

Ounsdale High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124419
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	359664
Inspection dates	11–12 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Clive Kempton HMI

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	1110
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	175
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Mullock
Headteacher	Christine Brown
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2008
School address	Ounsdale Road Wombourne, Wolverhampton WV5 8BJ
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 32 lessons and 32 teachers. They held meetings with the senior and middle managers of the school, three representatives of the governing body, a group of parents and carers, and six outside professionals associated with the school. They spoke to 13 groups of students in all year groups. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school development plan as well as subject development plans. Evidence was also provided by 349 parents and carers, staff and students who completed questionnaires to express their views of the school.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How the progress of students is tracked and measured.
- The quality of the intervention programmes to raise attainment.
- The quality of development planning at all levels.
- The effectiveness of strategies to improve the attendance of identified groups of students.
- The effectiveness of assessment procedures in lessons.
- The attainment and progress of sixth-form students.

Information about the school

Ounsdale High School serves the relatively affluent community of Wombourne and also takes students from the surrounding areas of Wolverhampton and Dudley. Just over half of the students stay on into the sixth form, with an increasing number joining from outside. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average and the proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The vast majority of students come from a White British background and about five per cent from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The school gained specialist Performing Arts status in 2003.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Ounsdale High is a good school that has improved year on year since the last inspection. One of its greatest strengths is the students themselves who are polite, confident and articulate. One parent described the school as a place where their children 'learn in a fun way with a high level of challenge'. The school has many other notable features:

- students feel safe and well looked after
- they are well cared for, guided and supported
- attendance is above the national average
- sixth-form students make an exceptional contribution to the school and local community
- the school works very well with outside professionals and other local schools to provide more opportunities and greater choice of subjects to study
- the performing arts specialism is having a positive impact on raising attainment
- the mentoring support provided for students who face barriers to their learning is highly valued
- the school is led well by the principal.

Students enter the school with attainment that is broadly similar to the national average. They make good progress and attain above the national average at GCSE, especially in the percentage of students who attain five A*-C grades including English and mathematics.

The new principal has embedded ambition and driven improvement in the school through her sheer determination and vision to make this an outstanding school one day. Self-evaluation is accurate and identifies the essential development points to take the school forward. However, the success criteria for some of these points are not measurable enough and lack regular milestones to enable parents and carers and the governing body to hold the school to account. The principal has motivated and supported staff well, so that now the vast majority feel valued and share her commitment.

The quality of teaching has improved. The majority is good or better. Teachers have been supported well by school leaders in developing their teaching skills. Some engage students more than others, by involving them in active learning in lessons. All teachers make use of the extensive data the school collects to monitor the attainment of students and predict grades for future examinations. However, the analysis of data is not yet sophisticated enough to measure individual progress over time.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that 80% is good or better by:
 - ensuring learning activities involve students more actively in their own learning
 - devising a questioning strategy, used by all adults, that ensures all students are challenged more appropriately in lessons.
- Use data more precisely at all levels to measure students' progress and take appropriate action.
- Ensure that development planning at all leadership levels includes termly measurable success criteria that will allow the governing body to hold the school to account.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

There has been a strong pattern of improved attainment over the last three years in both GCSE and at A level results. Students enjoy their learning and this is reflected in their willingness to get involved in lessons when they are given the opportunity. Outcomes are also above the national average in a number of other subjects as well as the core subjects, for example, in art, business studies, history, sociology and psychology. The majority of groups of students achieve well and make good progress. The school is successfully addressing the underachievement of a small group of students who are at school action and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities who are currently making satisfactory progress.

The school works constantly to improve attendance, particularly with students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable and those with particular needs. Attendance is good and above national averages, but some parents and carers still take their children out of school for holidays during term time, which frustrates further progress. Behaviour is good and supported well by initiatives such as the rewards ladder and withdrawal room. Inspectors found students well behaved and polite, both in lessons and around the school. The students have good workplace skills, being articulate and confident young adults. Students feel safe in school and the very rare bullying or racist behaviour is, quickly, dealt with well. Peer mentors, adult mentors and the school's 'Hub' ensure good relationships, so that this is a happy school to be in.

