



Aylestone High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116936
LEA Herefordshire
Inspection number 279954
Inspection dates 22 March 2006 to 23 March 2006
Reporting inspector Mark Sims HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Broadlands House
School category	Community		Broadlands Lane
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Hereford, Herefordshire HR1 1HY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01432 357371
Number on roll	1255	Fax number	01432 263925
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr George Nairn
Date of previous inspection	6 November 2000	Headteacher	Mr Steve Byatt

Age group 11 to 16	Inspection dates 22 March 2006 - 23 March 2006	Inspection number 279954
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Aylestone High School is a larger than average comprehensive school set on the outskirts of Hereford. It is a popular school with a strong reputation for its additional provision for music. Standards on entry to the school are broadly average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. There are a small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language. Overall, 95% of its pupils are from a White British background. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is slightly below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that gives good value for money. Pupils progress well throughout the school and reach high standards. Their attitudes and behaviour in and around the school are good. The quality of teaching is generally good, although teachers do not always plan sufficiently to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties.

Assessment procedures are good in most subjects but this is not consistent across all departments so that pupils do not always know what they need to do to improve. The curriculum provision for different groups of pupils is extensive. The school provides a good quality of care, support and guidance for the needs of its pupils, and they respond very well to the school's emphasis on an inclusive ethos. Tracking of pupils' academic progress is not as consistent as it should be across the school.

The school is well managed at all levels. The headteacher has a clear vision based on the principles of inclusion which is shared by most of the school community. Parents remain to be convinced that the school is improving. Communications with parents are not as strong as they could be. The senior leadership team and governing body have a good understanding of how well the school is doing and where it needs to improve. Planning, monitoring of teaching, and professional development for subject leaders and newly qualified staff are particularly strong features. The school's arrangements for a daily act of collective worship do not meet the statutory requirements.

The school has made significant improvements since the last inspection and can go on to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve communications with parents in order to address their concerns.
- Make sure the needs of pupils with learning difficulties are consistently met by ensuring work set is well matched to their requirements.
- Develop greater consistency in assessment procedures throughout the school, particularly in relation to tracking individuals and informing pupils on how they can improve.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards on entry to the school are broadly average. Pupils achieve well so that by the end of Key Stage 3 they reach standards that are above average. Progress was much improved in English and science in national tests in 2005 compared to previous years. Through improved systems for collecting and analysing assessment information the school knows that some lower attaining pupils in English make less progress than in mathematics and science at Key Stage 3. Systems for tracking individuals in other subjects are less well developed.

Progress in Key Stage 4 is good and test results in most subjects are above average. In 2005, although fewer pupils reached the highest grades in tests, overall pupils did better than expected nationally given their starting points and much better than pupils in the previous year's tests. All pupils gained at least one pass at GCSE in 2005 which is a credit to the school's commitment to inclusion.

Progress in mathematics throughout the school has been exceptionally high for the last three years. Higher attaining pupils do well in lessons because they work conscientiously and are given challenging work. The progress of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is not as good as for other pupils in the school because teachers do not always prepare work matched to their needs.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development is good. Most pupils enjoy school and attendance levels are above average. There is a high level of participation in the extra curricular activities. In lessons, pupils show positive attitudes and behave well. Behaviour throughout the school is generally good. There are few permanent exclusions, but the school's insistence on high standards and respect for others results in a high level of fixed-term exclusions. Most involve a small number of pupils. Many parents expressed concerns about bullying, but the pupils themselves said it is not such a significant issue and that the school deals well with incidents when they occur. Pupils feel safe and have confidence in the school's effective pastoral support system.

The school's encouragement of healthy lifestyles has been recognised by a Healthy Schools Award. Health related issues are well covered in the curriculum and the school operates a healthy eating policy. All pupils take part in physical education and many take advantage of the opportunities for further participation.

The school council provides an effective forum for pupils to express their views either directly or through their representatives. They feel their opinions are listened to and acted upon. Many pupils make a positive contribution to the local community through a programme of charity work and special events.

The school effectively helps pupils to acquire the skills that they will need for their future economic well-being. Standards of literacy and numeracy are high and the older pupils have many opportunities to take work related courses and develop leadership skills.

Overall, the school makes a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, there is insufficient emphasis across the curriculum to reflect cultural diversity.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. Teachers know their subjects well. They structure lessons effectively through well chosen activities and learning materials which build on pupils' understanding. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well, both in the presentation of lessons and as a tool for independent learning. Teachers usually share lesson objectives with pupils and routinely review progress to reinforce learning at the end of lessons. Teachers' expectations are usually high and pupils rise to the challenge. Relationships between pupils and teachers are positive and conducive to helping pupils realise their potential. Pupils with learning difficulties are given appropriate support and individual education plans provide focused targets for improvement but they are not always used well in planning lessons. The match of task to need is not always appropriate. Collaboration between teachers and teaching assistants about planning is underdeveloped.

