

Aylsham High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121164
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	358948
Inspection dates	16–17 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Michael Miller

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	1023
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Platt
Headteacher	Duncan Spalding
Date of previous school inspection	12 June 2008
School address	Sir Williams Lane Aylsham, Norwich NR11 6AN
Telephone number	01263 733270
Fax number	01263 732918
Email address	office@aylshamhigh.norfolk.sch.uk

Age group	11–16
Inspection dates	16–17 May 2011
Inspection number	358948

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 4234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. They visited 36 lessons and 34 teachers were seen. Inspectors held meetings with governing body representatives, teaching and non-teaching staff, the school council and house captains. They attended assemblies and daily registration sessions, looked at students' work, and talked informally throughout the inspection with many students. School documents were examined including policies, development planning, self-evaluation reports, monitoring files, curriculum and safeguarding documents. Minutes of governing body meetings were examined, including the headteacher's reports to the governing body, and information provided for parents and carers. Inspectors received and analysed questionnaires from 220 parents and carers, 56 members of staff and 191 Key Stage 3 and 4 students.

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

- The team examined the ways the school has been working to improve the attainment and progress of students in English.
- Inspectors explored the ways the school has been working to improve students' achievement in modern foreign languages.
- The inspectors analysed the development of the school's use of assessment, in order to improve both the quality of students' learning and day-to-day teaching.
- The extent to which the students' personal development, and preparation for their future lives, is an emerging strength of the school.

Information about the school

This is an average sized secondary school. Its application to move to Foundation status under a shared, cooperative Trust with its main feeder primary schools, has been approved recently. Almost all the students are of White British heritage. Overall, the percentages of students from minority ethnic groups, and of those who speak English as an additional language, are well-below average, with none at an early stage of English acquisition. The proportion identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. Most of these students have specific learning difficulties; the school has a designated resource base facility for such students who are integrated fully, with additional support, into normal classes and lessons. The percentage of students with a statement of special educational needs is well above average, and some students on roll, with specific medical needs, are educated off-site at a specialist unit. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average.

The school holds Business and Enterprise specialist status, is an Applied Learning specialist school, and is designated not only as a Training School but also as a High Performing Specialist School. It holds Sportsmark and High Quality Physical Education status, Investors in Family and Investors in Community status, and the National Enterprise Award accreditation.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school. Its excellent capacity for further improvement is shown through the ways it has sustained important aspects of its work which were recognised as excellent at its last inspection. These include the ways it practices and applies the principles of equality of opportunity to give its students the scope to grasp the best chances for their future lives and well-being. The students' excellent personal development is underpinned very securely by the outstanding quality of the care, guidance and support the school provides for its students and their families. In addition, further improvements have been made in the past three years. These have ensured the students' behaviour is excellent. High quality provision ensures the progress made by those students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those designated as part of the resource base provision, is outstanding. There is excellence in the drive for improvement and ambition shown by leaders at all levels, from heads of department through to the governing body. The views of most parents and carers may be summed up by one who wrote: 'The school has improved tremendously over the past few years. Our child loves attending school. Teachers help children such as ours to attain often exceptional grades. The students learn to care for and respect each other. They make good progress. Well done!'

Students enter the school in Year 7 with average attainment. They make good progress to gain above average standards overall in GCSE and other national tests and examinations by the time they leave at the end of Year 11. Attainment has improved steadily over the past three years, at a rate slightly faster than that seen nationally. The well-above average attainment gained by those students taking statistics, and their success in information and communications technology, reflects the positive influence of the school's business and enterprise specialism on the curriculum and students' achievement.

Excellent monitoring of teaching and learning is ensuring a good and improving quality of teaching. The school benefits well from its specialist Training School status. During the inspection the large majority of lessons seen involved good or better teaching and learning; a small minority were satisfactory. Until now, the focus of lesson observations has been more specifically on teaching than learning. The school recognises that a shift of focus is necessary to ensure the equally rigorous monitoring of learning. This is to raise further students' achievement and their attainment in national tests and examinations at the end of Year 11. In this the school is placed well as a specialist Applied Learning school.

