

Archway School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115723
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	357806
Inspection dates	8–9 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Karl Sampson

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1178
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	148
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Brian Oosthuysen
Headteacher	Mr Colin Belford
Date of previous school inspection	13 November 2007
School address	Paganhill Stroud GL5 4AX
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 42 teachers and 40 lessons, and saw parts of ten other lessons and activities. Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, staff, governors, representatives from the local authority and groups of students. Inspectors looked at the school's self-evaluation and planning documents, external evaluations of the school's work, policy documents and students' work. They also scrutinised 141 inspection questionnaires sent in by parents and carers, and questionnaires completed by staff and a sample from students in each year group.

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

- how well different groups of students are attaining and achieving, in particular boys and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the extent to which teaching provides both support and challenge for all groups of students
- whether the quality of provision is sufficiently strong to rapidly address low attainment and achievement
- the accuracy and demonstrable impact of self-evaluation by leaders and managers at all levels in driving up outcomes for all groups of learners
- the quality of provision and leadership and management, and their impact on student outcomes, in the sixth form.

Information about the school

Archway School is larger than most secondary schools and is the only non-selective secondary school in Stroud. The sixth form works in partnership as one of four partner schools within the Stroud post-16 consortium. The school has held specialist technology status since 2001. Most students are of White British heritage and the vast majority speak English as their first language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average; their needs include moderate learning difficulties and social, emotional and behavioural issues. The proportion of students who have a statement of special educational needs is also below that found nationally. The school holds the Investors in People and Sportsmark awards and Healthy School status.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

There are some good features in students' personal development, including their awareness of healthy lifestyles and how to keep safe. Nonetheless, the school's overall effectiveness remains inadequate because:

- senior leaders and the governing body have not done enough to secure rapid improvement in the areas of weakness identified at the last inspection
- attainment has remained too low over the last three years because the progress of students of all abilities has been inadequate
- the school has not tracked, monitored or evaluated the performance of different groups of students with enough rigour ♦
- the quality of teaching, the use of assessment and leadership remain inconsistent both within and across subject areas
- the overall effectiveness of the sixth form is inadequate and it is not providing value for money.

After the previous inspection, leaders and managers at the most senior level were kept at a reduced number in order to deal with a large projected budget deficit. As a result, the school's capacity to drive through the changes needed was significantly hampered. Subsequent appointments at senior and middle leader level are now beginning to improve provision and the tracking of students' progress. However, these changes are too recent to have had a significant impact on the quality of teaching and students' attainment. While there have been some improvements, particularly in English and in the number of students achieving five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, overall attainment remains low. A trend of improvement in the rate of progress made by students, relative to their starting points, has not been established. The progress of boys and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities between Year 7 and Year 11 has been inadequate in each of the past three years, and in 2010 girls also made inadequate progress for the first time.

Despite some improvements, the quality of teaching is not good enough to remedy the underperformance of previous years and is inadequate overall. In the best lessons, teachers use assessment information well to plan learning activities that meet students' needs and engage them. However, in too many lessons, activities do not take into account

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students' starting points and so do not support or extend their learning effectively. Overly-long teacher explanations sometimes inhibit opportunities for students to think for themselves and to develop and explain their ideas. Not all students are given clear subject-specific advice to improve precise aspects of knowledge, understanding and skills within and across subjects. Last year, inaccurate assessments of students' capabilities across different subjects led to a wide disparity in teachers' examination predictions and students' actual outcomes.

Leaders at all levels, including the governing body, have not done enough to analyse the performance of different groups of students in order to identify the most urgent areas for development. Consequently, the curriculum and systems for providing care, guidance and support do not meet the learning needs of all students. The management of the education of boys and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, as well as those who speak English as an additional language, is inadequate. Students have too few opportunities across the curriculum to consolidate their literacy and numeracy skills, and this means that they are not adequately prepared for their future economic well-being.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise students' attainment in all subjects to meet or exceed national levels, both at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.
- Improve the proportion of good or better teaching across the school by ensuring that:
 - monitoring and evaluation focus on the contribution that teaching makes to students' learning, and evaluate clearly the progress made by different groups of students
 - the resulting assessment information is used to plan work that is well matched to all students' individual needs
 - effective questioning and dialogue are used to stimulate students' active participation in all lessons, with more opportunities for students to contribute their ideas to drive the learning forward
 - marking is much more detailed and gives students clear advice so that they know how to improve their work.
- Improve the impact of leaders at all levels on raising achievement by:
 - assiduously monitoring and using assessment information on different student groups to ensure that learning opportunities fully meet their needs ♦
 - ensuring that assessment information is accurate in all subjects so that staff are clear about the capabilities of each student
 - ensuring that teachers make the most of learning opportunities within their subjects to reinforce literacy and numeracy across the school.
- Ensure that the governing body holds all leaders and managers to account by:
 - receiving regular, accurate information on the performance of different groups of students

