to ensure that you all know exactly what community cohesion means.

William Farr is led and managed to a very high standard; this includes the senior staff and governors, the sixth form, specialist status and the school council that is your own organisation. We were pleased to see the number of excellent initiatives the school council suggest and take on.

Teaching is good. You show interest in lessons but there are times when they could be a bit livelier and sometimes more matched to individual needs. We have asked the school to look at monitoring lessons more carefully with a focus on what you are learning and your progress and make any changes to teaching and learning if necessary.

With very best wishes for the future

Pam Haezewindt

Her Majesty's Inspector