

Ansford Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123865
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	359531
Inspection dates	6–7 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Alan Taylor-Bennett

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	626
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Christopher Culpin
Headteacher	Robert Benzie
Date of previous school inspection	19 September 2007
School address	Maggs Lane Castle Cary, Somerset Castle Cary BA7 7JJ
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. They observed 38 lessons and the work of 36 teachers. In addition, meetings were held with groups of students, representatives of the governing body and staff. A wide range of documentation was scrutinised including the school's development plans, its self-review, analyses of the attainment and progress of its students, records of lesson observations, policies, and the responses to staff and student questionnaires and 240 parental questionnaires.

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

- The extent to which the behaviour and attitude of students positively influences the quality of their learning and the progress they make.
- How effectively whole-school assessment strategies lead to good lesson planning and good teaching.
- The effectiveness of the leadership of the school in bringing about high quality outcomes for students.
- The quality of the school's work with parents to improve outcomes for all groups of students.

Information about the school

Ansford School is a smaller than average school whose roll has fallen over recent years in line with local demographic changes. It serves the villages of Ansford, Castle Cary and the surrounding area. Although the degree of social advantage of its students has wide variation, it is in line with the national average overall. The number of students who take free school meals has been lower than average for some time but it has risen recently. The proportion of students that have special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly lower than average. The school has a specialism in mathematics and computing, and it holds the International School, Healthy Schools and Eco-Schools awards.

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

- Ansford School is providing a quality of education that is at least satisfactory in all respects. Aspects of provision and some outcomes are good; some are outstanding.
- Students' attainment is in line with national averages and their achievement is satisfactory. This means that the overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory. There is the capacity to improve attainment, and there are indications that students are beginning to make better progress recently.
- The school usually meets or exceeds its targets for achievement overall and in the specialist subjects of mathematics, statistics and information and communication technology (ICT) but these targets have lacked challenge and have resulted in satisfactory progress. Targets are significantly more demanding from next year, reflecting the fact that there are signs that the rate of progress in both key stages is beginning to accelerate due to the recent curriculum changes and in response to changes in teaching methods.
- The quality of the care, guidance and support provided is outstanding because of its concentration on meeting the needs of individuals, some of whom are vulnerable and require special provision. As a result of this very good quality care, students feel very safe and they obviously enjoy being at school.
- Students are welcoming and mature and they have a positive attitude to their learning in lessons which supports their progress. Their behaviour around the site is calm and thoughtful.
- Their attendance is very high compared to the national average.
- The contributions students make to the school community and to their locality are impressive in range and quality. Through this, many students develop good skills and an understanding of how communities function effectively. The quality of the school's work to secure high levels of social cohesion locally is outstanding.
- Teaching is good overall. At its best it is using the recent curriculum changes to develop very good learning skills and support the incipient acceleration in progress. Assessment information is used to inform teaching styles and strategies, but this is not consistent across subjects.
- The school is well led. The headteacher and his senior staff and governors exercise care, plan well to drive improvement and monitor the effectiveness of initiatives closely. They strive to deliver high quality outcomes, for the most part successfully. Their judgement of students' achievement is optimistic, however.

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- The school has a good capacity to improve further because of the many strengths in leadership and management, and good provision which is supporting the recent signs of improvements in achievement.
- All young people are valued equally and provision is matched to need well. Provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is satisfactory and is currently being strengthened.
- The school's specialism is used well to support its development, and to support the work of other local schools. Targets in the specialism are met and the school is well placed to develop this aspect of its work strongly. The school values its links with parents and provides regular information and half-termly opportunities to gather their views. Some parents are not sure how to support their child's learning, however. The parents of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities have not been well informed in this respect until recently.
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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By 2012, improve the attainment of students by the end of Key Stage 4 to levels that are above the national average, by:
 - improving the accuracy with which the attainment and the progress of students are judged, so that expectations are more accurately defined and interventions can be used with more precision to drive improvement
 - improving the provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This will involve giving better quality information to teachers to enable them to support the particular needs of these students better, and engaging more closely with parents to help them to support their child better
- Improve the consistency of teachers' use of assessment by using information about students' achievement to plan lessons and use resources that ensure good progress and offer more challenge to students, across all departments