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- rigorously monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision for all students, especially boys and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

Students told inspectors that they enjoy school. The greatest gains in learning were observed when students were actively involved and encouraged to be partners in their learning. These lessons were skilfully designed to challenge and interest every student, enabling them to make good progress, but these make up only a small minority of lessons. Students rightly describe how some lessons are too teacher-led and involve everyone working on the same task, regardless of ability. In the majority of lessons and work seen during the inspection, students' progress, especially in Years 10 and 11, was satisfactory. However, because of the legacy of lost learning and previous underachievement, this rate of progress is not fast enough for students to achieve in line with their capabilities.

Students' attainment on entry to the school is broadly in line with the national average. However, since the last inspection, the proportions of students gaining A* to C and A* or A passes in GCSE examinations have been significantly below average, as has the progress made by successive year groups. In 2010, the percentage of students achieving GCSE passes at A* to C grades in eight subjects with high levels of entry, including mathematics and science, were significantly below average. Underachievement is most marked for boys and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Analysis of current data shows that the school is a considerable distance away from meeting its challenging targets for 2011. Too many Year 11 students are not on track to make enough progress in English, mathematics and science.

Students' behaviour is satisfactory and improving, especially in the lessons that engage and motivate them. Students who met with inspectors, and a large majority of those who returned inspection questionnaires, said they felt safe in school. The school has worked well on attendance and there has been a steady improvement. Persistent absence has fallen from a level that caused concern in previous years. Students' understanding of factors affecting their health is good and they make use of strong provision for physical education, both in lessons and in extra-curricular activities. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is developing well. Students make good use of a strong citizenship curriculum and opportunities in humanities to engage with relevant societal issues. The school has strong links with Bihar in India where they are building and sponsoring a school. This link is used within the curriculum and on 'interaction days' to develop greater multicultural understanding.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

Pastoral care and the range of provision in the learning support centre and in student services are generally effective in supporting students' personal development and well-being. Liaison work with local primary schools leads to effective transition arrangements from Year 6 to Year 7, and students feel supported in making informed choices about their future. However, insufficient attention is paid to improving the quality of students' learning. In particular, the learning and progress of the students whose circumstances make them potentially most vulnerable, such as students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language, are not managed effectively. The overall effectiveness of care, guidance and support is inadequate because of a significant decline in the management of the learning and academic achievement of these students over the past three years.

A comprehensive review of the curriculum has led to a number of changes across all key stages. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 now includes clearer pathways to support the full range of learners and the technology specialism is being used more effectively to deepen and broaden students' choices in science and design and technology. The changes have improved the effectiveness of partnerships between the school and other local providers such as Stroud College. Provision is increasingly tailored to learners' needs but the changes are relatively recent and have not yet had sufficient time to demonstrate positive and sustained impact on students' outcomes. Changes to the Key Stage 3 curriculum to

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embrace a skills-based approach are also under development, with the introduction of personal learning and thinking skills. These skills are not being consistently referred to by teachers in lessons however, so the impact on students' achievement and their attitudes to learning is not yet evident.

In most lessons, teachers set learning objectives but too often these focus on task completion rather than on learning. Some staff use a range of stepped learning activities to engage students and, in the better lessons, skilful questioning enables students to extend and deepen their thinking. These lessons are characterised by an effective sequence of activities which develops the knowledge, understanding and skills of all students, regardless of ability. Good lessons contrasted sharply with the satisfactory or inadequate lessons seen by inspectors. Many lessons are overly led by the teacher, with the result that students spend too much time listening passively. Too often, assessment information and prior learning are not taken into account with teachers providing all students with the same work regardless of ability or need. This leads to demotivation, lack of understanding, slow progress and underachievement. The quality of marking is variable and does not consistently provide students with the necessary subject-specific guidance to help them improve their work.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	4
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	4

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers have established a cohesive community and have increased the rigour of monitoring and evaluation. All staff, and in particular middle leaders, now have a shared purpose. Realistic targets to bring about good progress have recently been set where previously they were insufficiently challenging and reflected low expectations of students' capabilities. Planning focuses on suitable priorities, but success criteria and milestones are not sufficiently sharp, measurable or focused on student outcomes. The governing body is supportive, but has not focused enough on holding the school to account. Many of the areas of concern identified in the last inspection report still remain and the school does not provide adequate value for money.

