

Ashlawn School

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	125751
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	315303
Inspection date	17 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Elaine Taylor HMI

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

Type of school	Other secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1681
6th form	249
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Moore
Headteacher	Peter Rossborough
Date of previous school inspection	20 November 2003
School address	Ashlawn Road Rugby CV22 5ET
Telephone number	01788 573425
Fax number	01788 536159

Age group	11-19
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Amended Report Addendum

Report amended due to Ofsted notification

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors. It focused on the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the quality of students' personal development, the particular strengths of teaching and their impact, and the effects of specialist status on the curriculum. This was done by gathering evidence from observing lessons, scrutinising school documentation and questionnaires completed by parents, and by talking with students, the chair of governors, one of the feeder primary schools, staff and the headteacher. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspection team found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified.

Description of the school

Ashlawn is larger than average and has 30 places a year reserved for students who are successful in the Warwickshire Eleven Plus examination. It is a specialist science college. Students are from a wide range of backgrounds. The school has recently taken responsibility for Year 11 students at nearby Bishop Wulstan School, which was closed by the local authority. These students are educated exclusively on the Bishop Wulstan site.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Ashlawn School is an outstanding school, which provides excellent value for money. The school has high expectations and actively promotes a learning culture that successfully motivates and inspires students and staff. There are exemplary systems in place to monitor and evaluate the work of the school. As a result, self-evaluation is very accurate, enabling the school to make rapid and sustained improvements. Designation as a specialist science college has contributed to these improvements in a variety of ways, not least through the greatly improved provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and the renewable energy projects currently being undertaken.

Students enter the school with broadly average standards. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 are well above average. The proportion of students achieving the higher levels is very high and improving. Standards in examinations at the end of Year 11 have been rising rapidly over the last three years and in 2007 were also well above average. In 2007, the percentage of students gaining five or more GCSE grades at A* to C including English and mathematics was well above the national average, and 99% of the students gained five or more grades at A* to G. This represents outstanding achievement. Students do particularly well in English language, drama, fine art, media and astronomy. No groups make less than good progress.

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. They know what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and many, but not all, try to put the lessons learned into practice. Attendance is satisfactory and the school is working extremely hard to raise awareness of the issue. Improvements are slow because some families persist in taking their holidays in term time and the school has a considerable number of students with health issues that require them to take time off from school. Attendance in the sixth form is good. Behaviour is good, both in lessons and around the school. Exclusion rates have fallen dramatically and the school is successful in managing the reintegration of those who have been excluded. Students told us that they enjoy school a lot and feel very safe. Bullying is rare and students are confident that any such incident would be dealt with quickly and firmly. The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students from different cultures mix happily at work and at play. They are very polite and friendly. They respond very well to the many opportunities to make a positive contribution to the school and to the wider community. The active school council has initiated a number of improvement projects and students take part in a range of charity fund-raising events. Sixth form students are keen to accept responsibilities, for example as mentors for Year 11 students. In all key stages, students are developing confidence and personal skills that will equip them well for their future working lives.

Teaching and learning are good with some excellent features. Teachers plan their lessons well and make clear to the students precisely what they are expected to learn. There are excellent relationships in lessons and an atmosphere of mutual respect. Teaching assistants are used well to support those students with additional needs. Questioning is used to good effect but sometimes teachers do not give the students enough time to consider their answers or challenge them to increase the depth of their understanding. Teachers display good subject knowledge and most plan activities to meet a range of needs and some to address students' preferred learning styles. This is not consistent in all lessons. The inspection found that teaching and learning in Bishop Wulstan matched that in the main school. Students in both schools enjoy their lessons and are keen to learn. They are developing excellent attitudes to learning, and this shows in the very high number who continue in education in the sixth form and beyond.

The curriculum is good. Many students take part in enrichment activities. Parents and students told us they greatly appreciate this feature of the school. There are good opportunities for all students to develop their particular talents and interests, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those identified as gifted and talented. One example of this is the opportunity to study additional subjects such as astronomy. The school recognises the need to improve areas of the curriculum in design and technology.

