

Astley Sports College and Community High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106269
Local Authority	Tameside
Inspection number	362754
Inspection dates	2–3 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Marguerite Murphy HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	752
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Waxman
Headteacher	Mr Eamon Murphy
Date of previous school inspection	4 February 2009
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Introduction

The school was deemed to require special measures at its inspection in March 2010 and was monitored by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors on a visit in September 2010.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors who observed 31 lessons taught by 31 teachers. They paid short visits to other activities and classrooms and looked at students' books. Meetings were held with senior leaders, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB), a local authority representative, students, staff and by telephone with another IEB member. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation including its self-evaluation, monitoring and improvement plans, minutes of IEB meetings, and the school's analysis and tracking of information on students' attainment and progress.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. Inspectors looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The progress made by the school in addressing the areas for improvement identified in the section 5 inspection of March 2010.
- The school's capacity to sustain further improvements.
- The quality and consistency of teaching and learning across the school.
- The effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels, including governance.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average-sized secondary school with specialist sports college status. Most students are of White British heritage, with a relatively small but increasing number from minority ethnic backgrounds who speak English as an additional language. These are mainly of Asian or Asian British backgrounds and very few are at an early stage of learning English. A well above average proportion of students are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities, the majority of these with a range of moderate learning difficulties including some with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties. Around a quarter of students are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is well above average.

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

2

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (14) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. Astley Sports College and Community High School has made outstanding improvement since its last inspection so that, less than a year later, it now provides a satisfactory and improving quality of education for all students.

In a short timescale there have been significant and positive developments in the quality of teaching, assessment, students' behaviour and the effectiveness of the governing body. These aspects, previously judged inadequate, are now good. This has resulted not only from well-focused support and intervention but from effective senior leadership and clear vision, increasingly complemented by the skills of middle leaders. These factors, along with the commitment of all staff to the drive for improvement, demonstrate the school's good capacity to sustain improvement in the future. Self-evaluation is accurate and based on robust monitoring systems and data analysis, with leaders and governors well focused on demonstrating the impact of their actions on students' outcomes.

Although attainment remains low in comparison to national averages, there is an improving trend in which the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C including English and mathematics is steadily rising. The improvement in the 2010 examination results in English, mathematics and science will continue in 2011 as shown in modular results already achieved by students in Year 11. Similarly, the school's tracking and assessment data for students in Year 10 indicate that this trend will rise further in 2012.

Students' satisfactory progress over time is now improving securely and quickly due to the good and sometimes outstanding teaching, learning and behaviour seen in most lessons. Only in a minority of lessons is there room to improve the way in which teachers match activities to students' individual learning needs. The school is aware, through its evaluations and by listening to the views of students, for example, that a planned review of the satisfactory curriculum should include a focus on this. The school is in the early stages of improving opportunities to develop students' basic skills and independent learning across a range of subjects.

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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in English, mathematics and science by:

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- building on the significant improvements made to the quality of teaching to accelerate the rate of progress made by all students in both Key Stages 3 and 4
- developing teachers' good use of assessment to support learning so that tasks provided in lessons are always tightly matched to the ability levels of individual students, ensuring consistently high levels of challenge and support as appropriate to their needs
- using the school's good quality evaluation and assessment information to identify where further adjustments can be made to the curriculum to address any identified weaknesses in students' basic skills
- exploring more ways in which students can practise and develop their application of these skills across other areas of the curriculum, also increasing their ability to work more independently of teacher direction and support.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

The improvements made by the school and their impact on students' enjoyment and achievement were exemplified in a Year 11 student's response, when asked if he would recommend the school to others: 'Two years ago? No, but I would now!'

Taking into account variations from year to year, students enter the school with attainment that is below average. There is no significant difference in the progress made by any group of students, including those who speak English as an additional language and those who are eligible for free school meals. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers due to the well-targeted support they receive along with regular monitoring of their academic and personal development. Although the trend of improvement has not been established long enough to result in good progress over time, inspectors' observations during the inspection confirmed that students are making good or better progress in most lessons now. Good relationships were evident throughout the school, within a calm and purposeful working atmosphere. Where progress in lessons was most rapid, students were being equipped with the skills and resources needed to be independent, reflective learners who can assess their own progress against grade criteria and take appropriate steps to improve their work. Most students show interest and enthusiasm for their learning across a range of subjects, although the quality and presentation of written work is variable, particularly for boys in English.

Students say they feel safe and where challenging behaviour exists, it is dealt with quickly and effectively. They respond positively to the helpful approach of teachers and support staff, recognising that adults care about students as individuals.

The number of fixed-term exclusions and of persistent absentees has fallen considerably and students' attendance is average. These factors, along with adequate basic skills, contribute to students' satisfactory development of workplace skills for the future. There are strengths in their contribution to the school and wider community, for example, as sports leaders, prefects and in links with Cromwell Special School. However, this is not yet good overall because an insufficiently high proportion of students are involved in taking on responsibilities, using their initiative or contributing to a wider range of activities.

The quality of students' spiritual moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Students have a clear sense of right and wrong and cooperate in lessons, for example,

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when asked to work in pairs or groups. Students have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. They appreciate the extensive opportunities provided by the school's sports college facilities to participate in a wide range of sports and other outdoor activities within and beyond the school day.

