

Ludlow Church of England School Specialist Technology and Sports College

Inspection report

Unique reference number	123587
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	380695
Inspection dates	22–23 February 2012
Lead inspector	Mark Sims HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	837
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Annabel Gilmour
Headteacher	Philip Poulton
Date of previous school inspection	16 March 2009
School address	Bromfield Road Burway Ludlow SY8 1GJ
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Age group	11-16
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Introduction

Inspection team

Mark Sims

Her Majesty's Inspector

Doug Masterton

Additional inspector

Susan Williams

Additional inspector

Philip Winch

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 39 teachers teaching 39 lessons, of which four were joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. Observations accounted for approximately 20 hours of inspection time in total. Meetings were held with a group of pupils, members of the governing body and school staff, including senior and middle managers and a senior adviser from the local authority. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the recently revised self-evaluation form, the school development plan, the safeguarding and equality policies, and minutes of governing body meetings. Also, they analysed 159 parental and carers' questionnaires and others completed by pupils and staff.

Information about the school

Ludlow is smaller than the average secondary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average and there is a rising trend. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds and there are very few pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is broadly average including those with a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of pupils entering or leaving the school other than at the usual times is below the national average for secondary schools. The school meets current government floor standards. It has Healthy Schools accreditation and has been awarded Eco-school status and the Artsmark.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school because achievement is in line with that expected nationally. Standards at GCSE, based on the proportion of pupils who gain five good grades including English and mathematics, are broadly average. Pupils have not made sufficient progress in science and humanities as a result of previously identified inadequate teaching and behaviour in these subjects.
- Teaching is satisfactory although much is good or better and none seen during the inspection was inadequate. In good lessons, pupils learn well, inspired by teachers' flair and creativity. Higher attaining pupils are stretched but not all teachers plan for the needs of lower attaining pupils. Teachers' use of assessment, including marking, is inconsistent. It is used well in English to inform pupils of their progress and next steps but in some other subjects it is less informative.
- Behaviour and safety are satisfactory. Most pupils, parents and carers are positive, particularly the extent to which they say their children feel safe. Attendance is above average and rising. There are very few exclusions. During the inspection, almost all pupils behaved well. Pupils get on well together and have good relationships with the adults who work with them. However, questionnaires completed by parents and carers, pupils and staff, and discussions with pupils, indicated that this is not always the case. A minority of parents and carers said lessons were sometimes disrupted by pupils, especially in science, and less than half of the staff who responded said pupils' behaviour was managed well.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory. Senior leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. Improvements by senior leaders in monitoring and tracking performance have been significant, albeit recent. The quality of leadership of middle leaders is improving but remains inconsistent. The school is rich in the data senior leaders collect on pupils' progress but the extent varies to which this is used effectively by other leaders and teachers to bring about improvements.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement and improve the quality of teaching, particularly in science, humanities and vocational courses by ensuring that teachers:
 - are consistent in the use of behaviour management and provide stimulating and engaging activities to ensure that no lesson is disrupted
 - use data on pupils' prior attainment to ensure they are monitoring the progress of individuals and groups
 - plan to meet the needs of all groups of pupils in their lessons, particularly those who are lower attaining, and that the next steps in learning are appropriate to pupils' current level of attainment
 - inform pupils regularly, including through marking, how well they are doing and how they could improve their work to achieve their targets.

- Improve the quality of leadership and management in the school by ensuring that:
 - all middle leaders take greater responsibility for the use of data to track and monitor performance in their subject areas
 - teachers consistently plan for the different needs in their classes, particularly of lower attaining pupils
 - good practice in assessment is shared more widely with other departments to achieve greater consistency.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Since the last inspection, the proportion of pupils gaining at least five A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics has continued to rise at the same rate as the national figure and it is broadly average. This represents satisfactory progress as pupils join the school at the start of Year 7 having attained levels in English (including reading) and mathematics that are in line with national averages. There is, however, a widening gap with the national average when attainment is measured against five or more A* to C grades in any GCSE subject including vocational courses where results dipped in the most recent examinations. Standards are low in science and humanities and in the small number of vocational subjects offered, linked to the previous inadequate teaching identified by the school.

Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs have made rapid progress in English to close the gap with their peers nationally, but this is not consistent across all subjects and overall their progress is satisfactory. Lower attaining pupils in previous years have not made as much progress as higher attaining pupils.

Pupils made at least satisfactory progress in all lessons seen, including in previously identified under-performing subjects where the teaching has now improved. They are doing particularly well in their learning in English and mathematics where they know how well they are doing and are given clear guidance on next steps in their learning. Learning is most effective in those lessons where pupils have the opportunity to work in groups or take responsibility for their own research. Speaking skills have been well developed in mathematics where pupils are challenged to justify their answers and evaluate their own or others' responses. In history, pupils' literacy skills have been developed well through close partnerships with English.

Learning was less effective in lessons where teachers spent too much time talking from the front or took too long on one activity. Not all pupils took part in whole-class discussions where questions were answered by volunteers only. Higher attaining pupils learnt well when set challenging and stimulating tasks, but pupils made less progress where work was not sufficiently pitched at the right level. This was particularly the case for lower attaining pupils where, at times, their work was either too easy or too hard. A very large majority of parents and carers said their children were making good progress in school.

Quality of teaching

At its best, teaching provides pupils with lessons that are engaging and memorable. Teachers show flair and draw on their good subject knowledge to excite and stimulate pupils. The large majority of pupils respond well to teaching. They work hard and do their best to succeed. Relationships between adults and pupils are good. In the most effective lessons, pupils with additional learning needs are well supported to be fully integrated and achieve well. The best teacher questioning targets a mix of volunteers and non-volunteers and the level of challenge of the questions enable lower and higher attaining pupils to participate. In group work, all pupils have the opportunity to take part in discussions and support each other in their work. Pupils show a positive attitude to their learning even in those lessons where the pace dips or the activity is less interesting. Opportunities for pupils' social and moral development are offered through tutor time as well as in lessons when pupils are able to work in groups to discuss relevant issues. Most parents and carers said that their children were taught well and a large majority of pupils agreed. Inspectors found that while teaching in nearly half of the lessons was good, in the majority of lessons it was satisfactory.

