

Alderman Peel High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121170
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	327421
Inspection dates	24–25 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Deborah Vaughan-Jenkins HMI

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	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	295
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Martin Dutton
Headteacher	Mr Jonathan Platten
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 July 2006
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 25 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's operation, and looked at documentation as well as students' work in lessons. Questionnaire responses were received from 92 parents, and these were evaluated closely.

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

- the impact of the school's specialist sports status on the students' experiences and outcomes
- the extent to which the school's curriculum and support services meet the needs of all students and enables them to achieve their potential
- the progress made by all students in lessons
- the consistency of provision between subjects and departments
- the extent to which the school has improved the issues identified at the last inspection.

Information about the school

Alderman Peel is a smaller than average mixed comprehensive school located in Wells-next-the-Sea on the Norfolk coast. Most students are recruited from towns and villages within a ten mile radius. The majority of students at the school are White British, with around 1% of students from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is above average. Just over a quarter of all students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school successfully gained specialist status for sport in September 2007, international school status in 2008, and Healthy school status in 2009. The school also provides a range of extended services to support adult and family learning.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Alderman Peel High is an outstanding school that continues to improve, successfully pursuing a journey towards its vision of excellence. It is strongly inclusive and is effectively raising the aspirations of its students and staff alike. Students are rightly proud of their school and enjoy their learning experience. They make consistently good progress, with some making exceptional progress in their time at school. Students with specific or additional needs follow a programme of highly personalised learning, and as a consequence, make outstanding progress in relation to their starting points. Standards are rising notably because the school has strengthened its systems for monitoring the performance of subjects and maintained its momentum in improving the quality of its teaching and learning. The school recognises that GCSE results could be improved further and has increased its focus on raising standards consistently across subjects.

Students' behaviour in lessons, and particularly around the school, is exemplary. The majority of lessons are good and some are outstanding. Most students display positive attitudes to learning and are punctual to class. Student peer and self-assessment is actively encouraged by teachers to help students extend their own learning, although it is used to better effect in some lessons than others. Overall, assessment and feedback on students' work is used well by teachers to direct improvement. The curriculum is extensive, innovative and designed to meet the needs of all abilities. The excellent and imaginative use of the school's specialist sports status contributes significantly to the quality of provision. It has greatly extended its range of enrichment activities which students value highly. Many students take advantage of the wide range of opportunities that enable them to take on roles of additional responsibility, helping them to develop their confidence and make a significant contribution to their school and local community. Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Staff know their students well and the school provides a caring and supportive learning environment in which students flourish.

The headteacher provides strong leadership and is ably supported by a competent and enthusiastic leadership team. Together they set a clear vision and ambitious targets for the school. The accountability of middle managers has been increased and is leading to greater consistency between subjects. A key strength of the school is the particularly strong partnership arrangements that exist with a wide range of external agencies and educational providers that directly benefit students by

strengthening the curriculum, and support and influence of the school's sports status. The school's promotion of community cohesion is outstanding, with the school's inclusive ethos at the heart of its strategy. In most cases, the school's evaluation of its work is comprehensive, enabling it to judge its impact clearly; however, the school recognises that in a few areas evaluation is less extensive and coherent. The school has made good progress in addressing all the key areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. This, along with rising standards and improvements to the curriculum and support services demonstrates the school has a good capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve GCSE results further and across all subjects by:
 - continuing to identify and share the best practice that exists in the school
 - continuing to closely monitor and evaluate subject performance.
- Involve students even more in their own learning by:
 - ensuring appropriate levels of challenge; particularly through questioning, assessment and other planned activities that extend the learning for students who may finish their work more promptly
 - continuing to establish the use of peer and self-assessment in lessons.
- Ensure that all monitoring and self-evaluation of the school's work is equally extensive and coherent.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Students enter the school with lower than average levels of prior attainment and through years 7 to 11, make good and sometimes excellent progress. Overall standards are improving and in 2008, the school's GCSE results were close to the national average, with indications of sustained improvement this year. There are no significant patterns in the performance between girls and boys, but where any arise, the school acts swiftly to ensure the gap in achievement is reduced. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make outstanding progress because their academic and personal needs are very well understood by the school, which provides bespoke support to meet their needs.

