

St Ivo School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110874
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	356828
Inspection dates	25–26 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Paul Brooker

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1809
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	323
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susan Campbell
Headteacher	Howard Gilbert
Date of previous school inspection	10 October 2007
School address	High Leys St Ives PE27 6RR
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. In total, 58 lesson observations were undertaken of 57 different teachers. Several observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors observed many aspects of the school's work and looked at a range of documents including students' work, school self-evaluation, student tracking data and arrangements for safeguarding. In addition, analysis was undertaken of inspection survey responses from students as well as returns from 449 parents and carers and 105 staff.

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

- Since the last inspection, how effectively has the school used its evaluations of teaching to strengthen provision and improve learning outcomes for students?
- Does the school now promptly identify students who are falling behind and take effective action to counter underachievement?
- Are provision and outcomes outstanding in the sixth form?
- What are the innovative and inspirational aspects of the school's provision?
- To what extent are self-evaluation, target setting and strategic planning incisive, rigorous and effective?

Information about the school

St Ivo is a much larger than average secondary school with specialist humanities status. It draws students from across St Ives as well as from a wide geographical area beyond the town. Most students are of White British heritage. The proportion from minority ethnic heritage groups is small, as is the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational, is broadly average.

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

The school has made rapid and sustained improvement since the last inspection, both in terms of students' academic achievement and their personal development. Students' progress has been accelerated so that standards at Key Stage 4 have risen to levels that are significantly above those found nationally. This has been achieved by the sharp focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning, combined with judicious curriculum changes. Assessment information effectively underpins development planning and the school's systematic self-evaluation. It is effectively used to set challenging targets, monitor the progress of all students and to make timely and effective interventions that support individuals in danger of falling behind. As a result, the school achieves outstanding outcomes.

The sixth form is outstanding. However, most aspects of the school's provision are good, rather than outstanding, because its sheer size makes achieving consistency a significant challenge. Although whole-school systems and policies are in place, there is variation in the implementation and impact of agreed procedures. Teaching is good, but the different approaches that individual departments adopt, for example in behaviour management, are unhelpful for the students. There are weaknesses in the day-to-day use of assessment, particularly in lesson planning. Best practice in marking and assessment is not replicated across the school.

By the time that they leave school, the students develop the skills and personal qualities that prepare them exceptionally well for the next stage of their education and for later life. They mature as confident and articulate young people. Students know how to stay safe and keep healthy, and they develop a good awareness and understanding of the needs of others. These qualities are reflected in the outstanding contribution that students, particularly those in the sixth form, make to their own school and its wider community. These impressive outcomes are achieved as a result of the school's outstanding care, guidance and support, which were praised by a number of parents and carers. Work to promote inclusion and improve attendance has had a significant impact on reducing absence and exclusions. Behaviour around the school is often exemplary. In lessons most students have very positive attitudes to learning and sustain their concentration impressively well. However, the distracted behaviour of a very small number of students is not consistently addressed.

The headteacher's clear focus on strengthening teaching and learning has successfully guided developments, whilst maintaining the excellent attention to all aspects of care, guidance and support. Achieving consistency across the school, however, remains a significant challenge. A few staff express discontent about the effectiveness of school leadership, but the significant improvements achieved since the last inspection are ample

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evidence of the school's ambition, the impact of its drive to raise standards and its good capacity to sustain further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the involvement of all students in their learning by:
 - sharpening the use of assessment to plan learning activities to engage them all in lessons
 - increasing the impact and effectiveness of marking across all subjects.
- Secure the involvement of all staff to ensure that agreed whole-school strategies, such as behaviour management, are consistently implemented and then robustly monitored by all senior and middle leaders.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Students start school with levels of attainment that are generally above those expected for their age. Improvements in the quality of learning have accelerated progress in recent years. Whatever their starting points, all groups of students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress as they move up through the school. Standards are consequently rising and are well above national figures. The proportion of students achieving at least five A*-C grades including English and mathematics increased to 66% in 2010 and is set to rise rapidly. Students whose circumstances make them vulnerable to underachievement benefit from the school's good provision and timely intervention which enables them to achieve success.

The quality of learning is good. In the vast majority of lessons students settle quickly, volunteer answers, work with independence and respond enthusiastically when given opportunities to collaborate in pairs and small groups. Their good behaviour makes a strong contribution to their learning in lessons and reflects their positive attitudes. Most students sustain their concentration well, even when asked to sit and listen for extended periods, but some get restless when learning activities do not engage them sufficiently.

Students' wider personal development is a notable strength. Attendance has increased since the last inspection and is well above the national figure. There has also been significant reduction in levels of exclusion and persistent absenteeism. Students say that they feel safe at all times and enjoy the many extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities on offer. They understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and participate well in optional physical activities. Students are proud of their school, and many willingly contribute to the life of the school and beyond through the work of the student council, the various mentoring schemes, and local and international charity links. Their positive attitudes and behaviour are reflected in their respect and consideration for the needs of others and their strong sense of common values across different societies. Students sit on a Fair Trade working party and organise events, including a regular stall in the local market, to translate ideas into action.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
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	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
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?

Teachers have high expectations of what students will achieve and set suitably challenging work. They have good subject knowledge and make effective use of new technology to support learning, often using superbly prepared resources. Lessons are generally well directed and relationships between adults and students are good. In the best lessons, teachers consider how all groups of students will learn effectively and plan activities that engage them all. However, some lessons are too dominated by teachers talking. When questioning fails to probe the extent of students' understanding, too many students are passive and progress is uneven. Regular assessment across all subjects ensures that students know how well they are doing and what they should achieve, but marking is not used consistently to guide improvement. Teachers' comments are too often unrelated to specific outcomes and give too little feedback on what was achieved or guidance on what could be improved.

