

Ilkeston School: Specialist Arts College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112945
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	357230
Inspection dates	3–4 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Rashida Sharif HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	981
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	119
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Helene Morland
Headteacher	Stephen Daniels
Date of previous school inspection	7 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 50 lessons from 48 different teachers, including five joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. Meetings were held with a range of staff, groups of students, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at school documentation including information about students' progress, improvement plans, school policies, teaching records, health and safety information and an analysis of 117 parental questionnaires, together with 117 questionnaires from Year 7 students and 52 from staff.

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

- How effective are leaders and managers at all levels in driving whole school improvement?
- How much progress do all groups of students make, particularly boys and those with special education needs and/or disabilities?
- What is the quality of students' learning and progress in English?
- What are the impact and effectiveness of the school's actions to improve attendance?
- How far does the curriculum at Key Stage 4 and post-16 meet the needs of all students and in particular those who are less academic?
- What is the quality of teaching across the school and is it suitably challenging for students of all abilities?

Information about the school

This is an average sized secondary school. Student numbers have declined significantly in the last three years. This has meant that 12 staff have left in the last two years. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the numbers of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities including with statement, bringing the percentage in line with the national average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average.

The school became a specialist arts college in September 2005 and re-designated in 2008. The school holds a number of quality marks including, Artsmark Silver, Sportsmark Silver, Music Quality Mark and Healthy 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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Ilkeston School: Specialist Arts College provides a satisfactory education for its students. It is improving and has some good features, notably the curriculum, particularly at Key Stage 4, and the quality of care, guidance and support for students. The students make satisfactory progress and reach average standards of attainment by the end of Key Stage 4. Those students who regularly attend enjoy their learning. Attendance is average.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Students say that lessons are generally enjoyable. There is, however, a wide range in the quality of teaching. During the inspection, good practice was observed in some teachers' use of assessment to plan lessons and improve students' learning; this is not consistent in all lessons. Teachers do not always use assessment data to plan lessons so that the needs of individual students including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are met. Consequently the work set is not always sufficiently challenging and students are not always clear about what they need to do to succeed. Marking is irregular across subjects and departments and does not always inform students what they have done well and what they need to do to improve their work further.

The school successfully provides a broad and balanced curriculum. It is highly effective in securing students' interest, motivation and involvement, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This is particularly true at Key Stage 4, which has contributed significantly to the sustained improvement in standards of attainment since the last inspection, particularly in science and mathematics. Attainment in English is beginning to improve. The recently appointed head of department has a clear view of what is needed to make the necessary improvements. The curriculum is augmented by a rich variety of popular extra-curricular activities, particularly in sport and music. The school has used its specialist status well to develop links with the local community.

One of the strengths of the school is the relationships evident between students and with the staff. Students are very clear that they are well cared for, guided and supported, particularly those who need additional help or who may be at risk of disengaging from their education. Pastoral support is adapted to students' particular needs and makes effective use of a wide range of external services and agencies. Students are aware of how they can get help of any kind, if they need it, and are confident that their needs will be met and their concern will be responded to. As a result, they feel safe and happy at the school. A significant majority of the parents who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire commented on how well their children are cared for, particularly those most vulnerable due to their circumstances. Although a very few parents and carers raised concern about behaviour, inspectors observed students to be well behaved, showing consideration to each other both in lessons and around the school.

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

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The schools' capacity to improve further is satisfactory. The headteacher and extended leadership team recognise that they have to raise the overall attainment and achievement particularly in English and sustain improvement in mathematics. They are unequivocally determined to raise standards of attainment by improving the quality of teaching and learning and are securing an enthusiastic response from among the teaching staff. The middle leadership team are being given greater responsibility so that they become more effective in leading and managing their subjects, sharing good practice and holding staff fully to account. It is common, for example, for a large number of staff and governors to give up their time to enable school activities to take place at weekends. Senior leaders evaluate the school's progress critically and with reasonable accuracy, using a range of systems for monitoring and reviewing its work, but the practice among middle leaders in using these systems is inconsistent. Consequently, while there has been incremental improvement in examination results at Key Stage 4 since the last inspection, there remains too much variation in the performance of different subjects.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve overall attainment and achievement particularly in English and sustain improvement in mathematics by:
 - raising the percentage of students gaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics to 55% by 2011.
- Improve the quality of teaching and the progress students make across the school so that these are consistently good or outstanding by:
 - sharing good practice across the school to bring about more rapid improvement where teaching is weaker
 - making more consistent use of assessment data to plan lessons that meet students' individual needs, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - ensuring marking is regular, and informs students of any good features and what they need to do to improve their work.
- Give greater responsibility to middle leaders so that they become more effective in leading and managing their subjects, sharing good practice and holding staff fully to account.
- Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