Students say they feel very safe, and anti-bullying measures are used consistently to swiftly resolve any incidents reported. Students' behaviour overall, and particularly their conduct around the school, is exemplary because the school sets high expectations for its students and monitors students' behaviour carefully.

Students know and understand what they need to do to keep themselves healthy. An increasing number are taking advantage of the wide range of sporting and physical education opportunities provided for them through sports college activities. They speak enthusiastically about their experience and enjoyment of these and the benefits to them. Parental responses to the questionnaires confirm this.

A large number of students hold posts of responsibility, enabling students of all ages and abilities to make a positive contribution to the school and the local community. The school's specialist status for sport has significantly extended the opportunities for students to take on additional responsibility, such as subject captains and sports leaders who work with local primary schools. Students make a very enthusiastic contribution to new but wider-reaching local, national and international projects such as Young Ambassadors and Eco-school activities.

The school has improved the development of literacy and numeracy across all subjects to support students' future economic well-being and prepare them for life after school. The proportion of students gaining A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, improved significantly in 2008 and is now close to the national average. The school works tirelessly on the monitoring of students' attendance and promoting its importance to both students and their parents. As a result, attendance continues to improve each year and the proportion of persistent absences is declining.

Students' social, moral and cultural development is outstanding. The inclusive nature of the school's community and the mutual support students show for each other is evidence of their highly developed social, moral and cultural understanding. Students have been key contributors to the new 'minimum entitlement for learners', an agreement between the school and students which defines a shared set of personal values. Students are proud of this and it is playing a major role in the push to further improve the quality of teaching and learning. Students are able to talk positively about what they have gained from meeting, visiting and talking to others from a variety of backgrounds, both similar to and different from their own. Spiritual development is good. Students enjoy moments of reflection when offered, for example in assemblies, form time and during the range of talks and presentations which the school provides for them. However, students are not consistently given time for reflection or to share ideas and develop their thoughts collaboratively and individually.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Teaching and learning are good, and in some instances outstanding. In almost all lessons students are motivated and make good or outstanding progress because of firm classroom management and high expectations of behaviour. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. Questioning is used frequently to assess learning. The most effective questioning observed also challenged students' thinking in order to develop their independent learning skills and consider how and what they are learning. However, this was not seen routinely in all lessons. Peer and self-assessment is encouraged in many lessons to help students think for themselves and be involved in their own learning. Its use across the school is improving, with students gradually gaining the confidence to critique their own and each others' work. The use of teaching assistants to support students with specific learning support needs is very effective. Overall, current assessment information is being developed well to tailor teaching more specifically to meet individual students' needs. Class work and formal assessments are marked frequently but in a few cases teachers' comments do not always explain clearly enough what students need to do to improve.

The curriculum is outstanding. It is both innovative and extensive in its breadth, particularly given the size of school, offering a vast array of personalised learning pathways for each and every student at a level appropriate to their ability. The curriculum is used imaginatively to raise aspirations through taster sessions and courses at colleges, to inspire students to believe in their ability to access the highest levels of education. A carefully constructed timetable includes a comprehensive range of courses that are responsive to the needs and resources of the local community. The curriculum is under constant review and amendment. It continues to build on

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

very strong partnerships with local providers and businesses; to take account of the needs of different groups of students and to adopt new national programmes and initiatives where these will prove beneficial to its students. For example, the school has introduced a creative approach to the curriculum in Key Stage 3, as part of a national scheme, giving students even more opportunities to experience and enjoy different styles of learning.

Sports college status has had a marked effect on making an already outstanding curriculum become even more impressive through the introduction of well-chosen options and support, enabling all students to make appropriate choices and experience success at a variety of levels, both academically and personally.

