

Aylestone High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116936
Local Authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	326495
Inspection dates	6–7 July 2009
Reporting inspector	David Cox

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	861
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dean Cardey
Headteacher	Sue Woodrow
Date of previous school inspection	22 March 2006
School address	Broadlands House Broadlands Lane Hereford HR1 1HY
Telephone number	01432 357371
Fax number	01432 263925

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Aylestone Business and Enterprise College is an average-sized secondary school. The school has specialist status in business and enterprise. Nearly all students are from White British backgrounds, although students from many other ethnic groups are represented within the school. The new headteacher took up post in September 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Aylestone Business and Enterprise College provides its students with a satisfactory education. The school is improving rapidly after a decline in standards over the last three years.

Students' achievement is satisfactory overall. The recent decline in standards has been halted and the rate of students' progress has begun to accelerate due to better teaching and learning. Students leave school at the end of Year 11 with standards of attainment that are now average.

A systematic approach by senior leaders to directing improvement and promoting the well-being of learners has had a significant and positive impact. This is most noticeable in the personal development and well-being of students, which is now satisfactory. Attendance has improved greatly and is now close to the national average. The school's much improved procedures for preventing poor behaviour are highly effective. Behaviour is satisfactory and students demonstrate a pride in their school. Exclusions have declined sharply. Students report that they feel safe in school, bullying is rare and adults are available to provide support if problems arise. Students have a sound understanding of the need to adopt a healthy lifestyle with a number achieving the Junior Sports Leadership award. Successful annual charity events support local, national and international appeals. Representatives on the school council express students' views. Provision is satisfactory for the development of enterprise and workplace skills. Students have a satisfactory understanding of sustainable development, particularly through fieldwork enquiry and research. Students leave with satisfactory basic skills and plenty of interesting experiences on which they can confidently draw. They have a sound understanding of the different cultures represented in Britain, although they are less aware of their place in the global community.

The quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory. Arrangements to safeguard students are comprehensive and meet government requirements. A wide range of outside agencies lends effective support to assist the school in improving attendance and behaviour. The school provides a satisfactory curriculum. Working with local colleges and partner schools, the school has increased its vocational provision to provide students access to courses that meet their aptitudes, skills and choices. As a result, students find school more interesting and enjoyable.

Systematic improvement of teaching has taken place through good quality professional development and, where appropriate, specific support, training and mentoring, which is leading to examples of good and outstanding teaching. However, not all is this strong and therefore teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. While examples occur of teachers using assessment information well to ensure tasks in lessons match precisely with students' needs, this is not consistently the case in all lessons and occasionally work set does not enable different groups of students to progress as well as they could. Marking is variable across the school and, although most students receive regular feedback on how to improve their work, practice is inconsistent.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides good leadership and management. Parents are very supportive of the headteacher and the changes she has instigated. The school has a very good record of improvement in the last year and is in a strong position for further development. The school collects information from a wide range of sources to inform their self-evaluation. Its use is accurate and effective in intervening where it will have the greatest impact. However, while middle leaders are involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school, they do not always ensure the consistent application of school policies. The school's specialist status has provided additional resources to the benefit of students in

this school and in partner schools and the wider community. The relatively new governing body is increasingly offering support to the school while challenging it to do even better. In recent years, the school has set challenging targets for improvement which have not always been achieved. The school is fully aware that the rapid improvement seen this year needs to continue.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards of attainment for all students by ensuring teachers make better use of assessment data when matching work to the needs of students.
- Ensure that all middle leaders implement school policies and initiatives consistently.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

When students start school, their skills and knowledge are at the expected level for 11 year olds. From the accurate data that the school collects and from observations made during the inspection that the significant decline in standards seen in recent years has stopped. Standards are rising and achievement is satisfactory. This is due to the success of a range of strategies. Standards at the end of Year 11 are now average. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress and an increasing number leave the school with vocational and work-related qualifications.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students demonstrate they understand the shared values of the school community and support each other in attaining them. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. In lessons, students have a clear interest in the cultural heritage of others. However, across the school, opportunities to develop this further are limited, which confines students' understanding of their place in the global community.

Recent action has significantly improved attendance, which is now broadly average. When questioned, the majority of students say that they enjoy coming to school. In some lessons, however, a small minority become bored and not eager to learn, which slows their progress. Behaviour of the students is satisfactory, a view supported by the vast majority of parents' responses. Students move about the school safely, showing respect for adults and their peers. Improved internal provision and procedures have reduced the number of students' exclusions markedly.

Most students adopt healthy lifestyles, although some still bring unhealthy food to school. The wide range of 'house' sporting competitions students support well. Students' awareness about safety issues is secure and they adopt safe practices in lessons. They have a good understanding of the dangers of the internet.

Students confirm that they have numerous opportunities to contribute to the school community and many choose to do so, including taking on sports leadership roles and as members of the school council. However, students say that they do not have enough opportunities to volunteer for activities in the neighbourhood and community.