The trend in students' attainment over the last three years has been uneven and is now showing signs of improvement. Attainment at Key Stage 3 and 4 improved in 2010. The attainment gap between girls and boys narrowed significantly. By the end of Year 11 attainment in mathematics improved for all groups of students and is in line with the national average and is above average in science. Attainment in English remains lower but has improved on previous performance, moving this close to the national average. Overall, from just below average starting points on entry, students make satisfactory progress.

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

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Analysis of the school's current progress data and interim module and test results indicate that this is being sustained and built upon; current Year 11 students including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are firmly on track to exceed the school's ambitious targets in English and mathematics in 2011.

The gap between girls and boys progress has now narrowed considerably. Boys are making satisfactory progress overall and good or outstanding progress in some subjects, for example, science, art, music and physical education. In more than half the lessons seen during the inspection, students were making good and, in a very small minority, outstanding progress. The progress is undoubtedly better when activities are relevant to students' interests and aptitudes, and introduced at a brisk pace with minimal teacher input. In the good lessons seen, teachers are skilled at this and at retaining students' involvement in their learning.

Students say they feel safe and measures are taken consistently to ensure that any bullying, if it occurs, is reported and dealt with swiftly. Students' are happy and confident and have positive attitudes to their learning. The school actively promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Consequently, students play a significant role in the life of the school and are encouraged to take responsibility readily for themselves and those around them, for example, as mentors. Students have a clear understanding of what good health involves and how to maintain a healthy lifestyle although some agree that they do not always put this into practice. They undertake a wide range of charitable activities, including raising funds for a range of national and international charities. The development of workplace skills is satisfactory. Skills in literacy, numeracy and particularly information and communication technology are used well across the curriculum.

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

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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?

Teaching and learning have steadily improved since the last inspection. In the lessons seen, students showed a desire to learn. Teachers who use the school's assessment data effectively show good knowledge and understanding of students' needs. These lessons provide all groups of students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, with appropriately challenging and stimulating work and result in equally good progress. In other lessons, teachers' planning lacks sufficient detail and focuses more on what the teacher will do, rather than what students will learn. In these lessons, teachers do not use the assessment data and the learning support available to plan for the needs of different groups, resulting in lessons that lack sufficient challenge or pace. In a few instances, teachers tend to dominate the lesson, so students are not always developing good independent learning skills. The quality of marking is variable and some inconsistency is evident in terms of its usefulness to students.

The recently extended curriculum is broad, balanced and increasingly flexible enough to ensure that it meets the wider range of students' needs. For example, it provides a wide variety of courses, often in collaboration with other local providers, and is increasingly well tailored to meet students' individual needs and aspirations. For example, students who take physical education, information communication and technology, music and drama are doing particularly well. Specialist status has enabled the school both to enhance and extend its curriculum, benefiting its own students and also those from the partner schools.

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

The curriculum is further enriched by a good range of extra-curricular activities, many linked to its specialist arts status. All statutory requirements are met.

The school is successful in providing a welcoming learning environment for its students. Care systems are well organised and staff carry their roles out diligently. The school has good systems in place for transition into, through and beyond the school. These are much appreciated by the students. Students receive good quality information, advice and guidance about future courses and career opportunities. Students speak highly of their teachers and, when they have any concerns, they know who to go to and are confident of the support they will receive.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders have become more ambitious since the last inspection in the targets they set for students' success, endorsed by the governing body, which has close connections with the school. Governors discharge their statutory responsibilities and ensure that students and staff are safe. Senior leaders produce detailed and inspirational plans for improvement based on accurate self-evaluation, and which focus on improving teaching and learning. There is a comprehensive system of self-evaluation, but managers responsible at all levels for carrying it out are not always focused sufficiently on the learning outcomes for students when making their judgments.

The school works well with other schools and agencies. These partnerships make an important contribution to the good quality of care, guidance and support that students receive, and to the curriculum. The school obtains the views of students, parents and carers systematically and regularly uses them to inform its self-evaluation and improvement plans. Relationships with parents and carers are generally positive.