An improved system for tracking progress is now supporting quicker identification of students at risk of underachieving, but the resulting data are not used enough by teachers in their lesson planning to ensure that activities cater for the different groups of students. The leadership and management of teaching and learning at all levels are too variable to secure the necessary improvement in this critical area. Consequently, raising achievement is too dependent on the extra support given to students outside the classroom rather than securing improvement in the quality of learning in class. Middle leaders are starting to be

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made accountable, but their leadership skills are still underdeveloped. Actions taken by school leaders lack the clarity and precision to be effective. Standards are not rising quickly enough and, in too many subjects, students in Year 11 are not on track to achieve their targets. As a result, the extent to which leaders are embedding ambition and driving improvement is inadequate.

The school's work to promote community cohesion is effective within the school and there are some established international links. While safeguarding policies and procedures are secure, the school's failure to meet the learning needs of many of its students, including its potentially most vulnerable groups, means that the promotion of equality of opportunity is inadequate.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Sixth form

Given their starting points when entering the sixth form, students' examination outcomes reflect insufficient progress. Progress has not been helped by low attendance. Successive years of poor performance at AS level have resulted in too many students failing to successfully move onto A2 courses and, consequently, their overall achievement is inadequate. Students feel well cared for and good relationships in the sixth form enable students to feel supported and safe. They contribute well to school life and say that they are engaged by the teaching and enjoy their lessons. The recently appointed sixth form leadership team has introduced a number of positive initiatives, including assertive mentoring, a tutor and assembly programme, interim reports, a sixth form student committee and a successful drive to improve attendance and punctuality. These initiatives have been warmly welcomed by students but have not yet had a significant impact on outcomes.

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Provision in the sixth form mirrors that of the main school and shares many similar characteristics. In the past, the curriculum has not provided a range of pathways that were well matched to the needs and interests of all students. As a result, students were guided onto inappropriate courses which limited their achievement. A greater range of courses has now been introduced but these have not had time to make a discernible impact on student outcomes. Lessons are variable in quality and the overall teaching profile is not strong enough to remedy the legacy of underperformance. The best lessons offer good opportunities for students to learn through focused discussion, underpinned by activities which progressively secure and extend their understanding. While there are some examples of collaborative working, too many lessons are teacher-dominated and opportunities for student-led learning are frequently missed.

The effectiveness of sixth form leaders in driving improvement is inadequate and their work is hampered by the inconsistent and inaccurate use of tracking data across all subjects. Systems for strategically monitoring student and subject performance are weak, and limited analysis of performance and retention data by student groups takes place. There is a lack of systematic rigorous self-evaluation and action planning. The most recent plan to raise achievement fails to show clearly how the quality of teaching and learning in sixth form lessons is going to be developed.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	4
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	4
The quality of provision in the sixth form	4
Leadership and management of the sixth form	4

Views of parents and carers

Of the 12 per cent of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire, almost all are happy with their child's experience at the school and say that they are kept informed about their child's progress. Positive comments related to the quality of transition arrangements into Year 7 and the quality of home-school communication. A small number expressed concerns about the level of academic challenge provided in lessons and whether their child was making enough progress. Inspection evidence supported these concerns and, where appropriate, they are reflected in the report.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Archway School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 141 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1178 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	55	39	79	56	5	4	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	53	38	83	59	5	4	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	70	50	67	48	4	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	59	42	67	48	11	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	39	28	95	67	2	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	46	33	82	58	9	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	42	30	90	64	8	6	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	52	37	76	54	2	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	51	36	78	55	9	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	48	34	79	56	9	6	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	41	29	81	57	9	6	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	58	41	80	57	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	65	46	72	51	4	3	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



10 December 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Archway School, Stroud GL5 4AX

Thank you for the welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school. We all enjoyed talking with you and you helped us to find out about the school. You told us that you enjoy coming to school and that you feel safe. Your attendance has improved; you have a good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and enjoy participating in a range of different activities beyond the classroom. You particularly enjoy your work to support the construction and funding of the school you are sponsoring in India.

We found that you are not making as much progress as you should and the school has not made enough improvements since it was last inspected. The headteacher and the staff team have begun to make improvements but these have not been happening fast enough. The inspection team has judged that the school now requires 'special measures', which means it will receive extra help to tackle areas for improvement urgently. Further visits will be made by inspectors to monitor the progress that it is making. We discussed what we found with your headteacher and governing body and they will focus on the following areas by:

- helping more of you to get better GCSE and A-level grades
- making sure you have more lessons which are good or better so that your progress accelerates
- tailoring activities in lessons so that they better meet your individual needs
- allowing you enough time to develop and explain your ideas and sharing with you clear 'next steps' in your learning
- checking regularly to make sure that lessons are good for all students, regardless of ability
- making sure that you have regular opportunities to develop your key literacy and numeracy skills across different subjects
- accurately checking that you are on track to make good progress and intervening quickly if you are not.

You can all help by discussing with teachers what you need to do to learn even more. We wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Karl Sampson

Her Majesty's Inspector

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