

The Avon Valley School and Performing Arts College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125764
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	359940
Inspection dates	18–19 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Ian Middleton HMI

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	1104
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Don O'Neill
Date of previous school inspection	25 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 44 lessons, observing 42 different teachers for periods lasting around 30 minutes. In addition, inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, other school leaders and managers, the Chair of the Governing Body and staff. Discussions with groups of students (with their work), included students following a range of curriculum options, students with leadership roles, those who make a particular contribution to the community, a sample of students who find learning difficult and a group with particular gifts and talents. Inspectors observed the school's work, and inspected planning and evaluation documents. The school's analysis of students' progress and attainment was scrutinised, as were a total of 187 questionnaires received from parents and carers, a sample of 108 from students and 57 from teaching and support staff.

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

The progress made by different groups of students, particularly boys and students with wide ranging prior attainment.

- The use of information from assessment to inform teachers' planning, in particular to engage students purposefully in their learning.
- The focus of leaders and managers on identifying and addressing underachievement.
- The impact of the arts specialism on raising aspirations and improvement across all subjects.

Information about the school

Avon Valley School and Performing Arts College is a larger than average 11-16 school in an area where selection to grammar schools remains an option. Specialist status for performing arts was gained in 2004. The school's accreditations include National Healthy Schools status gained in 2009.

The majority of students are White British and a below average proportion is from minority ethnic backgrounds. A small number of students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities, or with a statement of special educational needs, is higher than average, mainly behavioural, emotional and social or moderate learning difficulties. A lower than average proportion of students is known to be eligible for free school meals.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Avon Valley School and Performing Arts College provides a good quality of education. From a wide range of starting points, students enjoy success, particularly in and through the arts, sports and humanities subjects that also promote students' strong contribution to the school and local community, and commitment to healthy lifestyle. Attainment in English and mathematics is less consistent but current work aligns with the school's assessment and tracking data indicating that students are learning what is required to reach suitably challenging targets. Although not assessed or tracked as consistently as academic performance, students' personal development and well-being are promoted very well. This underpins the good overall progress made by boys and girls, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Inspection evidence indicates a high level of satisfaction in the school by students, parents, carers and staff, Not all are clear about the steps required, or the strategy adopted, to make students' very best attainment and contributory behaviour consistent across all subjects.

Teaching is good overall, including the work of support staff. The most successful lessons often stem from an inspiring start that stimulates students' curiosity in the topic, invites active participation and explains the purpose of the lesson succinctly. Opportunities for groups of teachers and support staff to share the ideas and approaches that work well with the students are proving effective. For example, many students start the school day purposefully as a result of professional development focused on 'being an outstanding form tutor'. However, there are still inconsistencies in teaching, for example in ensuring that all students remain attentive or are aware, through discussion and marking, of how to improve their work. The staff who have opted into workshops understand the importance of using examples or demonstration to make expectations clear.

Students' continuous improvement in attendance and performance support the school's view that leadership and management are effective. However, the governing body, senior and many middle leaders also know that the less effective teaching that remains requires heightened challenge and support in order to move the school on. The extent to which initiatives are embedded is a weaker aspect of school self-evaluation. Following the last inspection, the impact of the specialism has spread to more subjects and staff through a focus on creative teaching and learning. Lesson and curriculum planning shows that opportunities for students to develop and apply their personal qualities across the curriculum are widening, for example through 'splash' days. The curriculum provides students with a good range and quality of experiences, enriched by extra-curricular provision that is popular with the students. Attendance has improved and is now good. Academic and vocational courses meet different students' needs, interests and aspirations well. The school shows good capacity to improve further.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make teaching consistently good or better by ensuring that all teachers:
 - stimulate students' curiosity and interest from the start of lessons
 - insist on the full attention and involvement of the class
 - evaluate how well individuals develop and apply their personal skills
 - provide clear targets and guidance about how to improve further.
- Make improvement sustained by ensuring that the senior leadership team and governing body focus continuously on:
 - increasing the proportion of students attaining five or more A* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics
 - working with middle leaders to ensure that subject teaching is high quality
 - challenging students and staff early when underachievement is evident
 - communicating regularly to parents and carers the strategies used to manage students' behaviour and the evaluations of their impact.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Achievement is good overall. Boys and girls make good progress from below average starting points. The proportion of students who leave with five or more GCSEs, and with five or more GCSE A* to C grades, has continued to rise over the past three years in line with national trends. Attainment is consistently a little above the national average. Some subjects successfully recruit an above average proportion of students and achieve above average grades, for example, art, dance, humanities, physical education and communication studies. However, the school's baseline assessment indicates that over half the students start at the school particularly challenged by aspects of literacy and/or numeracy. In English and mathematics, students progress well but their attainment remains below the national average. In 2010, the gap between school and national results in both subjects was narrower than in previous years. The proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades including both English and mathematics also improved in 2010 but remains below the national average.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress, particularly the high proportion with a statement of special educational needs. The individual support that is targeted at overcoming specific barriers to learning is a contributory factor. Good behaviour predominated throughout the inspection; the quality of paired work between students is a particular strength. Students' collaboration, questioning and independence contribute to learning more evidently in higher ability classes. While positive attitudes to learning were observed in almost all lessons, not all students, parents and carers, or staff are convinced that students' best behaviour is consistent. However, students' excellent contribution to the school as a community and their work with those older and younger than themselves who share the locality, reflects their strong personal qualities. High participation in voluntary activities, particularly related to the arts and sports, and dedication to roles and duties at school, also show how students take increasing responsibility for their well-being and that of others, and develop healthy and cultured

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lifestyles. Improved attendance over the past three years to above average also contributes to good preparation for life beyond school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	2
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?