The school responds satisfactorily to promoting equal opportunities and tackling discrimination. It has a basic policy for promoting equalities. Any report of a racist incident, should this occur, is dealt with swiftly and effectively. There are various aspects of school's curriculum and specialist college activities that contribute towards community cohesion, but these are not yet consistently evaluated for impact. All regulations for safeguarding students are met and the school ensures the arrangements for doing so are in line with government requirements. The arrangements for carrying out checks on staff are robust.

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

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
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	3

Sixth form

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Students are responsible and well motivated. They concentrate in class and show interest and commitment to their studies. Those who travel between the two sites of the sixth form partnership do so sensibly and responsibly. Many make a strong contribution to the school community and are helpful and supportive towards younger students. Following the introduction of better systems, students' attendance has improved considerably and is currently good. The excellent working partnership with another local school and other partner institutions gives students extensive choice from an impressive range of academic and vocational courses. Most students reach expected targets, although there are differences in the performance of different subjects. Students achieve exceptionally well in art and health and social care.

Teaching is good. The best provides students with challenging learning opportunities and enables them to achieve well. Students appreciate the care and guidance they receive and most Year 13 students continue to higher education or employment. Leaders and managers have systems to assure the quality of educational provision available on the two school sites. There is a clear commitment to developing and driving further improvements in the sixth form.

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

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

The response rate from 117 parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire was much smaller compared with the school's own questionnaire, to which over 500 parents responded recently. Parents' views about the school are generally positive. Many praised specific aspects of the school's work, including the care and support offered to them and their children, particularly the more vulnerable. The majority of the respondents stated that their children were happy at school, well cared for and enjoyed attending. However, a small minority of parents raised some concerns, for example that the school does not always take account of their suggestions and concerns. Some did not agree that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. However, inspectors found students' behaviour in lessons and around the school to be good.

The school agrees with a small minority of parents who raised issues about wanting greater communication and involvement between school and home. A few concerns were raised which were related to individual matters rather than whole-school issues. The school is intending to respond to these and other issues raised by some parents.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ilkeston School: Specialist Arts College 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 117 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 981 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	25	21	77	66	14	12	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	27	23	74	63	10	9	3	3
My school informs me about my child's progress	31	26	65	56	15	13	4	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	28	24	70	60	11	9	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	26	22	73	62	7	6	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	26	62	53	20	17	4	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	20	77	66	12	10	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)	25	21	73	62	7	6	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	18	79	68	7	6	3	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	23	59	50	17	15	7	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	15	67	57	22	19	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	16	14	81	69	7	6	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	27	23	72	62	8	7	2	2

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.



5 November 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Ilkeston School: Specialist Arts College, Ilkeston, DE7 5HS

Thank you very much for your help during our visit. We found what you had to say very interesting and helpful in making our judgments about your school. We were pleased to hear that so many of you enjoy attending school. Many of you told us how much you appreciate the help and guidance that your teachers give you at all times. You also told us how much you appreciate the range of opportunities that you are given both during and after school. We were impressed to see so many of you willingly take part in the wide range of extra-curricular activities, particularly those linked with your school's arts specialism, including music and sports.

We judged your school to be satisfactory. It has some good features. The curriculum is rich and varied, allowing you to develop well as young people. It provides you with many opportunities to develop a wide range of skills. You told us that you found your teachers to be helpful and supportive and most make your lessons interesting by involving you in your learning. The care, guidance and support that you receive are good and you are prepared for your next stage in life. We saw that some of you contribute well to your school and the wider community. We were impressed with your knowledge and understanding about adopting a healthy lifestyle, although some of you admitted that you did not always practise it. Some of your parents told us of their worries about your attitudes to healthy eating.

We worked very closely with your headteacher and agreed on what the school should do to make it even better. We have asked the headteacher with his staff and governors to:

- improve overall attainment and achievement, particularly in English, and sustain improvement in mathematics by raising the percentage of you gaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C to 55%
- improve the quality of teaching and the progress you make by sharing good practice across the school, using the assessment data to plan lessons that meet your needs, including those of you with special educational needs and/or disabilities and make sure that marking in your books is regular and helps you to improve your work
- help subject leaders so that they become more effective in leading and managing their subjects and share the good practice that exists in the school.

You can help by everyone attending regularly and continuing to work hard.

Yours sincerely

Rashida Sharif

Her Majesty's Inspector

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