

Ludlow CofE School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123587
Local Authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	327946
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2009
Reporting inspector	David Carrington

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	814
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Wooldridge
Headteacher	Philip Poulton
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2006
School address	Bromfield Road Ludlow SY8 1GJ
Telephone number	01584 872691
Fax number	01584 877708
Email address	admin@ludlow.shropshire.sch.uk

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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors. The inspectors visited 28 lessons, and held meetings with school staff, governors and students. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school improvement plan, governors' minutes, subject improvement plans, assessment information and curriculum planning. In addition, 77 parent questionnaires were received and analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how well students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and lower attaining girls are achieving
- the way in which assessment information is shared with students in order to improve their learning
- whether provision in Key Stages 3 and 4 is of comparable quality
- the extent of students' awareness and understanding of communities in other parts of Britain and overseas, and the school's promotion of community cohesion.

Information about the school

Ludlow C of E School is smaller than most secondary schools. About two thirds of the students come from Ludlow, the remainder live in the surrounding villages. Nearly all of them come from White British families and all but a few speak English as their first language. More students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities than is typical in a school of this size.

The school has had specialist Technology College status since 2003. Its second specialism as a Sports College was awarded in 2007. It has Healthy School accreditation and has been awarded Eco-school status and the Artsmark.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

As most parents and carers recognise, this is a good school. The key factors in its success are:

- students do well in school and reach above average standards
- achievement is particularly good in the specialist technology and sports subjects
- students develop well as mature and sensible learners who behave well and enjoy good relationships with others
- teaching quality has improved steadily in recent years and is good
- the curriculum provides good opportunities for students to learn new skills and knowledge and develop their understanding of the world of work and leisure
- the quality of leadership and management is good and is increasingly focused on how well students are achieving and on further improvement
- the headteacher is expert in inspiring staff and students to aim high and take the school from strength to strength.

Because the school has effective systems to evaluate its strengths and weaknesses, school leaders know where to focus their efforts for improvement. Strategic planning is built around these areas and on improving students' achievement. Since the previous inspection, standards, attendance, students' progress and the quality of teaching have all improved significantly. There are effective initiatives in place which encourage students to assess their own work and this has improved their pace of learning. Clearly, the school has good potential to consolidate its strengths and to improve further, especially in two key areas:

- within the teaching sets and groups, the match of work to students' achievement is not always sufficiently challenging
- the school makes inconsistent use of the assessment data it holds about students' achievement to pinpoint where improvements are required for learning and teaching.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure the quality of teaching is consistently good or better throughout the school by increasing the challenge of work and sharpening its suitability for students of different abilities within the sets and groups.
- Increase the rigour of school monitoring and evaluation so that it measures how effectively students are being taught and whether progress is at the best rate possible.

How good is the overall outcome for individuals and groups of pupils?

2

Students start Year 7 with broadly average standards. Because the transition from primary school is handled very effectively, students are quick off the mark in their learning in Key Stage 3. They make good progress and standards are above average by the end of Year 9. Learning is good in most lessons and the students work hard. Inspectors noted that lower attaining girls were particularly well motivated and interested in their tasks, which enabled them to make good progress. Higher attaining students are often, but not always, provided with tasks that challenge and inspire them to greater performance.

The good progress continues up to the end of Year 11. This includes those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In several lessons these students were particularly well managed, which ensured that those with behavioural difficulties were kept on task and the quieter students, often the girls, were encouraged successfully to build confidence and knowledge, and to talk about their work.

GCSE results are notably good in technology and physical education because the lessons are firmly focused on the development of skills, knowledge and understanding, and ample opportunities are provided for students to evaluate their own work. Across the board, the proportion of students gaining grades A* to C at GCSE and its equivalents is above average. Results in English and mathematics are also good. In many lessons in these two subjects, students enjoy their learning and they gain the necessary skills and knowledge for life and work outside school. Wisely, the school has set challenging targets for improving the proportion of A* and A grades in future years, especially in mathematics, to build upon the success in physical education where over half of the students reached these levels in 2008.

Both during and outside lessons, the vast majority of students behave well. Whilst some bullying happens very occasionally, students and most parents and carers have full confidence in the school's measures to combat unacceptable conduct. The school is a calm and settled place of work where relationships are warm and supportive. Conditions for learning are good, which ensures students approach their work in a productive and purposeful way. The school has had considerable success in improving attendance, particularly amongst students with frequent absence. The attendance rate is now average.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education are strengths of the school. They have ample opportunities to reflect on their experiences, as seen in the 'It's a

wonderful world' assembly where students gave rapt attention as they thought about making changes that are right for them. There is a strong sense of community within school and there are many events locally in which students are involved. Their good ideas for ways to improve the school are adopted whenever possible.