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support. Comprehensive transition arrangements prepare students successfully for both joining and leaving school. Academic support is focused effectively. Gifted and talented students are supported well through a growing range of opportunities to enable them to fast track qualifications. The support given to students with persistent attendance problems to help them re-engage in school life is extensive and involves working closely with families and other external support agencies. As a result of this work, the proportion of persistent absence in the school has reduced notably over the last three years. The support provided to students who have specific or additional learning needs or face barriers to education is particularly strong, enabling these learners to make excellent progress and significant personal gains.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides strong leadership. The leadership team, staff and governors are energised and committed to his vision to raise standards and improve the future life chances and equality of opportunities for all students at Alderman Peel. Outcomes for students are improving markedly as a result. Staff morale is high. The monitoring at faculty and subject level has increased in rigour and enables managers to target areas for improvement effectively. Middle management is mostly good and improving, reducing inconsistency between subject performances. Effective quality assurance and a relentless focus on teaching and learning is successfully improving the quality of provision and outcomes for students. The school evaluates its work frequently. However, although the school evaluates the impact of its provision, in a few areas, such as its positive promotion of equality and diversity, it is not quite as extensive or cohesive. Overall, self-evaluation processes are effective and extend into all faculties and teams.

Governance is good. Governors are highly supportive of the school and their involvement in monitoring performance is improving through increasing links with subjects and involvement in faculty reviews. The school's promotion of and approach to community cohesion are outstanding. Students appreciate the feeling of togetherness that the school ethos provides. The school plays a significant role in its local community, including strong links with local primary schools through a wide range of projects. The school's international school status is effectively extending the range of opportunities for students to broaden their horizons. The school's international student group is working well to raise global awareness through initiatives such as producing plays delivered in a foreign language and an annual languages day. The school's partnership arrangements and other collaborative work are a key strength of the school, and directly benefit students' learning.

Clear safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and meet government requirements. The school deploys its resources extremely well and provides outstanding value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

Around one third of parents responded to the parental questionnaire. Parents were overwhelmingly positive about the school and spoke highly of its work. Parents and carers who live outside the catchment area of the school were particularly delighted with their choice, and reported the difference they felt the school was making to their child's experience of education. Praise and gratitude were also reported from parents of students with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities who felt the school has enabled their children to develop and achieve both academically and personally. A very small minority raised issues about wanting even greater communication between the school and home.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Alderman Peel High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspection team received 92 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 255 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	65	20	2	2

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:** the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
- 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.



26 June 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Alderman Peel High School, Wells Next-the Sea, NR23 1RB

I would like to begin by thanking you all for welcoming me and my colleagues to your school on the 24 and 25 June. Your behaviour, courtesy and smart appearance impressed us from the outset. During the two days we spent at your school we visited your lessons, met a number of you, and talked at length to various members of school staff. This letter aims to outline to you our findings from the inspection.

We found that Alderman Peel is an outstanding school. You told us that your school's specialist status for sport is making a big difference and broadening the opportunities available to you, and we agree. We found the excellent curriculum and outstanding support and guidance you receive prepares you well for life after school. In fact, many of you progress successfully into further education when you leave Year 11. There are three areas we felt your school could improve further, these are:

- to improve your GCSE results even further
- to involve you further in your own learning so that you gain more confidence in discussing your own, and other students' work
- to make sure that the school monitors and evaluates all aspects of its work equally well.

Your headteacher, along with his team, is doing a great job in ensuring your school continues to improve. Your school knows what is needed to improve and is committed to making your experience in education enjoyable and successful.

You can of course contribute by continuing to work as hard as you can to achieve your best. You should also continue to share your views through your school council. In this way, the school will know what you think it does well or what you think it needs to improve further.

Thank you again for your help in this inspection and we would like to wish you all the very best in your studies and every success in the future.

Deborah Vaughan Jenkins

Her Majesty's Inspector

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