Students and parents and carers reported that the school could do more to encourage them to adopt healthy lifestyles, especially through the availability of a wider range of food at lunchtime. Curriculum enrichment means that students develop a clear identity and sense of their place in the world and have good spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. As one student said following an anti-racism day, 'We all know racism is wrong, but today is the first time I've felt it.' Students make a good contribution to the community, such as through the Comenius 'Power of Water' project undertaken with a range of local and European schools.

Students are well prepared for their future economic well-being. They develop the skills to be able to get a job or progress to further education. These skills include good attendance and punctuality and secure English, mathematics, information and communication technology and social skills. The students have good opportunities to learn how to write a curriculum vitae (CV) and to take part in mock interviews with a number of professionals working in the area.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have worked hard to improve the quality of their teaching since the last inspection. In the best lessons, they use their good subject knowledge to plan interesting and relevant tasks and consider the different learning styles of students to create varied activities. In those lessons, learning objectives are clear and challenge students of all abilities. Success criteria are implicit in lesson planning. Students say that they learn better when lessons include opportunities for discussion and working in small groups.

A wide range of assessment material is available and is used very well by some, but not all, teachers to plan work for each student within the class. In the best lessons, students could talk confidently about how well they were doing, what they understood and how they could improve their work. In most lessons, teachers have high expectations of their students. In a geography lesson preparing students for an examination, the teacher worked closely with the group to explore the requirements of each part of the question and students supported each other to compile a top grade answer. However, in less successful lessons, the level of challenge for higher ability students is less evident.

The curriculum has improved considerably since the last inspection and now embraces a range of vocational courses which match the full range of learners' needs, aspirations and capabilities. This wider choice is much appreciated by students and contributes to their enjoyment of school. Involvement in the Creative Partnerships programme has had the

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impact of enhancing learning opportunities, for example, students' involvement in flexible learning weeks and 'impact' days. These activities have encouraged collaborative working to ensure strong learning gains, particularly in areas which have been supported by the school's performing arts specialism. Curricular provision is enhanced by effective partnership working with others schools, colleges and outside agencies. Opportunities for work-based learning, extra-curricular activities, trips and visits are valued by students and contribute to their enjoyment and achievement.

Care, guidance and support for students are good. The work of the Hub Centre and the interventions of the learning mentor to support potentially vulnerable students is a considerable strength of the school. Students who have substantial needs speak powerfully of the determined and consistent support which they have received. In addition, there are numerous and wide-ranging intervention strategies which are in place to enable students to maximise their potential in school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leadership and management at all levels have been effective in improving the school year on year since the last inspection. Under the inspirational leadership of the principal, staff have come together and become focused and re-energised by the improvement agenda. The constant focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning has been effective in improving students' outcomes. The use of the student teaching and learning council ensures that students are able to contribute to the overview and improvement of teaching as well. The impact of management actions over the last three years is clear evidence of the school's good capacity to improve.

Middle leaders are enthusiastic and report the significance of the change in the learning culture over recent years. They have more responsibility now and accountability for raising attainment and the monitoring of teaching and learning within their departments. Good support and challenge is provided for subject leaders by senior staff.

Although every effort is made to ensure that discrimination is tackled and equal opportunities promoted to ensure that all students have equal access to achieving their potential, a small minority of students at school action have not been as well supported as others by some staff in the classroom, in order to achieve their full potential. No student is refused access to after-school sports clubs, educational trips or arts opportunities.

Safeguarding procedures are robust and exceed requirements. In the questionnaire sent out to parents and carers, the vast majority feel passionately that the school does keep

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their children safe. Well-qualified staff have a thorough understanding of their roles and responsibilities and ensure that students are kept safe. All adults at Ounsdale High School are trained effectively on a regular basis, so that safeguarding is good and monitored well by the governing body. Effective risk assessments are carried out to ensure students are safeguarded in the same way off site. There are good opportunities in the curriculum and through links with other agencies to enable students to learn how to keep themselves safe, such as fire safety lessons from the Safety Team and clear e-safety training in using the Internet.

Governance is good. Members of the governing body are regular visitors in school and at arts productions and other events. The school has audited its provision for community cohesion, which is judged currently to be satisfactory as they are only just in the process of establishing links with contrasting schools locally and nationally.