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

The positive ethos and happy atmosphere around the school enable students to feel both part of their community and enthusiastic about giving back to it. Students speak confidently and reflect maturely on ways in which their actions can help to improve provision in the school; many enjoy taking part in projects that benefit the local community, for example the annual carnival, supporting local charitable work, helping in local junior schools as a part of the school's specialism work in robotics and e-safety, and befriending older local residents. The very high level of attendance is an indication of students' enjoyment of school. Behaviour is consistently very good around the site and students work and relax with each other pleasantly and positively.

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Over the last few years, all groups of students have made consistently satisfactory progress. In lessons, students' behaviour, with a few exceptions, supports their learning well. They are receptive and interested in the work and are confident to ask questions to check their grasp of an idea. Students respond well to the 'stamp' system to recognise when expectations are met. The progress of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is now satisfactory but was an area of concern for the school and governors last year. Better provision is now enabling these students to make more secure progress.

Students understand the factors that contribute to a healthy lifestyle and appreciate the ways in which the school supports them, through the curriculum, to eat well, look after their own and others' well-being and enjoy being active. Despite the fact that a high proportion travel in by bus each day, many take part in a range of competitive and recreational team sports, including a relatively new show jumping team. Participation rates are very good in Key Stage 3 but diminish to just under half by Year 11. The school is currently working towards higher level status in the Healthy Schools Award.

Because of the skills that the school helps them to develop, students are well prepared for education and work opportunities post-16. They are knowledgeable about a range of courses in further education and they are able to use their literacy and numeracy, and their well-developed ICT skills, to good effect. The proportion of students not in education, employment or training after they leave the school is low.

Students take the opportunities presented to them to learn about other cultures. They have developed a good awareness of multiculturalism through their links with another school in Britain which is much more culturally diverse, through the religious education curriculum and as a consequence of the well-established links with Zambia. Students feel very safe in the school as a result of its good ethos and the very close attention paid to risk management. The peer mentoring system is strong and effective. The system of restorative justice is regarded by students as a sometimes challenging but ultimately very powerful and successful means of addressing the relatively infrequent incidents of bullying. The number of exclusions has dropped significantly since its inception. Students are sensitive to social stereotyping, and the school's work to address homophobia, sexism and other forms of discrimination is well received by these mature and thoughtful young people.

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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	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

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 school has excellent systems to support individuals and groups of students and operates them thoughtfully, caringly and consistently. All staff show a high level of sensitivity to students' need and provide guidance and care when it is required. The school works very closely with a range of external agencies to support young people, including Connexions, local GPs and other specialist support groups. The school has a strong approach to addressing issues such as e-safety, to the point where the risks associated with internet access are very well understood by students. Peer mentoring is an important part of this provision, and it is accredited as a part of a qualification.

A recent review brought about significant improvements in the curriculum. It now has the capacity to meet the needs of all students well, through a wider range of courses, and to accelerate progress. Vocational provision includes BTEC courses, and access to six of the seven Diploma lines through collaborative work with the East Somerset Partnership. Students are appreciative of the ways in which these courses cater for their interests and enable them to use their skills and talents to good effect. The 'competency-driven' approach to the delivery of subjects at Key Stage 3 has the capability to develop good learning and thinking skills and drive progress which is better than satisfactory. Partnerships to support these curriculum developments are strong, and include links with local employers and Bristol University. The school offers a range of extra-curricular provision, including eco-work such as the green car club, a 'no power day' challenge, and

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the gardening club. The school's specialism has a good impact on learning and progress in the specialist subjects and it is strengthening the curriculum.

