

Aldersley High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104404
Local Authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	355579
Inspection dates	20–21 October 2010
Reporting inspector	David Anstead 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	701
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	115
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jim Inglis
Headteacher	Nicola Davis
Date of previous school inspection	14 October 2009
School address	Barnhurst Lane Wolverhampton WV8 1RT
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspection team saw 33 lessons with 31 teachers visited. Meetings were held with groups of students, the school council, staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and the sixth form consortium coordinator. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at students' books, analysed assessment data, checked policies and read reports about the school from the local authority. The views of 20 parents and carers, 138 students and 24 members of staff expressed in questionnaires were taken into account.

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

- How good is achievement in mathematics and in the sixth form and of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities?
- What is the quality of teaching and assessment like and particularly in mathematics?
- How effective is the impact of leadership and management on improving provision and can the school sustain the improvements in its performance?

Information about the school

The school is smaller than average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. Around half of students are from minority ethnic groups. There proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than average and there is a unit for students with statements for speech and language difficulties managed by the school. Sixth-form provision is shared with three other local schools. The school has held specialist status in technology for a number of years and the specialist subjects are mathematics, science and technology. At the last inspection in October 2009 the school was deemed to require significant improvement and was given a notice to improve.

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

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Patterns in the school's performance data over the last three years go up and down, like a roller coaster ride. Between 2007 and 2009 performance plummeted and examination results were exceptionally low. An inspection towards the end of this period concluded that the school required significant improvement but judged that the new leadership of the school had the capacity to bring about the necessary improvements within a year. It has succeeded in doing so and the 2010 data shows performance is strongly up and continuing to climb. This is a good school which gives good value for money.

Following the inspection, senior leaders set about tackling underperformance by rigorously evaluating provision and identifying the school's strengths and weaknesses. It was made explicitly clear to the staff what was expected of them and an extensive programme of support and coaching was introduced to challenge and encourage them to improve. Students were engaged in discussing how more opportunities for group and independent work would improve their learning. This approach to improving the school has been spectacularly successful in the way it has galvanised and motivated the staff and students to raise their game. There is a strong sense of commitment and enthusiasm about improving learning and morale is high. All staff who responded to a questionnaire agreed that the school was well led with 79% strongly agreeing. Students were similarly positive about school leaders and the improvements they have brought about in learning in a short space of time.

A year on and the impact of this work can be seen in the greatly improved outcomes. The progress made by students is much better and is now good. Consequently examination results have improved and attainment is now average apart from in mathematics which although improved, remains below average. Action to tackle past inequalities in performance between different groups is outstanding. Students' attendance has improved from low to average and there has been a noticeable reduction in the proportion of persistent absenteeism. The school is a delightful and harmonious community where students from different backgrounds integrate and get on extremely well with each other. A climate of mutual respect exists; behaviour is good and students display mature and considerate attitudes. Students and staff were unanimous in describing how much better behaviour now is and the good contribution that it has made to improving learning and to how safe students feel. All students responding to a questionnaire said they felt safe at the school with a majority expressing this strongly. The extent to which students feel safe is outstanding as is their adoption of healthy lifestyles. The overwhelming majority of students participate in an hour or so more than the expected minimum of two hours

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exercise each week and the number of students choosing to eat school meals is high. This is because the care, guidance and support students receive are outstanding.

The quality of teaching is good with some outstanding practice. Good partnership arrangements with local schools, colleges and the university enable the good curriculum to offer a wide range of courses appropriate for students' needs and aspirations. There is an excellent range of after-school leisure, sporting and study activities known as 'period 7' in which all teachers participate and which are attended at least once a week by a majority of students. However, the impact of the school's technology specialism has been limited due to past weaknesses in two of the specialist subjects.

Good progress has been made on tackling the issues from the last inspection including improving the overall effectiveness of the sixth form which is now satisfactory. Despite this improvement, outcomes in the sixth form lag behind those in the main school. Progress made by students following different subjects in the sixth form is mixed and still only satisfactory and the proportion of students who leave without completing their courses is higher than usual.

