

Allerton Grange School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108058
Local Authority	Leeds
Inspection number	356297
Inspection dates	2–3 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Ruth James 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	1520
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	265
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Richard Morris
Headteacher	Mr Rick Whittaker
Date of previous school inspection	2 July 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. Forty six lessons were observed and the same number of teachers seen. Meetings were held with groups of students, governors, and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents including assessment and tracking data, school policies, department self-evaluations, and safeguarding documentation. Inspectors also considered 36 questionnaires from parents and carers.

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

- The current achievement of different groups of students.
- The effectiveness of the school's strategies to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence.
- The quality of teaching, especially in subjects where outcomes are weaker, and teachers' use of assessment data.
- The effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels in implementing strategies to raise achievement rapidly.
- The effectiveness of strategies in the sixth form to improve the achievement of different groups of students, especially at AS level.

Information about the school

The school is much larger than most secondary schools. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is high, as is the percentage who speak English as an additional language. The percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is high but the number with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The school hosts specialist provision for hearing impaired students. The school has specialist status for Arts, and has the Artsmark Gold Award. The school moved into a new building in September 2009.

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

This is a satisfactory but improving school with some notable strengths. The sixth form is good. At Key Stage 4, results have shown steady improvement in recent years. Attainment is broadly average compared with national figures, but standards are rising. Most groups of students are making satisfactory progress and this represents considerable improvement for some groups, especially those from minority ethnic backgrounds, who had underachieved in the past. There remains variation in the performance of subjects. Students' personal development is mainly satisfactory but the contribution made by students to the school and local community is good. Cultural development is also a strength. Attendance has improved as a result of targeted strategies and is now close to the national average, but the school recognises the need to improve it further.

Behaviour in lessons and around school is satisfactory. Exclusions have reduced substantially because of successful strategies to provide better for the needs of students whose circumstances may have made them vulnerable. Behaviour in lessons is closely linked with the quality of teaching which is variable both within and between departments. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. There are examples of good and outstanding practice. Action has been taken to address inadequate teaching, but this has not yet been eradicated and good practice is not yet the norm across the school. In the best lessons students displayed good attitudes to learning and made good progress. In weaker lessons behaviour management was less effective, the pace was slower, expectations were not high enough, or the range of teaching styles limited so that students were not well motivated, showed low-level inattention and progress was slower.

Assessment information is used at a whole-school level to set challenging targets and to prioritise support for individuals who are falling behind their peers, but it is inconsistently used in lesson planning. Not all teachers are paying sufficient attention to planning different activities that match the range of ability in the group and teachers are not sufficiently skilled at adapting their plans during the lesson in response to regular checks on what students are learning.

The curriculum has undergone some significant changes and it now meets the differing needs and aspirations of almost all students. Pathways for Key Stage 4 students have been reviewed and a new competence-based curriculum has been introduced in early Key Stage 3. Care, guidance and support arrangements have undergone radical changes and are now outstanding. The commitment shown to meeting the very diverse needs of students including those facing significant barriers to learning is paying dividends in the improving achievement of different groups. These changes demonstrate that school self-evaluation is effective and is used well to guide strategic planning and also to implement necessary changes. The headteacher has clearly elucidated his vision for the school. He provides strong leadership and has shown determination in guiding improvements by

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developing and strengthening leadership and management at all levels within the school. The senior team understands the school's strengths and areas needing development, and is tackling these with success. Community cohesion is outstanding. The school draws on its diversity to create a community where students and adults show tolerance and consideration. The school is improving well and demonstrates good capacity for further improvement.