Assessment procedures are good overall and the school is increasingly making use of data to set challenging targets for pupils. In many subjects, assessment is used well by teachers and pupils are encouraged to assess their own work. In other subjects, the tracking of progress and the quality of feedback on how to improve is less informative. Teachers give extra time for revision classes and prepare their pupils very well for examinations. Pupils respond well to the commitment shown by their teachers and they are motivated to succeed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The inclusive curriculum is good. It provides pupils with a wide range of opportunities to pursue courses suited to their needs and interests. It has been strengthened through the GCSE short courses for all pupils in citizenship, ICT and religious education. Optional GCSE courses in astronomy and geology are offered after school. Able linguists can take an additional modern foreign language and talented musicians have extra lessons before school. Accelerated courses in mathematics and music allow some pupils to take GCSE examinations early. Personal, social and health education and citizenship make a strong contribution to pupils' personal development. Statutory requirements are met in full.

Vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 lead to a range of qualifications matched to pupils' abilities. The school works well with local partners to offer courses that will engage pupils. Work related skills are developed well and pupils' awareness of the relevance of their studies is heightened through work experience and visits to the school by representatives of the business community. The curriculum is enriched by a full programme of extra curricular activities, particularly in sport and music, and enhanced by house competitions. There are many opportunities for educational visits,

such as geography fieldwork in Scotland and the history visit to the battlefields of the First World War.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils feel safe and enjoy school because care and guidance arrangements are good. Child protection, risk assessment and health and safety procedures meet statutory requirements. Good cooperation with outside agencies ensures the protection of vulnerable children. Effective measures have improved the safety of the site. Changes to the role of the tutor have increased pupils' readiness to discuss problems, and individuals' achievements are more closely monitored. Incidents of bullying are taken seriously but many parents are unconvinced that procedures to address this are effective. Pupils understand systems for rewards and sanctions. Those with fixed-term exclusions receive guidance through the learning support centre to rejoin the school.

Individual education plans identify strengths and needs to set achievable targets for pupils with learning difficulties. They are not used consistently so some pupils do not achieve as well as they might. Pupils are encouraged to take on responsibilities within the school and they benefit from good guidance about education and training opportunities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The strong leadership of the headteacher is successfully changing the school's culture to one where all pupils are valued and included. The governors, senior managers and most staff fully support his vision but there is still further work to do in communicating this vision to parents. Governors know the school well and this enables them to challenge decisions. They are well briefed about national test results, which helps them question the school's performance more rigorously.

Senior managers undertake their responsibilities with commitment and enthusiasm. They monitor and evaluate teaching and learning regularly and work hard to develop teachers' professional expertise through in-service training. In particular, the school's induction and guidance for newly qualified teachers are exemplary. Recent training for many subject leaders has improved their leadership. Subject improvement plans help departments to evaluate their provision more effectively. The school is planning strategically to strengthen the leadership at middle management.

Performance management of teachers has been temporarily suspended pending the outcome of a staffing review, although is to be re-introduced shortly. Communication systems are not always effective in ensuring that information is shared amongst staff or with parents. The school does not comply with the requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship. Financial management is effective. The school budget is very tight, and careful forward planning is being used to avoid a deficit. The school gives good value for money and shows good capacity for improvement.

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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?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

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

Thank you very much for welcoming us to your school this week when we spent two days with you. We enjoyed meeting many of you and thought you would like to know what we have said about Aylestone High.

We think you go to a good school where you do well in most of your subjects and make good progress during your time in school. Your teachers and other staff work hard to give you a wide range of interesting lessons and curriculum activities. We were very impressed with the additional provision in music and after school subjects some of you study. We think that those responsible for leading the school are doing a good job and they know what next steps need to be taken to make the school an even better place.

Most of you behave very well in lessons and around the school. You have told us you enjoy school and that if bullying occurs it is dealt with well. Many of your parents do not feel the same way, however, and if you enjoy school and feel safe and well cared for, as many of you have told us you do, you can help the school gain more of your parents' confidence by telling them this.

We have asked the staff and governors in your school to:

Improve the way it speaks to parents so that they are well informed about the school.

Make sure teachers always plan activities that are suitable for those of you who find your work hard.

Follow more closely how well you are doing in different subjects so that they can tell you what you need to do next to make your work better.

We enjoyed our visit to your school and wish you every success in your future.