This is a school which evaluates its performance conscientiously and has therefore an excellent understanding of its strengths and relative weaknesses. Consequently, all the points identified for further improvement are already part of the school's improvement and development planning. In each case, there is excellent practice within the school, but this is not always applied consistently enough across the whole school. While the use of

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

assessment during lessons is good overall, not all teachers make consistently effective use of questioning to check students' understanding of their learning. This is particularly the case in lessons where teachers tend to lecture the students rather than involve them actively in exploring their learning. Written marking is inconsistent in the way it provides a permanent record to remind students about what it is they need to do to improve, and against which they may judge their future progress. Day-to-day lesson planning can also be inconsistent. While this is often good for broad groups of students, the use of assessment in lessons to plan specific learning for individuals is not always evident.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the students' improving attainment by enhancing the good work the school has been undertaking to increase further the proportion of good and outstanding teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring additional opportunities for students to become involved more actively in lessons
 - planning lessons to take even more account of the learning needs of individuals, so that students are challenged and inspired.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

School data, including GCSE grades already achieved through coursework and early entries, show that current Year 11 are attaining well above average overall as a result of further progress this academic year. The impact of the school's specialist Applied Learning status is contributing well to this improved progress. The attainment of students in the majority of lessons sampled during the inspection, and from the scrutiny of their work, shows attainment is certainly above average and progress at least good in the large majority of lessons. The attainment by the end of Year 11 for students with a statement of special educational needs and/or disabilities is very high compared with similar groups nationally, and their progress is particularly excellent. This is because of the support they receive from very well qualified, specialist teaching assistants which enhances very well the normal teaching. Consequently, the individual challenge offered to such students is focused very well and precisely.

What can be achieved by students was typified by an outstanding Year 9 design and technology lesson where students were making bread. As a result of exceptional planning which met their diverse needs, students were involved actively throughout the lesson. Levels of enjoyment were high and students made prodigious progress. Their attitudes to learning and their behaviour were outstanding. The teacher was calm and collected, enthused the learners, and together with exceptional support enabled the students to produce a product of high quality.

The very large majority of students and their families responding to the questionnaires confirm they enjoy school. This is reflected in students' positive attitudes to learning and the civilized nature of the school as a community. Students show high levels of respect and consideration for each other, which reflects the depth of their social development and moral understanding. As a result of ensuring the school provides a safe and friendly environment, 17 students from the 'Friendly Faces' team have recently received the Princess Diana Award for their contributions. Students say they want to come to school

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

because they appreciate what it has to offer them both academically and socially. Attendance is above average; most absences are for good reasons. Overall, the students' preparation for their future lives, through their education and personal development, stands them in excellent stead for their future economic well-being. Students show themselves to be well-informed young citizens with an excellent commitment to community cohesion.

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	2
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	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
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	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
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 large majority of the teaching challenges and inspires the students well. In outstanding lessons, when the teaching encourages students to discuss, share ideas, and trusts them to take more control of their learning, students' progress and achievement is often high. Students embrace the opportunities they are given by the teaching to become involved actively in lessons and learning. When teachers talk too much at their classes, students listen because they realise their teacher's subject knowledge is good. However, the lecturing approach means students remain more passive recipients of learning. Students appreciate the verbal feedback they get from their teachers in lessons; this helps them know what and how to improve. However, some marking does not document this regularly enough, or in sufficient detail, to provide a more permanent record to which students may refer when precise memories of the oral feedback may fade.

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

The curriculum is innovative and imaginative including an extension of a primary based approach for a specific groups of Key Stage 3 students who require additional support. The outstanding Key Stage 4 curriculum is extended to include a range of vocational courses. There is good planning, alongside partner schools and colleges, for continuity of education 14-19 after students leave at the end of Year 11. The school has been at the forefront of curriculum design in relation to the new diploma courses. Students have excellent opportunity to develop their enterprise skills through activities related to the Business and Enterprise specialism. They take very good advantage of the outstanding enrichment and extra-curricular opportunities available. Sporting provision is excellent and there is a successful Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. The activities week is highly popular with students. School productions are a key strength, popular with the wider local community and involve both present and past students, particularly with technical support.