About 40% of 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?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that more of it is good and outstanding by:
 - improving the consistency of classroom behaviour management
 - further developing strategies to raise aspirations and improve attitudes to learning
 - raising expectations and ensuring that learning outcomes are explicit and sufficiently demanding for all students
 - improving punctuality to lessons and ensuring that lessons proceed at a rapid pace
 - further developing the range of teaching styles employed to better meet the diverse needs of all students.
- Make better use of assessment data in planning and delivering lessons to ensure that teaching is suitably challenging and meets the needs of students of the full range of different abilities.
- Continue to work to improve attendance, including attendance in the sixth form, by:
 - refining and developing existing strategies to promote high attendance
 - continuing with the range of strategies already in place to tackle absence, especially that of persistent absentees.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students join the school with prior attainment that is a little below average. Overall standards by the end of Key Stage 4 are broadly average and improving. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE A* to C grades increased significantly in 2010 but the proportion gaining five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics improved by only one percentage point and remained below average. The achievement of most groups of students improved in 2010. Progress in mathematics is not yet rapid enough. The school's assessment data for the current Year 11 indicate that the school is on track to achieve better results in 2011. Attainment in Key Stage 3 is also improving.

The progress seen by inspectors in lessons was satisfactory overall. In the best lessons attitudes to learning were good and students participated well, the pace was lively and work was of a high quality, but in the weaker lessons learning proceeded at a slower pace because students were not consistently engaged or the work was not at an appropriate

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level. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers.

Students' behaviour is satisfactory overall. In lessons it is closely linked with the quality of teaching. In the better lessons where interest is engaged and students are motivated to achieve it is often good. In weaker lessons students lose interest and low-level inattention or minor disruption which is not sufficiently well managed becomes apparent. The extent to which students feel safe in school is satisfactory, and widely differing views were evident. Attendance is improving and persistent absence is reducing. Students' contribution to the community, both within the school and further afield, is good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also good, with particular strengths in cultural development.

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	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	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 satisfactory overall. The quality of lessons is extremely variable, and the teaching in observed lessons ranged from outstanding to inadequate. In the best lessons behaviour management is unobtrusive and effective, the pace is rapid, students are engaged, teachers make regular checks of understanding and work is well tailored to the different abilities present. However, this good practice is not embedded and in too many lessons students' low-level misbehaviour takes too much time to control, the teaching styles fail to engage the students, and whole-class teaching fails to meet the different

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student needs. It is not always clear precisely what the intended learning outcomes of lessons are, and where these are explicit they are not always demanding enough. Students sometimes arrive late for lessons and valuable time is lost. Assessment practices are also inconsistent and too many teachers do not make effective use of the wealth of data available in planning their lessons, or adapt their teaching in the light of ongoing assessment in the lesson.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and offers a good choice of pathways at Key Stage 4. There is a good range of vocational options, including science, and this is improving engagement. The new 'learning to learn' curriculum in Key Stage 3 is starting to have an impact by helping to improve the attitudes and independence of younger students. Tutorial time is not always used constructively.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The school has radically revised the structure of its student care arrangements. Highly effective leadership by the inclusion leader together with arrangements for support for groups of potentially vulnerable students has helped to reduce differences in the achievement of different groups of students. The school can cite many instances of success where it has helped individual students overcome significant barriers to education. The quality of impartial advice and guidance to students is high. The school actively supports students in making well-informed choices about their future. This is helping to ensure that very few students leave the school without a suitable placement in further or higher education, training or employment.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership. He is ably supported by a highly capable senior team. Middle leaders feel empowered and contribute to the vision and delivery of the key areas. The school development plan accurately identifies the school's priorities. It is explicit in identifying actions, timescales and costs, and allocating responsibilities. Progress is monitored formally at regular intervals. Effective systems are in place for self-evaluation. There are clear lines of accountability established. The restructuring of areas such as student support is bringing clear benefits and improvements.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is outstanding. The school has purposefully created, developed and nurtured a climate of mutual respect regardless of ethnic background, religion or socio-economic status. The diversity of cultures and backgrounds within the school is celebrated. Events such as the 'Love Music, Hate Racism' concert are used to promote understanding. There are highly effective links with

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community groups. The historic underachievement of students from minority ethnic backgrounds has been addressed effectively and contributes to the school's good promotion of equality of opportunity. The school's specialism plays a part and the content of the curriculum in textiles and art has been designed to reflect the diversity of the school. An Afro-Caribbean artist in residence works with Key Stage 4 art students.