Outside professionals associated with the school speak warmly about how much they look forward to and enjoy working with the Ounsdale staff and students. One described the school as 'giving students ambition'.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Recent improvements have been significant in this good sixth form and results have improved rapidly. Accurate evaluation of the sixth form has identified key areas for improvement. Strong leadership has ensured that provision has improved and it is now good. The students speak highly of the range of subjects on offer and the courses that can be taken, some at other local schools and colleges. Teaching has improved and the guidance given to students on how to develop their work has been a key factor in securing good progress for all students. The best teaching builds students' belief in themselves and they develop sufficient confidence quickly to work at high levels, analysing, forming

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opinions and justifying them. These qualities are particularly evident in psychology, sociology, business studies and art. Where teaching is less effective, teachers provide work which is more mundane and does not require high-level thinking skills. Behaviour is exemplary and students' enthusiasm and ambition contribute to successful learning.

The care, guidance and support that students receive are excellent. There is a culture of mutual respect between staff and students; everyone is valued. One student commented 'They should be really proud of the support they give.' Students' personal development is not left to chance: there is a good induction programme which develops leadership skills well and helps those new to the school to settle quickly. In Year 12, all students take part in a good programme of enrichment through which they have opportunities to learn to cook, manage their personal finances and prepare for adult life. All students make valuable contributions to the school and local community. Some help younger students with their learning, others work in the community with, for example, St. John Ambulance. Students value the guidance they receive to move to university, college or work. They are taught how to research opportunities; how to apply; given practice interviews; listen to external speakers and are constantly provided with feedback and support. Students attend well because they value the way they are developed in this school. One commented 'You learn how to grow up.'

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers are positive in their responses in the questionnaire sent as part of this inspection and say their children enjoy school. They are almost unanimous in their view that the school keeps their children safe. The area of most concern is the extent to which the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors observed the behaviour of students in lessons and around the school and judged it to be good. They looked also at the school's behaviour log and exclusion data over time which demonstrates that incidents of poor behaviour are reducing year on year. They scrutinised the behaviour policy also, available on the schools' website, and found it to be robust and used consistently by the vast majority of staff. The headteacher has agreed to write to parents and carers and re-iterate how incidents of unacceptable behaviour are dealt with.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ounsdale High School 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 349 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1110 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	89	26	228	65	27	8	5	1
The school keeps my child safe	86	25	248	71	12	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	79	23	226	65	38	11	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	90	26	223	64	26	7	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	65	19	238	68	28	8	4	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	64	18	236	68	37	11	5	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	42	12	231	66	64	18	3	1
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)	70	20	232	66	19	5	3	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	55	16	251	72	30	9	4	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	63	18	208	60	49	14	17	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	47	13	238	68	29	8	13	4
The school is led and managed effectively	65	19	232	66	33	9	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	89	26	232	66	16	5	5	1

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



13 May 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Ounsdale High School, Wolverhampton, WV5 8BJ

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave to the inspection team when we visited your school earlier this year. We enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work and watching you learn. I thought you would like to know the outcome of the inspection and what you could all do to improve the school further.

You go to a good school and sixth form that is improving year on year. It has improved since the last inspection because the teaching is getting better. You attain standards that are better than other schools, especially in the percentage of you who manage to attain English and mathematics at GCSE. These are very important qualifications when you come to apply for university or get a job. Creativity and the arts are a key focus in the school and many of you spoke of how you develop creative ideas in lots of subject areas. Your attendance is much higher than other schools, although some of you choose not to attend as frequently. This will affect your future employability. One of the most impressive features of the school is you! You are all very supportive of each other and want to do well. Keep striving to achieve the best you can. All adults in the school really care that you succeed and the teaching staff work very hard to prepare interesting lessons for you. Your principal has made a difference in the last few years and has high expectations and aspirations that Ounsdale will become an outstanding school. This is the next challenge that faces you, but you will have to work together to achieve this accolade.

In order to improve the school, I have asked your principal and senior staff to do the following things:

- make all lessons as good as the best by providing opportunities for you to get actively involved in all lessons and making sure you are all challenged more through questioning
- monitor your progress more accurately and involve you in improving your work
- ensure that the plans school leaders write to improve your attainment and progress have more measurable success criteria.

I wish you all the best in your journey to become an outstanding school.

Yours sincerely

Clive Kempton HMI

Her Majesty's Inspector

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