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	4
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	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	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?

The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was consistently good or better, reflecting the success of the school's actions to develop teachers' skills and challenge any underperformance. Along with the improved and positive management of students' behaviour by teachers and support staff, these are key factors in the rising trend in students' achievement. Any low-level disruption by a minority of students is handled calmly and sensitively so that situations are quickly diffused without confrontation. Teachers have good subject knowledge, plan lessons well and make effective use of a variety of available resources, such as interactive whiteboard technology. They deploy a range of active learning techniques to engage and motivate students, promoting their good attitudes to learning and securing good and sometimes outstanding progress in lessons. Assessments are often used well to plan future learning and to trigger interventions for those students who need additional support. The impact of recent training for the skilled teaching assistants is ensuring that these skills are put to best use

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in partnership with teachers, adding to the quality of learning and progress made by students, particularly those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

On occasions when lessons are less successful, specific tasks set are not as closely matched to students' individual needs, providing too little challenge for some and yet proving too difficult for others, so that learning slows. This can also occur when students are not in the habit of being expected to use their initiative and work independently.

The school is increasingly consulting students to contribute to its review of the design, range and depth of the curriculum from their perspective. Leaders also recognise that there are, as yet, insufficient planned opportunities for students to apply and improve their basic skills in literacy and numeracy, for example, across a wider range of subjects.

Care, guidance and support are notable strengths of the school's provision. Astley is an inclusive school that works hard to meet individual students' needs, both in their learning and personal development. Inspection evidence illustrated several notable examples of the impact of the school on supporting and making a difference to students whose circumstances make them vulnerable. This level of care contributes to students' feelings of being safe and knowing that there is always someone to talk to if they are experiencing difficulties. The school's rigorous procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are understood by students and their families and continue to have a positive impact on overall attendance levels, despite some variability across some year groups.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and deputy headteachers are successfully leading the drive for school improvement and they are well supported by other members of the senior leadership team and middle leaders. Through the monitoring of teaching and learning and the systematic tracking of students' progress, leaders are holding teachers to account for the standards achieved by the students in their care. They have made good use of external support, training and guidance in securing the school's good capacity to improve independently of this in the future. Well-developed partnerships also make a good contribution to this and are mutually beneficial as Astley's provision continues to strengthen. The ethos of the sports specialism and the leadership of this have improved since the monitoring visit in September. However, the school recognises that there is more to do to ensure that the specialism has a clear impact on raising students' attainment.

The IEB has quickly established itself through involvement in rigorous monitoring and evaluation, holding leaders to account and challenging any weaknesses in the school's

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performance. Effective structures and plans are in place, including for the formation of a shadow governing body, followed by a full governing body elected and in place by the start of the next academic year. Safeguarding procedures are good, secured by the adoption of several aspects of recommended best practice beyond the fulfilment of statutory requirements.

The school is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination. Examples of where concerted action has been taken to do this include; the school meals payment systems and the reorganisation of support and intervention for students with learning or behavioural difficulties.

The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily. The school has pertinent information about its religious, ethnic and socio-economic context. However it does not yet evaluate the impact of its work across each of these strands. Nevertheless, there are strengths in the contribution of its extended school and sports specialism resources to building cohesion in the school and local community. For example, a recent football tournament held at Astley prompted some members of the local community to write to the school, expressing their appreciation of those students who organised it and the commonly held view that 'They were a credit to themselves and the school.'

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	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	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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed by Ofsted for special measures monitoring inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

Positive action is taken to engage parents and carers through a wide range of communications including reports, letters, phone calls or texts, events and the school's

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website. The views of parents are sought and a Parents' Forum was formed at the start of this academic year. Through extended school provision, several projects or events have been implemented to encourage the involvement of parents who are otherwise reluctant or unsure about contacting the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

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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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



4 February 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Astley Sports College and Community High School, Dukinfield, SK16 5BL

Thank you for your help during the recent inspection of your school. Inspectors enjoyed spending time in lessons and talking to you about your learning. This was only my second visit to Astley school and I am pleased to tell you that it already no longer needs 'special measures' because it has improved significantly since the last inspection in March 2010. Although standards of attainment are still well-below national averages, there is a rising trend. Your school is now providing a satisfactory and rapidly improving education and much of its work is already good. These are some of the particular strengths we found:

- Consistently good and sometimes outstanding teaching is helping you to make good progress in your lessons now so that your achievement is improving.
- Many of you told us about how much the behaviour in lessons and around school has improved and we agree because behaviour is good. You feel safe because adults take good care of you and those students who need extra guidance with their work or behaviour get the help and support they need.
- Your headteacher and senior leaders are doing a good job and are always checking on the school's work in order to plan for more improvements.
- The school's sports specialism and joint work with Cromwell Special School are just two examples of its good range of partnerships that successfully contribute to your personal development and achievement.

In order to improve further, inspectors have agreed that the school needs to continue working hard to raise students' attainment, particularly in English, mathematics and science. This will help you to be more fully equipped with the basic skills you need for your future lives and careers. You can help by always working hard, maintaining your concentration and effort, and taking responsibility for your own learning whenever possible.

I wish you lots of success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Marguerite Murphy

Her Majesty's Inspector

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