Safeguarding arrangements are good. Records of staff checks meet government requirements. The school has clear policies and strategies in place and staff are appropriately trained. Leadership by the governing body is satisfactory. Governors are very committed to the school and keen to develop their role. Many are relatively new to the governing body and with support of the School Improvement Partner they are developing their skills in supporting and challenging the school. Resources are deployed appropriately and, although the school has a deficit budget, this is being managed appropriately and is reducing. Value for money is satisfactory.

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	3
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

Sixth form

Outcomes for students in the sixth form are good. The 2010 results showed improvements over the 2009 figures especially at AS level, where the pass rate improved. Differences in attainment between different groups of students reduced, and the attainment of students of Pakistani origin, which was low in 2009, rose significantly. In 2010, the variation in outcomes between different subjects was also reduced. Value added data show that students make good progress given their starting points, despite the low attendance of a small number of students. The quality of teaching is good, and the motivation and good attitudes to learning of sixth form students contribute well to their learning. Students' progress against their targets is assessed regularly. Student views are considered carefully and the curriculum has been reviewed to ensure that it provides opportunities to meet the

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needs and aspirations of different groups. Sixth form students contribute well to the rest of the school. Leaders and managers have a strong understanding of the data and this has been used effectively to drive improvements.

These are the grades for the sixth form

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

Views of parents and carers

The school sent the questionnaires to parents and carers by post the day before the inspection. The proportion of parents and carers who returned questionnaires was low. The most significant concerns from the analysis of responses were related to students' progress and behaviour. Inspection findings support the view that these are areas that could be improved. A number of parents made individual comments about aspects of the school's work. While these covered different issues, recurring themes were variability in the quality of teaching and behaviour.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Allerton Grange 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 36 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1520 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	14	39	17	47	3	8	1	3
The school keeps my child safe	5	14	25	69	3	8	1	3
My school informs me about my child's progress	9	25	24	67	2	6	1	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	8	22	15	42	9	25	4	11
The teaching is good at this school	9	25	16	44	4	11	1	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	5	14	18	50	12	33	1	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	4	11	21	58	10	28	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	8	22	21	58	3	8	1	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	7	19	17	47	9	25	1	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	6	17	13	36	9	25	4	11
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	6	17	13	36	10	28	2	6
The school is led and managed effectively	7	19	17	47	7	19	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	8	22	18	50	6	17	1	3

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.



4 March 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Allerton Grange School, Leeds, LS17 6SF

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed meeting you, seeing you at work and hearing your views. We found that your school is providing you with a satisfactory education, but it is improving. The sixth form is good. Your headteacher provides good leadership.

Examination results are about average. Teaching is satisfactory, enabling you to make satisfactory progress overall. In the better lessons you behave well and make good progress, but this is not consistent across the school.

Your curriculum options are good and provide a wide range of opportunities for you. The new 'Learning to Learn' curriculum in Year 7 and 8 is helping younger students to become more independent learners. The sixth form curriculum has also been extended successfully.

The care, guidance and support provided by the school are outstanding. Those of you with particular difficulties or needs are extremely well supported. Your school is a diverse community where students from different faiths and backgrounds are all valued and cultural differences are celebrated.

The headteacher, other leaders and managers and the staff recognise that further improvements can be made. We have asked them to continue the work already begun to:

- improve the quality of teaching so that more of it is good and outstanding
- use information about your progress to ensure that teaching meets all your needs whatever your ability
- work with those of you who do not attend school regularly to improve your attendance.

You can help by attending school regularly and really working hard in all your lessons so that gain the best qualifications that you can which will help you in the future.

Yours sincerely

Ruth James

Her Majesty's Inspector

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