The curriculum is well organised and suitably adapted to meet the different needs and abilities of the students. A wide range of enrichment activities is enjoyed by the students. The humanities specialism provides particularly good opportunities for students to extend their learning through, for example the 'Eco-Ivo' club and history work with the local museum.

The students' well-being is central to the school's everyday work. Excellent attention is given to all aspects of care and guidance. Over many years the school has developed high

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quality support for students, notably through the Pathfinder Children's Trust. A team of inclusion workers links closely with external agencies to support students and their families, to sustain the learning, development and well-being of individual students facing challenging circumstances. The impact of this work is seen in the positive outcomes for individual students who might otherwise underachieve, and also in the school's improving attendance and exclusion figures.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Since the last inspection the headteacher has successfully guided and driven the school's development and improvement. Responses from the staff collected during the inspection indicate that there is discontent about how the school is led and managed, linked to shortcomings in communication and a perception that not all staff feel adequately involved or supported. The school has taken significant steps to embed ambition at all levels and drive improvement in developing high quality provision, but it recognises the challenge of achieving consistency across a large establishment. Good systems are in place for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance, and suitable plans have been implemented to address areas of weakness and to secure high-quality teaching. Key developments include the development of the school's humanities specialism, the appointment of advanced skills teachers and the impact of five teaching and learning groups drawn from across the curriculum. These initiatives are driven by middle leaders and enthusiastic staff, some of whom are new to the school, who have started to identify and share best practice to strengthen teaching across all areas of the curriculum.

Despite its size, the school places the achievement and well-being of individual students at the heart of its endeavours. The performance and participation of particular groups is rigorously monitored to ensure that students do not underachieve. Parents and carers are kept well informed about their children's progress and well-being, including through the school's impressive 'IvoOnline' system. The school takes a leading role in developing a range of successful partnerships that widen provision and make an excellent contribution to students' well-being. It is proactive and highly successful in promoting community cohesion, both through the mainstream curriculum, notably in humanities, and also through its wider community engagement, including with faith groups.

Governance is good because governors use their good knowledge of the school to support its work and development, but also to provide suitable challenge and hold senior leaders to account. Safeguarding procedures meet all requirements and child protection policies and procedures are thoroughly implemented and carefully monitored.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

The sixth form has developed from strength to strength since the last inspection. Students achieve exceptionally well because high quality teaching promotes consistently good progress across all subjects. They are exceptionally well guided and supported, but are also enabled to develop the essential independence and responsibility for their own learning and welfare. Moreover, they are highly supportive of each other and contribute extensively to the school and its wider community. Students enthusiastically take up charity fund raising, the support and mentoring of younger students and work with local primary schools, for example through the Sixth Form Volunteer Project.

Sixth-form students thrive because provision is outstanding, and their success rates and attendance are high. The curriculum offers a wide range of options and pathways for students, mainly through AS and A2 courses with a few vocational or applied options. It is enhanced by an array of enrichment opportunities, including trips abroad to China, South Africa and New York, which students enjoy immensely. Teaching is very well structured and sharply focused, and makes effective use of assessment information to set challenging targets.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding. The head of sixth form is an inspirational leader, very well supported by his team of tutors. Robust systems for monitoring student progress ensure that there is no sense of complacency. Evaluation of provision is rigorous and effective in sustaining improvement.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

Most parents or carers who returned the inspection questionnaire are happy with their child's experience at the school, and are pleased both with the school's provision and the outcomes achieved. Their responses are particularly positive about the students' enjoyment of school and the fact that students are safe. Most parents and carers agree with the statement that teaching is good, but a significant number also expressed concern about disruption in lessons. Inspectors found that although students' attitudes to learning are good, the distracted behaviour of a very small number of students occasionally disrupts learning. Procedures for managing behaviour are not applied consistently.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Ivo 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 449 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1809 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	103	23	308	69	28	6	7	2
The school keeps my child safe	100	22	317	71	20	4	7	2
My school informs me about my child's progress	131	29	286	64	24	5	6	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	117	26	286	64	33	7	8	2
The teaching is good at this school	75	17	312	70	39	9	7	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	72	16	293	66	54	12	12	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	58	13	294	66	75	17	5	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)	88	20	301	67	20	4	9	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	80	18	307	69	33	7	10	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	55	12	257	57	79	18	28	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	69	15	274	61	45	10	15	3
The school is led and managed effectively	77	17	302	68	34	8	16	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	105	23	299	67	26	6	12	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	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.



27 May 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of St Ivo School, St Ives PE27 6RR

Thank you for your positive contribution to our recent inspection. We appreciated your friendly welcome and enjoyed speaking to you. Your carefully articulated opinions were helpful in confirming our own findings. We were impressed with the improvements made since the last inspection. The school's many strengths include:

- the excellent sixth form
- your good progress and the high standards that you achieve at GCSE
- high levels of attendance, your positive attitudes to learning and the impressive contribution that so many of you make to your school and its wider community.

These notable strengths ensure that St Ivo prepares you exceptionally well for the next stage of your education and for later life. However, it is a huge school and there are obvious inconsistencies in provision and in the effectiveness with which whole-school systems are applied. Some of you, and a few parents and carers, were quick to complain about disruptions caused by poor behaviour in some lessons. We agree that behaviour should be managed more consistently, and that the features of the best teaching should be more widely replicated. We have asked the school specifically to:

- make better use of assessment and marking to guide your improvement and to plan learning activities in lessons to engage your interest and involvement
- ensure that agreed whole-school strategies, such as behaviour management, are consistently applied.

You own role is important because you must each take personal responsibility, for example in responding to guidance in marking. We wish you all every success.

Yours sincerely

Paul Brooker

Her Majesty's Inspector

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