



Astley Community High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122374
LEA Northumberland
Inspection number 281246
Inspection dates 2 November 2005 to 3 November 2005
Reporting inspector Garry Jones

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Elsdon Avenue
School category	Community		Seaton Delaval
Age range of pupils	13 to 18		Whitley Bay, Northumberland
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 2371505
Number on roll	808	Fax number	0191 2376891
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Peter Hillman
Date of previous inspection	1 September 1999	Headteacher	Mr Ian G Knight

Age group 13 to 18	Inspection dates 2 November 2005 - 3 November 2005	Inspection number 281246
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Astley Community High School is a smaller than average 13–18 comprehensive school serving the community of Seaton Delaval and surrounding settlements. The area has average levels of socio-economic deprivation and the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is below the national average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. The pupils are predominantly white and the number of pupils from other ethnic groups is low. The school has attained the Investors in People award and the associated Work Life Balance award. The school is currently subject to proposals to develop 11–18 provision within the county and is scheduled for restructuring in September 2009.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school judges its overall effectiveness to be good. The inspectors found it and the value for money provided to be satisfactory.

The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory and this results in the pupils achieving standards in line with the national average. Overall pupils make satisfactory progress. The curriculum is designed to ensure that statutory requirements are met and that pupils are able to access appropriate courses to suit their abilities and aspirations. There are links with further education providers to broaden the curriculum available. There is good care and guidance provided for all the pupils which enables them to develop in a calm and ordered environment and to make good progress in their personal and social development. The pupils' attitudes to school and their behaviour are generally good. The senior leadership of the school, the governors and the staff are committed to improving the rate of the pupils' progress and raising standards further in an inclusive school. A thorough self-evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the school is in place, but the inspection team is not able to agree with all the grades. The senior leadership team has established a wide range of priorities for improvement, but the current school improvement plan places insufficient emphasis on the key priority of raising achievement. However, there are signs, in the most recent results, that their efforts are beginning to succeed, but this is not yet consistent across the key stages and all subjects. Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory and there is satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The school judges that the quality of provision and value for money are satisfactory and the inspection team agree. The head of sixth form has a clear vision for its development. Students are able to choose from a satisfactory range of courses including advanced vocational qualifications which meet their needs and aspirations. In 2004, the general certificate of education advanced-level (GCE A-level) and advanced subsidiary-level (AS-level) results were below the national average but results in the vocational certificate of education (VCE) A level were well above the national level. Overall attainment is satisfactory and pupils make appropriate progress given their attainment on entry to the sixth form. Care, guidance and personal development are good with an effective tutorial system. Students make significant contributions to the life of the school through the school council and extra-curricular activities, and to the wider community through charity work.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use systematic monitoring of teaching and learning to identify best practice and disseminate this widely to increase the proportion of teaching that is good or better
- Raise pupil's standards and achievement by extending the use of data to set personal targets for improvement and to use these consistently in lessons

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The overall standards of attainment and achievement are satisfactory. The pupils enter the school in Year 9 with standards that are in line with those found nationally. During Key Stage 3, satisfactory progress is achieved and by the end of Year 9 the overall attainment remains in line with that found nationally. Standards in English slipped in 2004 to below national averages, but mathematics and science remained in line with national averages. However, this year's unvalidated results indicate that all subjects have improved significantly and that the school exceeded its targets for 2005.

By the end of Key Stage 4, the pupils have made satisfactory progress, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Performance overall is in line with national averages, although there are significant variations in the performance between subjects. The school correctly identified that some subjects were underachieving at general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) in 2004 and acted to address this. External data analysis suggests that the planned actions were successful. The unvalidated results for 2005 show that the proportion of pupils gaining 5 or more A* to C grades at GCSE has improved significantly, but that overall attainment has declined slightly. The target for 5 or more A* to C GCSE grades was exceeded in 2005, but that for the average points score was missed.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of pupils is good. The vast majority of students enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in attendance rates that are in line with the national average. Provision for spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is effective. Pupils get on well with each other and confirm that they feel safe in school where they can learn in an environment free from bullying or racial harassment. The school operates a strict code of behaviour which resulted in very high levels of fixed-term exclusions in the last school year. Students now have a clear understanding of what is expected of them, behaviour in most lessons is good and there is a lower rate of exclusion this year.