Students are able to express their views and raise concerns through the school council. They are proud of improvements that have resulted from their discussions, such as helping to shape the behaviour policy. Students in different year groups regularly organise fundraising events in aid of charities. Through such projects as the Young Enterprise 'Learn to Earn' programme, students develop satisfactorily the skills that will be of use to them in adult life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning have improved significantly in the last year. Teaching is satisfactory and the proportion of lessons in which students make good progress has increased. Teaching promotes positive behaviour and learning through varied approaches and the encouragement of student independence. The outstanding teaching in a minority of lessons excites and supports students of all levels of ability to make rapid progress. However, in a small minority of instances poor questioning techniques do not encourage students to extend their knowledge and understanding. Teachers do not always match work sufficiently to support and challenge different groups of students. Most students are clear about their targets for improvement but a small minority do not know how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve their work. Inconsistent marking hinders students' progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

After a considered analysis of the previous curriculum, its impact on results, and feedback from students and parents the school has developed a new curriculum which teachers are implementing. However, while recent improvements to the curriculum have not embedded fully, the new curriculum is already providing greater choice for students. For example, the Garden Project provides well for some Year 9 boys whose literacy levels were making it more difficult for them to access the mainstream curriculum.

Older students are appreciative of the increasing range of options available such as astronomy and geology, Young Apprenticeships and various college courses. Work placements through the Taste for Adventure programme serves vulnerable students well. While some opportunities for early entry to courses are in place, the few opportunities extended to students who are gifted and talented slows their progress.

The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities, including a substantial number of trips and visits. Opportunities cover sport, the arts, outdoor education and languages. For example, students in Year 8 speak enthusiastically about their recent visit to an Icon painting workshop hosted by a neighbouring school.

The school is working hard this year to embed the specialist subjects and skills required of being a specialist Business and Enterprise College. Year one of the specialism was not very successful, but recent development means that the school is now making good progress in this area. Specialist status has had most impact through the provision and the growing use of technology in lessons, which is supporting students' engagement and enjoyment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Child protection and other safeguarding procedures are secure, and processes in place are effective and understood by staff. Staff support students well in their transition from primary schools through well-planned activities and strong liaison with feeder schools, parents and students.

The school works hard to ensure all students, including the more vulnerable, are happy and supported. The school is clear about both the interventions and their impact on the students who need greatest support to achieve. The school makes effective use of other agencies, such as the strong contribution of the local authority behaviour and attendance consultants to raising attendance and improving behaviour.

By contrast, the academic guidance students receive is inconsistent. The embedding of sharing of targets with students by teachers is not secure in all areas, although good practice takes place in science and history.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

A strong and relentless focus on improvement by senior leaders has secured a rapid improvement in behaviour and attendance and halted the decline in standards. The headteacher provides good leadership and is committed to improving further all aspects of the school's work. The headteacher has set up robust partnerships with external organisations in order to accelerate improvement. She has set a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning and on the achievement of students. Her highly successful style of leadership has drawn together a team of committed senior leaders who feel empowered to make improvements to the quality of provision. The school is developing the role of the middle managers in contributing to school improvement. Some are now skilled in this aspect of their work. However, senior staff need to ensure that all middle managers are equally skilled. At this level, monitoring is not always rigorous enough to achieve consistency of practice across the school. Nearly all members of the governing body are new to their role. They have received extensive training and their role is developing well. They provide a satisfactory level of support and strategic planning.

The recent specialism re-launch was extensive and ambitious and the school is now a centre of business enterprise in the local authority, hosting many training courses and meetings. The school increasingly serves the needs and promotes the cohesiveness of the school's community by fostering an enterprise culture that extends into the community as well as across the school. A development of a nurture centre helps promote family learning and vulnerable families are now taking advantage of this facility.

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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	School Overall
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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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	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**

8 July 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Aylestone Business and Enterprise College, Hereford HR1 1H

Thank you to those of you who spoke to us when we inspected your school. Like you, we think the school has improved significantly in the last year since the arrival of the new headteacher. We think the school is satisfactory. You get on fine with each other and enjoy working together. It is good to see you helping the school to plan improvements through the school council, and you have contributed through the improved way you behave. You told us you feel safe, although some of you are not fully involved in your learning. You know how to stay healthy. You are aware of other cultures in Britain but less so of those in the wider world. Many of you now enjoy coming to school because courses that are more interesting are available to you, including the many opportunities the business and enterprise college provides. You enjoy visiting local colleges to discover how you might further your education after leaving Aylestone.

The quality of teaching is improving and satisfactory overall. This is reflected in a greater number of you leaving school with more relevant qualifications. However, not all teachers support you well enough in the classroom or provide you with work that challenges you to do your best. You are cared for satisfactorily and those of you who struggle with your learning receive sound specialist individual support. The school is helping you all to improve your attendance.

- Your headteacher and staff want the best for you and are determined that you make as much progress as you can in lessons. To make your school even better, we have asked your teachers to do two things:
- Make better use of assessment data in order to set work that is more demanding.
- Ensure that all staff who are responsible for checking how well you are doing do so more rigorously and apply the school's policies more consistently.

Finally, your school deserves your support. It is working hard to improve the education it provides for you in order that you can be successful and achieve well in later life.

Yours faithfully

David Cox

Lead inspector