The caring and inclusive ethos of the school enables students to develop a strong sense of being supported. This is complemented by provision that builds their character and confidence, particularly in and through the arts. Across the curriculum, the most skilful teaching exploits students' energy, expressiveness and enthusiasm for active participation. The 'teaching and learning groups' of staff, focused on sharing approaches that work well, for example in the use of computer technology, teaching assistants and questioning, have helped to increase the proportion of good or better teaching. Where lessons are less successful in stimulating students visually and practically early on, or where planning proceeds without checking that all students are attentive or understand, behaviour and learning are patchy. The range and use of assessment information has widened since the last inspection. However, while teachers regularly assess students, the quality of feedback remains inconsistent, including guidance given through marking. Whatever the subject, where students' personal targets are clear and indicate how to improve, students are able to develop the independence and originality that they learn are important through their creative work.

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Curriculum provision involves a wide range of opportunities for students to make informed and relevant choices as they progress through the school. Partnerships with other educational establishments, including vocational settings, contribute well and ease students' transition into the school and into post-16 education, employment or training where the high proportion of students engaged has increased over the last three years. The guidance given to students about courses is informative. Links across the curriculum have become more explicit to students since the last inspection, particularly in Years 7 to 9, for example through 'splash' days which are popular with the students. There is further scope, however, to evaluate and embed more widely curriculum innovation in order to increase opportunities for teachers and students to work collaboratively.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders, the governing body and staff support the headteacher's vision for an inclusive and supportive school which promotes and celebrates students' diversity. The school provides good equality of opportunity, evident in the good progress made by different groups of students, and the wide range of gifts and talents developed by individual students. The school's aims are shared with, and supported by, parents and carers. More needs to be done to address the difference between their perceptions about behaviour and those of senior staff, raised in the questionnaires returned in 2007 and 2011. Resources are managed judiciously to maintain good provision, and promote good progress and achievement, indicating good value for money. Daily routines are managed satisfactorily; they are well established in the uplifting school buildings, new in 2007. The school promotes community cohesion well due in particular to the impact of the specialism on drawing together the school, parents, carers and the local community. Senior staff are aware there is more to do in embracing wider communities.

The joint observations conducted by inspectors and senior staff indicate that the school's monitoring and evaluation of lessons are accurate and priorities are appropriate. Reviews of policies and procedures by senior staff and governors are adequate. Safeguarding arrangements fulfil government requirements. The effectiveness of middle leaders in ensuring that the quality of provision is consistent within subjects is improving but still variable. Excellent practice evident in some areas of the school or within subjects is not routinely shared so that all staff may learn and improve. Accountability to senior staff and the governing body where outcomes are lower, is an area to strengthen. The match between thorough assessment and feedback and students' peaks in achievement show what is possible. A good basis for further development is established through the teaching and learning group, which is effective in widening the repertoire and effectiveness of staff

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participating, but their involvement is based too much on their own analysis of needs. Overall, the progress made in enhancing provision and raising achievement indicates good capacity to improve further.

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	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	2
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	2

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers who returned the questionnaire was low in comparison with most secondary schools. Responses indicate a high level of satisfaction with the school. Students' enjoyment of school was rated highly. Of the parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire the most negative response related to the school's effectiveness in dealing with unacceptable behaviour. Little evidence was observed during the inspection of poor behaviour. The school has reduced the number of exclusions and raised attendance since the last inspection.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Avon Valley School and Performing 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 187 completed parental questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1104 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	94	50	89	48	4	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	88	47	93	50	3	2	3	2
My school informs me about my child's progress	88	47	90	48	8	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	61	33	107	57	15	8	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	65	35	105	56	11	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	63	34	94	50	24	13	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	52	28	118	63	7	4	1	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)	53	28	115	61	2	1	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	63	34	107	57	12	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	60	32	81	43	27	14	10	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	49	26	112	60	12	6	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	78	42	95	51	6	3	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	91	49	79	42	13	7	1	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

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



20 January 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of The Avon Valley School and Performing Arts College, Rugby, CV21 1EH

On behalf of the inspectors who visited on 18 and 19 January, I would like to thank you for welcoming us into your school. We valued the opportunity to share your achievements, talk to you in discussion groups and observe your lessons.

We found Avon Valley School and Performing Arts College provides a good quality of education and thought you might like to know why that is the case.

You make good progress, including those of you who find learning difficult, because you are supported well.

Your personal development and contribution to the community are promoted particularly well through the arts.

You get good care, guidance and support that enable students of all ages and abilities to feel safe and succeed.

Your awareness of how to develop a healthy lifestyle is excellent and many of you participate well in voluntary activities.

You have a wide range of opportunities to pursue through varied courses and optional activities, which prepare you well for the future.

Your school is well led and managed, and staff are keen to discover and develop your gifts and talents.

You develop good relationships with staff and other students as you progress through the school, contributing positively to it as a community.

Your lessons are generally good, particularly those that attract your interest early in the lesson and enable you to get practically involved.

We have asked your school to prioritise these things:

- to develop more of the very best teaching, particularly lessons that stimulate your interest and attention, and inform you about how to do even better.
- to raise standards and improve behaviour further, working with you, your parents and carers to ensure that your successes are sustained.

The inspection team wish you well for your future.

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton

Her Majesty's Inspector

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