Most inspection judgements are a grade or more higher than when the school was last inspected. It is quite remarkable how quickly the school has turned itself round. The way in which ambition has been embedded and has driven the school forward is outstanding as is the management of teaching and learning. There is a strong trend of improvement in almost all aspects of the school's work which as this is relatively recent, shows the school has a good capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase attainment to be above average by:
 - improving progress in mathematics so that achievement in all the key subjects is similarly good
 - improving the impact of the school's specialist status.
- Improve the overall effectiveness of the sixth form by:
 - ensuring the progress made by sixth-formers is consistently good in all subjects and at all levels
 - supporting a higher proportion of sixth-formers to successfully complete their courses.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Attainment on entry is broadly average. Progress made by students a year ago was inadequate and particularly so in mathematics and technology, two of the school's specialist subjects. The 2010 examination results show the progress now made places the school in the top 15% of all schools. Progress now is good and is outstanding in some subjects such as performing arts and science. Attainment was low in 2009 but improved to average in 2010 and tracking data and standards seen by inspectors in lessons confirm it continues to be average overall. Some attainment measures are now above average and only attainment in mathematics remains below. There is minimal variation in the performance of different minority ethnic groups or between students of varying prior

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attainment. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities in 2009 were making very poor progress. Most are now making good progress and some make outstanding progress including those receiving additional support for speech and language development. Average attendance and average attainment in mathematics mean that students have a satisfactory development of workplace skills.

In nearly all lessons seen during the inspection, learning was good or outstanding. Where learning was best, there were opportunities for students to work collaboratively in small groups and independently. The school has devised a four point scale which older students and teachers use to evaluate their ability to learn independently and to plot their development of this skill. Good learning often involved students in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses in each other's work. Exceptional collaborative learning was seen in a performing arts lesson where a 'board' of 23 students planned and organised a show they are putting on. In a handful of less successful lessons, learning was over-directed by the teacher which had the effect of disengaging some pupils and limiting their progress. Tasks set for group work in some of these satisfactory lessons could be completed whether students worked together or independently.

Students are proud of their school. They speak with enthusiasm about their many opportunities to be involved in decision-making and to take on responsibilities that contribute to the smooth running of the school. For example, students in all year groups offer support to younger students; sixth form students meet with the governing body to help shape school improvement planning. Social and moral development is good. There is a strong sense of shared purpose, underpinned by caring, supportive values, evident in all aspects of the school's work. Spiritual development is facilitated through a 'thought for the day' although some students could not recall what it was when asked. Cultural development is satisfactory because it mainly involves learning about local culture and not so much about national and international culture. Achievement is good and rising and students enjoy life at the school. This is a school community that wants to do as well as it can.

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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	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	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?

Teaching is planned well so that there are a range of tasks matched to students' abilities. In a small minority of lessons, there is insufficient recognition of individual students' needs. Assessment is used highly successfully in motivating students, the vast majority of whom understand their current attainment, their targets and how to improve. Teachers use good open questioning which encourages students to think about their learning and to explore ideas. Teaching in mathematics is good.

Good partnerships and coordinated timetabling two days a week mean that students have access to any optional course offered by any local authority school. This enhances choice and ensures the curriculum meets the needs and interests of students. The school met its specialist school targets in 2010 for the first time in four years. The impact of its specialist status on the rest of the curriculum and on the engagement with the community has not been successful.

Students feel they are very effectively supported by staff and are very positive about how adults deal with their concerns. A very thorough week-long induction programme introduces incoming Year 7 students to their future 'family' in the form of mixed-age tutor groups. Students experience teambuilding activities which significantly reduces any anxiety new students transferring to their secondary school may feel. Provision for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. Additional induction days are held for students who find themselves in vulnerable circumstances and those who will join the

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speech and language difficulty unit. 'Mini schools' operate in Years 7, 8 and 9 for those from the most vulnerable circumstances, these provide a transitional experience whereby several subjects are taught by the same teacher until students are ready to join the mainstream.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Arrangements for monitoring the work of the school are rigorous and inform self-evaluation and strategic planning, which are excellent. They ensure there is clarity about future actions to be taken and drive improvement work very well. Tracking of the progress made by individual students and their personal development is detailed and reliable. It has enabled the school to monitor closely the impact of its actions to ensure different student groups are making the same good progress. There are no discernible differences in the performance of any groups because the school has been exceptionally effective in tackling past inequalities.