The quality of care, guidance and support provided to students is outstanding. Students report that they receive excellent academic and pastoral guidance. Every student truly matters at this school. There are excellent systems to monitor students' progress and the information is used very effectively to set targets for improvement. Students are aware of what they should aspire to and are proud of their achievements to date. They are encouraged to assess their own work and that of their fellow students and have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve their work. Good intervention programmes are in place to support targeted groups and this helps them to make good progress. A child protection policy is in place, safeguarding procedures are rigorous and all staff receive regular training in respect of these. An impressive feature of the school is the work done through the mentoring system. Students told us they feel this has contributed greatly to recent improvements, although a significant minority of parents feel they would like more opportunities to meet individual subject teachers. The school works closely with feeder primary schools to ensure students make the transition to secondary school as smoothly as possible.

The driving force behind this successful school is the headteacher and the senior team he has built up. He provides inspirational leadership underpinned by a strong determination to give every member of the school community the opportunity to develop and succeed. The ethos that pervades the school is one where 'everyone matters'. This evokes a strong commitment to learning by staff and students. The school is involved in a number of initiatives with outside agencies such as a local university and the National College for School Leadership to provide high quality learning and training opportunities. Exemplary systems are in place to monitor the quality of teaching. Where this identifies areas for improvement peer coaching is used to provide effective support. Subject leaders evaluate the work of their departments thoroughly and there are some examples of excellent departmental evaluations that feed directly into whole-school planning. This is not yet consistent across all departments. The governing body gives good support and challenge to the school leaders and takes an increasingly active part in gathering first hand information on the work of the school. Overall, leadership and management are outstanding, as is the capacity to improve even further.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry to the sixth form is below average. Standards are broadly average overall, indicating that progress is good. This is especially the case in AS-level examinations. Progress in science is very good, but in some subjects, students only make satisfactory progress. There are excellent relationships and in lessons, the varied learning opportunities promote good progress. Students have good opportunities to take an active part in lessons and most teachers plan lessons to meet the needs of a wide range of ability. The curriculum is good with a good range of academic and vocational subjects. However, the requirements for the teaching of religious education are still not fully met. The care, guidance and support that the students receive are outstanding. A particular strength is the support provided to lower ability students, which ensures that all achieve at least a grade E in their A-level examinations. The leadership

and management of the sixth form are good. The new head of the sixth form is already having a significant impact on raising aspirations, particularly for more able students. It is too early to judge the impact of the other improvement strategies that have been put in place.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure teachers consistently provide activities in lessons that meet the needs of all students.
- Develop teachers' questioning skills so more matches the best practice that already exists.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	1	2
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	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	3	2
The behaviour of learners	2	
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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

¹ 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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**

On behalf of myself and my colleagues I want to thank you for your help in the inspection, for welcoming us into your school and talking to us so sensibly about the things you like and what you would like to see improved.

You told us how much you enjoy the school and how proud you are of the many improvements that have come about through the work of the school council. We were impressed by the respect everyone shows for each other and how willing you all are to contribute to making things even better. This is not just in terms of how well the school operates but also through the impressive charity fund raising you undertake.

We found that there are many things about your school that make it outstanding. You make excellent progress in your learning, helped by your excellent attitudes, and we were impressed by the way in which the school monitors your progress to make sure you all succeed. You told us how you value the mentoring that you receive and how safe you feel at school, knowing there are many adults and organisations you can turn to for help. There is a wide range of sporting and other activities for you to take part in and there are exciting opportunities to visit far away places. The headteacher and his colleagues lead the school in an outstanding way. They regularly check the quality of the teaching you receive and work hard to ensure it is as good as possible. It was a pleasure to see how you form excellent relationships with adults in the school and with each other, respecting each other regardless of race or culture.

We think that your school can improve further by making sure teachers always plan activities that provide challenging and interesting work for all of you. We want all teachers to extend your learning through the way they use questions. You can help as well by making sure you all come to school regularly.



18 October 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Ashlawn School, Rugby, CV22 5ET

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We wish you all continued success,
Elaine Taylor HMI