The school provides a most welcoming environment. Students are very well known by the school as individuals. Students are very positive about the support they receive from adults at the school. There are particularly close links with the families of those who require additional support or whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable due to their circumstances. The school is vigilant concerning the well-being and progress of those students on its roll whose medical needs require them to be educated off-site. Transition arrangements are particularly good with the wide range of feeder primary schools; they are especially close with those schools which now form part of the new cooperative Foundation Trust. The school makes excellent use of external agencies and facilities, from counselling to police drop-in sessions, to give students the help and guidance they may need.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Strong and perceptive leadership by the headteacher is reflected in the approach of the senior leadership team, who are supported very effectively by heads of department and house. This is a school with high ambitions and resolute desire to be successful. All staff responding to the questionnaire say they are proud of the school, know what it is trying to achieve and believe it is led well. Ambition and the drive for improvement are underpinned by an extensive programme of professional development for both teaching and support staff. Members of the governing body make an excellent contribution to the school through their individual skills and professional expertise. The outstanding governing body carries out very effectively its role of both challenging and supporting the school. The safeguarding of students is given top priority and systems are monitored thoroughly. The contributions relevant staff make in cases where students may find themselves vulnerable,

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

or in cases of child protection, are excellent. However, a few departmental risk assessments remain generic and are still in the process of being adapted for the school's specific needs.

The school has an excellent approach to the promotion of community cohesion, and takes very seriously its role and responsibility for this aspect of the students' development. This is reflected in its Investors in Community status, and a specific governor has responsibility for monitoring community cohesion. There has been clear analysis, action planning and continuous review and evaluation of the impact of the school's role in its community and beyond. This underpins securely the students' understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and the excellence of their contribution to the school and wider communities. The school's ethos and very strong commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity has ensured concerted action to improve students' achievement and ensure continuous improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. The school's approach to equality fulfils its aims of bringing together its day-to-day practices within the school community, tackling firmly any discrimination, and promoting the directive that every child matters.

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	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers responding to the questionnaire was above average for secondary schools. The very large majority are very happy with the school and responded affirmatively to the questions. A very small minority expressed some concern that the school does not always take sufficient account of their suggestions and concerns. The inspection finds that the school does take the views of all its stakeholders very seriously. This is reflected in its achievement of the Investors in Families award, and its quality mark for community engagement. A few parents and carers expressed some

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

concern about matters which are largely out of the school's hands, for example the enforced use of cover teachers for long-term absences due to illness. The inspection finds the school does its best to ensure the minimum disruption to students' education. A few responses indicated some concern that the school does not help them support their child's learning. There is a wealth of material provided for parents and carers for this purpose, including through the school's website. Some concern was also expressed that the school did not help students to have a healthy lifestyle. The inspection finds that the students have an excellent understanding of the importance of leading healthy lifestyles and put this into practise while in school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Aylsham 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 220 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1023 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	88	40	116	53	13	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	100	45	115	52	5	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	65	30	129	59	17	8	4	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	83	38	112	51	16	7	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	76	35	124	56	7	3	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	61	28	118	54	23	10	5	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	47	21	131	60	28	13	5	2
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)	75	34	119	54	7	3	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	83	38	107	49	17	8	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	77	35	107	49	20	9	5	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	54	25	115	52	29	13	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	90	41	105	48	6	3	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	95	43	106	48	14	6	2	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



18 May 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Aylsham High School, Norwich, NR11 6AN

We would like to thank you for the very open and friendly welcome you gave to us when we visited you recently. We thoroughly enjoyed talking with you and appreciated the way you helped us to understand what your life and work at the school is really all about. You can take due pride in the contributions you make in ensuring that yours is an outstanding school.

These are some of the things we found are best about your school.

You achieve well and make good progress in your time at the school.

Your behaviour around school and attitudes to learning are outstanding.

Your school gives you excellent opportunity to prepare for your future lives.

Your personal development is ensuring you are responsible young citizens.

You make an outstanding contribution to the school and its wider community.

The care and support you receive from adults at the school is of high quality.

Your headteacher, other senior teachers and governors lead your school very well indeed and work purposefully to ensure you receive the best education.

We have asked your headteacher and the other teachers to do certain things to help all of you make even better progress. They will be continuing the work they have already started to develop the ways they assess your learning in lessons, particularly through the use of questioning. Teachers will also be ensuring you have a written record of the good oral feedback you receive on your work; this is to ensure you are very clear as to how to improve. You will also find all your teachers involving you more actively in lessons, and in some cases being challenged by more individual work. This is all aimed at helping you gain even higher standards.

During one of the tutorial lessons we saw, the students were asked by their form tutor to write a letter to their future selves listing how they had contributed to the school in the past year, and what they hoped to contribute in the future. Perhaps all of you may like to write similar letters, to be opened at the end of the next academic year, saying how you intend to improve further your own learning and achievement.

Yours sincerely

Michael Miller

Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.