Governance is good. Governors have a good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are prepared to take robust action when necessary. They have for instance taken action in changing the leadership of the school and in making staffing reductions to balance the budget. The governing body and school leaders have worked hard to engage parents and carers. Although the number of questionnaires received from them was low, engagement is good as shown by the very high proportions of parents and carers who attend students' review meetings.

Work to promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination, is outstanding and makes an excellent contribution to the good relationships in the school and its immediate community. The promotion of community cohesion is only satisfactory however because the national and international dimensions are less well developed. Safeguarding procedures have been inspected three times in a year and have improved from satisfactory to good. All required arrangements are in place, are well implemented and effectively and regularly checked.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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	1
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	2

Sixth form

Progress is mixed between different subjects and is better at AS-level than at A-level. It is satisfactory now, whereas it was inadequate a year ago. Students make good and sometimes outstanding progress in a lesser number of vocational qualifications.

Attendance has improved to be above average. Around 20% more students are staying on to successfully complete their courses than was the case previously, although another 20% still leave early, which is higher than usual. These improvements have been brought about because sixth-formers are well cared for and well taught. They speak highly of the very good support they get and particularly of the efforts the school has made to promote their independent learning skills. As one student put it: 'teachers here help us to help ourselves'. Outcomes are now satisfactory and strongly improving.

The curriculum is greatly improved through the school's partnership with other schools which enables students to choose from a range of 43 courses including a good balance of academic and vocational courses at two levels of challenge. The curriculum meets the needs of the vast majority of students who want to stay on after completing Key Stage 4. Good leadership and management by the head of sixth form and her team are ensuring satisfactory provision and outcomes are rapidly improving. The sixth form was judged to be inadequate at the last inspection. Its overall effectiveness is now satisfactory with some good features.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

A very small number of questionnaires were received from parents and carers and so the pattern of responses should be treated with caution. Four respondents disagreed that behaviour is effectively dealt with, whilst another 14 felt that it is. In student and staff questionnaires almost all agreed that behaviour is good. Behaviour around the school and in lessons during the inspection was good. Four parents and carers disagreed that their children enjoy school whilst another 15 felt they did. Almost all students in the sample receiving questionnaires, agreed that they enjoyed school and certainly those spoken to during the inspection expressed this view strongly.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Aldersley High 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 20 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 701 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	6	30	9	45	4	20	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	8	40	10	50	1	5	1	5
My school informs me about my child's progress	7	35	9	45	1	5	1	5
My child is making enough progress at this school	8	40	10	50	1	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	5	25	13	65	0	0	1	5
The school helps me to support my child's learning	5	25	10	50	2	10	2	10
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	2	10	12	60	3	15	2	10
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)	5	25	13	65	0	0	1	5
The school meets my child's particular needs	3	15	12	60	1	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	1	5	13	65	4	20	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	1	5	12	60	3	15	1	5
The school is led and managed effectively	4	20	11	55	3	15	1	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	3	15	14	70	1	5	1	5

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.



22 October 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Aldersley High School, Wolverhampton WV8 1RT

Thank you for your friendly welcome when we inspected your school and an especial thank you to the students who baked the cakes for the inspection team.

We found that your school is good and that it is improving rapidly. Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding and consequently the progress you are making is also good. Examination results are rising and are now mostly in line with or above those in other schools. Results in mathematics, although improving, are still below average. The school looks after you extremely well in making sure you live healthy lifestyles and you told us that you feel safe. The headteacher and senior staff are doing an outstanding job of making your school better.

I have asked the headteacher to continue to improve examination results at the school by making sure:

- all of you make good progress in mathematics
- your specialist status (currently in technology) is used more effectively to improve learning
- progress in the sixth form is as good at A-level as it is at AS-level
- more sixth-formers stay on to complete their courses successfully.

You can help by attending school regularly and for those of you in the sixth form, by staying on to complete the courses you start.

With best wishes for your future,

Yours sincerely

David Anstead

Her Majesty's Inspector

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