Marking varies from high quality in English, where pupils know exactly how well they are doing and how they could improve, to some other subjects where it is limited to brief praise comments and where pupils are not sure how they can achieve the next level. Higher attaining pupils are usually given challenging work to enable many of them to attain the highest possible level or grade in their subjects. Elsewhere, there is insufficient recognition of pupils' different starting points when teachers plan lessons and activities, particularly for lower attaining pupils. In some lessons, intended learning outcomes are limited to tasks to be completed. At times, teaching assistants and other adults are not effectively deployed to support pupils and their role is not clearly enough defined.

The school is drawing on strengths within English to improve the teaching of literacy across the curriculum. The curriculum is based mainly on academic courses which meet the needs of the large majority of pupils, but there is a small range of vocational courses available.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

During the inspection, behaviour seen around the school and in the majority of lessons was good. Pupils are helpful and considerate towards one another, and show an appreciation of others' differences. They collaborate well together during group work in lessons and the vertical tutor system (pupils of different ages in the same tutor group) enables older pupils to help and support younger ones, which they much appreciate. Older pupils enjoy taking on additional responsibilities. Pupils take advantage of the work scrutiny meetings with senior leaders when they are able to talk about any concerns they have.

A large majority of parents, carers and pupils said behaviour in school was good, but over a third of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire said their children's lessons had been disrupted by bad behaviour. Less than half of the 53 staff who responded to their survey agreed that the behaviour of pupils is consistently well managed. Inspectors investigated these concerns and found that, while no disruptive behaviour was seen during the inspection, the school recognised that in some lessons this has been an issue. This was linked to previous inadequate teaching and effective action is now being taken to address this.

A very large majority of parents and carers said their children feel safe in school and the large majority of pupils agreed with this. The school ensures it keeps pupils safe through the rigorous safeguarding arrangements which are in place and continuously reviewed. Pupils themselves show a good awareness of keeping themselves safe, for example through their knowledge of e-safety and how to avoid potentially dangerous situations. Different kinds of bullying, including very occasional racist and homophobic incidents, are dealt with well by the school and the electronic tracking system enables the school to monitor incidents closely and take effective action. Pupils are confident in reporting incidents if they occur. Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in the rising attendance which is above average. The rate of persistent absences has fallen and exclusion rates are very low.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, supported well by senior leaders, has an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and this is reflected in the school's self-evaluation and development plan. Senior leaders have high expectations and have consequently introduced more rigorous procedures for tracking teaching and the performance and progress of pupils. Teaching has improved in a number of key subjects, including English and mathematics, due to the successful interventions introduced, although some weaknesses in teaching remain in other subjects. Governors, too, have a clear view of the school and, as they remain fully supportive of the school's leaders, they are developing their role to challenge and hold them to account. Consequently, the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

The school's promotion of equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Senior leaders' development of sophisticated data gives the school the ability to track the progress of individuals and groups, and to monitor trends. The extent varies to which this is used by all staff to track groups. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive effective support through the pupil support centre, although there is some inconsistency in the quality of the support and provision in mainstream lessons. There remain inconsistencies in the quality of middle leadership, but the quality is improving through the weekly developmental meetings attended by middle and senior leaders. Middle leaders are less secure in the use of data to track the progress of groups of pupils or to hold individual teachers to account for the performance of pupils they teach.

The curriculum is weighted more towards academic subjects, which meets the needs of most pupils and the demands of the local community. Outcomes in the few vocational courses have not been high; nevertheless, the school recognises the need to reflect on whether more vocational opportunities should be offered. Despite the largely monocultural make-up of the school, pupils demonstrate a good appreciation and understanding of the wider world.

The school meets all its statutory requirements for safeguarding; it ensures that staff are well trained and that procedures are kept fully up to date. Partnerships with local schools and other agencies are well established. With the exception of the questions about disruption in lessons, a very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were positive about all other aspects of the school and most said they would recommend it to another parent.

Glossary

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.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



24 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ludlow Church of England School Specialist Technology and Sports College, Ludlow, SY8 1GJ

You know that we came recently to inspect your school and I thought you would be interested in what we said in our report. I am grateful to all of you who told us your view either in discussions or through the questionnaires which we read very carefully. This is a satisfactory school. We agree with you, your parents and carers that the extent to which you feel safe in school is good and that your attendance is above average and rising, and that very few of you are ever excluded from school.

The proportion of you who gain five or more good passes at GCSE, including English and mathematics, is about in line with the national average. This represents satisfactory progress from your starting points. There have been improvements in teaching, particularly in English and mathematics. All the lessons we saw were at least satisfactory and many were good.

The behaviour we saw in lessons and around school was mostly good. But we know from what you told us that there has been some previous disruption in lessons. Your leaders are clear about what is good in the school and what needs improving. These are the things we have asked the school to do to help it improve further. The school's leaders must make sure that:

- you do as well as you can in all your subjects, particularly science, humanities and vocational courses
- your teachers consistently plan work that is suitable for all of you, especially those of you who find learning difficult, and that they let you know how well you are doing and how you could improve
- more of your leaders use information on your progress to check you are all doing as well as you can.

Your feedback keeps leaders informed of what needs improving and I hope you will continue to let them know your views. I wish you every success in your future.

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims
Her Majesty's Inspector

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