These are the grades for students' outcomes

Students' attainment ¹	2
The quality of students' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do students achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do students feel safe?	2
How well do students behave?	2
To what extent do students adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do students contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Students' attendance	3
How well do students develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

The quality of the school's work

Teaching has improved. Whilst the quality is similarly good in Key Stages 3 and 4, it is not yet totally consistent across subjects, years and ability groups. There is determination amongst all staff to remedy the inconsistencies in quality. At present, school leaders are working to improve the match of work to the level of students' attainment. In technology and physical education, the match is secure, but in other subjects such as mathematics and science, it should be sharper. Visits to lessons indicate that within the different teaching sets and groups, the work is sometimes similar for all students. In some of the top mathematics sets there is insufficient attention to the challenge provided for all the pupils in the set, especially for the top performers. English is taught in mixed ability groups and generally, the match of work to students' abilities is better.

The school is using the strengths of provision in the two specialist areas to make improvements to the curriculum for other subjects. This is a success story, as the curriculum has been enhanced by greater focus on practical activity in all lessons and an increasing emphasis on students' own evaluation of their work. In some, but not all, lessons across the school, the information from assessment is shared with the students in order to help them identify how well they are reaching their targets. The building learning initiative is intended to ensure such feedback is consistent across the school and, so far, it is proving effective in this. Students are enthusiastic about the rich programme of after-school sporting activities. It is hardly a surprise that

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

most students know exactly why keeping fit is an essential part of healthy living.

Most parents and carers are impressed with the welfare arrangements. The school has striking success in ensuring that vulnerable students learn and achieve equally as well as all others. It also maintains continued successful learning for those students in school who might, without effective guidance and management, be excluded. The school works extremely effectively with organisations, businesses and outside agencies to promote students' good learning and achievement.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	2
Effective assessment	2
An appropriate curriculum which meets students' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	2
Support, guidance and care	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Staff, governors and many parents acknowledge that the headteacher's steadfast leadership has been the root of its improvement. In a comparatively short time, he has built a strong team of senior leaders who achieve good results for their efforts to improve school performance. Middle leaders are increasingly focused on actions to 'raise the bar' in teaching quality and students' achievement. Governors provide the necessary challenge to underpin the effective work of all leaders. This is manifestly a joined-up approach to leadership and management which is based squarely on a shared sense of purpose and firm steer towards improvement.

So far, monitoring and evaluation of school performance has been geared mainly towards the quality of teaching. Senior leaders realise that the emphasis has to change to give more weight to the evaluation of students' learning and achievement. The initiative to build students' learning power is midway through its introductory cycle and is already showing promise in the subjects and year groups involved. At its best, the initiative is resulting in greater opportunities for students to take charge of their own learning and to evaluate their progress. In such lessons, the quality of provision is at its strongest and staff are getting closer to answering in full the critical question, 'Who learns best in my lesson and why?'

The school is conspicuous in the effective way that it promotes equality of opportunity for students. It also gives positive messages about different cultures, faiths and personal traits that reduce the potential for discrimination or hostile attitudes. Community cohesion is promoted well, with an effective audit undertaken and plans in hand to implement a strategy for broadening students' appreciation of life in communities in different parts of Britain and overseas. Governors recognise that the next step for them is to monitor how effectively this strategy strengthens the school's contribution to community cohesion. The arrangements for safeguarding students were good at the time of the inspection.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	2
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	2
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	2
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	2
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	2
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	2
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents are positive about the school. Where concerns were raised, these focused on the information given about their children's progress, discipline in a few lessons, challenge for top achievers and provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, for each of these, there were no more than a handful of concerns, and positive comments very much outweighed the concerns. The identified strengths of the school revolved around the leadership of the headteacher, care and welfare provision, the arrangements for transition from primary school, effective measures to overcome bullying, the school ethos and the degree to which it ensures students' enjoyment and good achievement.

As shown in this report, inspectors agree with the positive views of parents. The concern about top achievers is supported by some of the inspection findings.

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. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
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. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Achievement:	an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
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.

18 March 2009

Dear Students



Inspection of Ludlow C of E School, Ludlow SY8 1GJ

Thank you for the welcome you gave us when we visited your school. You helped us find out more about your learning and showed us why it is a good school. Like your parents and carers, we think your school is improving well and that it has a promising future. It has many strengths.

- You reach above average standards and make good progress.
- You do particularly well in your school's specialist subjects.
- Your behaviour is good, you get on well with each other and you enjoy your time in school.
- You are well taught and are keen to learn.
- The curriculum gives you good opportunities to study a range of subjects and develop key skills and knowledge.
- You know how to keep healthy and safe and have sensible ideas for improving the school.
- Your welfare is looked after carefully and you are well prepared for the next stage of your education and future working life.
- All staff and governors work effectively to make sure you do well in school.
- The headteacher has high expectations of you and he gives a very strong lead to everyone.

There are two things that we identify for staff and governors to improve.

- Make sure that the work you are given is challenging and well focused to extend your level of skills and knowledge.
- Use your success in learning to pinpoint where further improvements are required for teaching.

To help make these improvements, you can share with your teachers your thoughts and ideas about how well you are progressing. This will help them plan the next challenge for you.

We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

David Carrington
Lead inspector

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