The school actively promotes healthy living and is working towards achieving the Healthy Schools award. There is an effective school council which represents the views of pupils and contributes to developments within the school. This is greatly valued by pupils. They are involved in a range of charity work and have a good understanding of the contributions they can make to the wider community. There are, for example, well developed links with a school in Sri Lanka. Pupils effectively develop the skills and understanding they need to prepare them for future employment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school judges that teaching overall is good, but the inspectors judged it satisfactory. Good and very good teaching is balanced by too much that is satisfactory and a very small proportion that is inadequate. In the most effective lessons teachers display good subject knowledge and plan effectively, adopting a wide range of teaching styles to engage pupils fully in their learning. Activities and resources are well matched to the range of abilities within groups. There is effective use of discussion and pupils are confident in discussing their work. In some lessons, they were encouraged to assess their own progress and to identify areas for development.

However, lesson planning is not consistently of high quality and in some lessons the content or approach fails to engage pupils fully in the work. In some lessons, the level of challenge was inappropriate to support pupils in making good progress. There is inconsistency in the use of assessment to support learning and marking does not always give pupils sufficient guidance on how to improve their work.

The support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is generally effective, but there is some inconsistency.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school considers its curriculum to be satisfactory and the inspectors agree with this judgement. The curriculum fulfils all statutory requirements, although the length of the teaching week for Key Stage 4 pupils is slightly below the recommended minimum. There is an appropriate emphasis on the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. Curricular liaison with the main feeder middle schools is good and steps are taken to ensure continuity in learning as pupils transfer from one stage of their education to the next. The option system at Key Stage 4 provides access to a broad and balanced curriculum within which pupils can take the courses they choose. A large proportion of pupils opt to take at least one vocational course. The sixth form curriculum offers a reasonably broad range of options. There are satisfactory links with other institutions to provide courses that the school cannot offer.

There is a good range of enrichment activities including sports, the arts and those provided by a visiting Japanese teacher. The school keeps its curriculum under constant review and is actively seeking ways to involve pupils more in taking responsibility for their own learning and in using their preferred learning styles.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support of students is good. There is good support for students in transferring from middle school and pupils confirm that they soon settle in and enjoy the opportunities that their new school provides. Guidance for students' academic progress through the use of learning targets in lessons and advice through marking is inconsistent. However, pupils confirm that they receive good support and guidance with regard to their personal development. There is effective support for considering a range of issues including education on sex and relationships, drugs and the need for racial tolerance through the curriculum. Pupils and parents value the support of tutors and heads of year.

Care and support for vulnerable pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are sensitive and responsive and they are effectively helped to make the most of their time within the school. There are clear procedures for health and safety with risk assessments and child protection procedures in place and staff have received the necessary training.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the school is satisfactory and there is capacity for further improvement. There is an established senior leadership team with a shared vision and a real commitment to raising achievement, inclusion and improving the school. Self-evaluation is thorough and the school knows most of its strengths and weaknesses, but the inspection team was not able to confirm all the proposed grades. The school seeks the views of parents and the vast majority value the education the school provides. The improvement plan is a comprehensive document but it lacks sufficient focus on the key priority of raising achievement and the success indicators are insufficiently precise to allow effective monitoring and evaluation of progress. Despite this there is evidence that attainment is improving, although not yet consistently in all subjects.

There is extensive monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning to support improvement but this is not yet sufficiently coordinated. Support for staff development is effectively coordinated. This reflects a strong commitment to supporting staff to develop and maintain a work life balance. However, the reduction of teaching time by one hour each week to support staff in developing effective teaching and learning strategies has not been sufficiently evaluated to ensure that it provides good value for money.

The structures for the governance of the school are in place. However, the governing body has recently undergone significant change and there is an equal balance of experienced and inexperienced governors. Despite the strong commitment of the governors, under the leadership of an experienced chair, they are insufficiently involved in challenging the school to improve.

The school generally uses its finances well to develop the resource base for learning. This is particularly evident in the very good facilities for information and communication technology available to and valued by staff and pupils.

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Inspection judgements

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

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	3
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

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2 November 2005

Dear students

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed the opportunities to talk to you about your work and interests and to listen to your views on the school. We believe that your school provides you with a satisfactory education.

We were impressed by:

the commitment of the school leaders, teachers and governors to improving your school
your generally good behaviour and positive attitudes to your work
the good relationships you have with each other and with your teachers
how well your teachers know you and support you to develop as confident young people
the good teaching you get in some lessons and the progress you make in them
your involvement in the life of the school through the school council, the out of school activities and charity work
the ICT facilities for you to use within the school.

We have asked your school to help you to achieve higher standards and make more progress by:

improving some of the teaching so that it is as good as in the best lessons
helping you to improve by giving you clear targets in every lesson for achieving higher standards.
Keep up your good behaviour and continue to work hard to meet your targets.

Garry Jones HMI

Annex B