Teaching is good, and teachers have good subject knowledge. The best teaching is stimulating, challenging and makes lessons fun, gives useful opportunities for self- and peer-assessment, and makes students think for themselves and ask good questions which they want to address rather than be answered for them. This was seen in a science lesson where students had the chance to formulate their own response to the problem of representing the huge distances between planets in the solar system. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, there is often a lack of regular assessment to gauge students' grasp of ideas and to pinpoint any important misconceptions, and expectations could be higher. The information from the school's well-developed attainment recording and monitoring procedures is not always used to inform teaching strategies in all classrooms.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders in the school continually and clearly emphasise the importance of securing good outcomes for young people and staff are clear about how to use the well-established development planning systems and accountability mechanisms to bring this about. Recent changes to the curriculum have been well led and successful, and mechanisms to develop the quality of teaching are successful. The school knows itself and its developmental needs well but makes optimistic judgements of the quality of some outcomes. Governors are skilled and knowledgeable, and they provide good support for the work of the school. For example, they are very usefully involved in evaluating aspects of outcomes for pupils. Governors have not always provided sufficient challenge to the school's judgements of the achievement of students using the available data. They work closely and very well with the school to ensure that resources are used wisely and effectively, and deliver value for money.

The school provides a wide range of useful information for parents and they are appreciative of this. The school seeks the views of parents on a range of issues and acts on them. The reporting system is currently under review in response to concerns from parents which were also expressed on some of the questionnaires received. Safeguarding is taken very seriously and the school has good quality systems in place, and a good level of general awareness by staff of the need for constant vigilance, to recognise and respond to any concerns about the welfare of students. The school places considerable emphasis on working with its local community and other partners and does so very successfully. It

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has identified particular projects and development opportunities through the headteacher's work on the local community forum, the assistant headteacher's attendance at Town Council meetings and students' regular involvement as members of the UK Youth Parliament. It reviews and evaluates its work on improving community cohesion very thoroughly.

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	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of parents are happy with their child's experience at school and recognise the good quality of the teaching, the safe environment it provides, and value their child's enjoyment of school. Fewer, but still a large majority, felt that the school enabled them to support their child's learning and senior staff are interested to respond to this. For the most part, parental views matched the inspection team's judgements.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ansford 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 240 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 626 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	83	35	140	58	11	5	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	82	34	142	59	8	3	1	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	57	24	146	61	25	10	3	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	60	25	144	60	20	8	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	44	18	169	70	8	3	3	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	38	16	141	59	45	19	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	32	13	154	64	36	15	3	1
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)	66	28	136	57	10	4	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	57	24	151	63	16	7	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	49	20	142	59	27	11	7	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	49	20	132	55	29	12	5	2
The school is led and managed effectively	70	29	130	54	18	8	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	75	31	136	57	13	5	3	1

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.



8 October 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Ansford School, Castle Carey, BA7 7JJ

Thank you for the warmth of your welcome and for the mature and positive way in which you engaged with the inspection of your school recently. It was a pleasure to meet you and work with you, and your contributions to the process were valuable. You can read a full version of the report on the Ofsted website but I have provided a short summary of the main findings here for your convenience.

Your school is providing you with a quality of education which is satisfactory. Aspects of its work are good and some are outstanding. It has helped you to become happy and confident young people who feel very safe in school and attend reliably. You make significant contributions to your school community and to the locality. I was pleased that you are confident to challenge bullying and racial and homophobic abuse and that you have a very keen sense of justice and an impressive understanding of cultural diversity. The teaching in the school is good, and the curriculum provides you with a rich experience via a useful range of courses. The quality of care, guidance and support provided for you is outstanding.

Students have left over recent years with examination results that are broadly in line with the national average, having made satisfactory progress over their time at the school. This could be better, and there are signs that achievement is beginning to improve.

Your headteacher, his staff and the governors all want the best for you. We have agreed that they should concentrate on two issues to drive further improvement.

- Improve examination results by the end of Key Stage 4 to levels that are above the national average, gauging achievement more accurately and targeting provision better because of this, and improving the provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Use information about your achievement to inform teaching styles and methods more consistently well across classrooms.

I know that you are keen to play a part in helping your school to be even more successful, and that you will reflect on how you can individually and collectively help to deliver further improvements. I would like to extend my very best wishes to you for your happiness and success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Alan Taylor-Bennett

Her Majesty's Inspector

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