

Alsop High School Technology & Applied Learning Specialist College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104693
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	373140
Inspection dates	21–22 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Sue Harrison 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	1,790
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	338
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marilyn Fielding
Headteacher	Phil Jamieson
Date of previous school inspection	2 October 2007
School address	Queen's Drive Liverpool L4 6SH
Telephone number	0151 2351200
Fax number	0151 5211044
Email address	office@alsophigh.org.uk

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 rates 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 purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information 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'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. They observed teaching and learning in 44 lessons, taught by 41 teachers. They held meetings with staff, the Chair of Governors and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at key documentation, including the school's development plans, safeguarding policies and performance management records. They also scrutinised questionnaires completed by staff, students and the 187 parents and carers.

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

- The effectiveness of strategies to improve attendance.
- Whether students make sufficient progress in mathematics.
- The extent to which sixth formers are reaching their potential.

Information about the school

Alsop High School is a large school, serving an urban area of Liverpool. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is about three times the national average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well-above average, but the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is average. Almost all students are of White British heritage. The school holds specialist status in technology and applied learning. It runs joint sixth-form provision with two other schools.

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

This is a good school because it successfully engages young people from a wide range of backgrounds and abilities and helps them to achieve well. The curriculum it offers, and the level and quality of support students receive, are examples of outstanding practice. Teaching and learning are good in most lessons but there is scope to further extend good practice in the planning and delivery of lessons.

Students make an excellent contribution to the life of the school and the local community. They feel safe in the school and their behaviour is good. Attendance is improving and is line with the national average. Levels of attainment have risen significantly in recent years and are now close to the national average. As a result of an excellent curriculum and support system, and teaching that is generally good, students make good progress against their starting points on entering the school. They gain a wide range of skills that prepare them well for the next step in their lives. The majority of sixth-form students make good progress, but those taking GCE A levels do better in some subjects than others.

Senior leaders and managers have successfully kept the school focussed on driving up standards during a period of disruption associated with significant new build on the campus. Parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted survey are exceptionally positive about the leadership and management of the school and the quality of education provided for their child. The school has an excellent focus on equality of opportunity and has been very successful in narrowing the gap in outcomes for different groups of students.

As a result of planned retirement and promotions, the school is undergoing a period of change in the senior leadership team. Clear succession plans are in place. There is a well-established training programme for managers at all levels and effective performance management systems. Self evaluation is rigorous; senior leaders and managers have a good understanding of the quality of provision and areas for further development. As a result of all this, inspectors judge the school's capacity for sustained improvement to be good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the good practice that exists in many lessons to ensure that, in all lessons, students are motivated to work hard and achieve their potential. To achieve this, the school should extend the use of learning methods that involve students more fully in lessons and ensure teachers check frequently the level of learning that is taking place.
- Ensure that students in the sixth form who are taking A levels make good progress in the minority of subjects where they are not reaching target grades, by:
 - further developing staff understanding of the data used by managers to check progress
 - by ensuring students are developing appropriate skills for advanced level work in those subjects.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

In the majority of lessons, students try hard and make good progress. They are keen to learn and ask additional questions to deepen their understanding. They acquire a good level of subject knowledge, which they apply well in written and practical work. Their level of participation in activities outside lessons is outstanding. As a result of their efforts in class and in wider enrichment, they gain confidence and good work-related skills. They show respect for other people and are very keen to help others within the school and the wider community. From their starting points on entering the school, students make good progress in the majority of subjects. Progress in mathematics has not been as good as in English, but actions taken to address this are proving successful and inspectors found no difference in the pace of learning in these subjects.

Levels of attainment are on an upward trend. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, rose by almost 10 percentage points between 2008 and 2010 and school data show a further significant rise to 47% in 2011. The school is very successful at ensuring all groups of students achieve equally well. Inspectors found no difference in the progress made by boys and girls. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. The large number of students known to be eligible to receive free school meals achieve significantly better than is found nationally.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Two thirds of lessons observed by inspectors were judged to be good or better. There are very few unsatisfactory lessons. Teachers have good subject knowledge and relate well to their classes so that students feel able to seek help when required. The majority of lessons are well planned to stimulate and maintain students' interest. These lessons provide steps in the learning that help students to build up their knowledge and understanding. Inspectors saw some outstanding lessons, where teaching methods were extremely well matched to students' interests and abilities and totally captured their attention. In a minority of lessons, students lose concentration and this can impact on their behaviour, which then distracts other learners.

The use of the school's applied specialism is having a very beneficial impact on teaching and learning. A particular strength in the best lessons is the way practical activities are linked to theory to help students understand topics and also to enhance their enjoyment of the lesson. Some teachers are very skilled at using new technology to enliven lessons but this is not consistent across the school.

The use of target-setting and monitoring by managers to check students' progress is excellent. The use of strategies in the classroom to assess learning, and the quality of marking of students' work, is less consistent. In a minority of classes questioning is too general and not sufficiently directed or developmental to check understanding and extend learning. Students generally know the level of work they are producing, and many have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve further, but this is not always the case.

The school has worked hard to provide a curriculum that is exceptional at meeting the needs of its large and diverse student cohort. The strong emphasis on improving reading skills in Years 7 and 8 helps students to achieve well across the curriculum. Older students benefit from an impressive range of academic and vocational choices, which can be combined in flexible pathways to suit their individual needs. Resources to support the curriculum are of a high standard, for example, in the off-site hairdressing and beauty salon situated in a local high street, which provides a real working environment for students taking those courses. There is also an 'Applied Learning Centre' in a local business park where students can follow a range of vocational courses. Enrichment activities cover a wide range of interests and abilities that enhance students' personal development and help them to live healthier lifestyles.

The extent and excellent quality of care, guidance and support systems make a significant contribution to the progress made by students. There are outstanding levels of academic and pastoral support, together with very effective guidance to help students with careers and study options. Effective systems to support students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable and those falling behind with their work mean very few students are excluded from school on a temporary basis and there has been only one permanent exclusion in recent years. The school’s work with families and external agencies demonstrates a clear commitment to make use of all possible resources to support students. Transition arrangements are excellent for young people coming into Year 7, and those moving on at aged 16 or 18. Staff working in the special needs area, as well as those providing support throughout the school, enable students with special educational needs and/or disabilities to play a full part in the life of the school and achieve well.

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?

The senior management team provides outstanding leadership in terms of keeping the school focused on driving up standards. They effectively promote a culture of ambition and accountability throughout the school. Staff share a commitment to the inclusive ethos of the school and a drive to continue to improve the quality of provision. The school gives a high priority to training for managers resulting in effective performance management. The school is reviewing the way it monitors teaching and learning to improve it further, for example, by more frequent observation of some lessons.

The governing body provides an effective level of challenge and support to the school. Governors have a very clear understanding of the strengths of the school and the areas for further development. Partnership work to support curriculum development and pastoral work, and the level of engagement with parents and carers, are all outstanding features of the school. As a result of this, and the school’s excellent commitment to equality of opportunity, no group of students is disadvantaged. Safeguarding procedures are good. It is to the credit of the leadership team and the staff that students feel that they are treated as individuals in this large school. There is a harmonious culture and students show good understanding of people from different communities.

The school provides good value for money. It has made very effective use of additional resources provided to ensure government targets are being met. The lack of disruption to learning, despite substantial new building taking place on the site, is a testament to good management, and resources to support learning are good.

These are the grades for the 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	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	1
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	2

Sixth form

This is a large and popular sixth form providing a good quality of education. The curriculum is extensive. A large number of students choose to take vocational courses and, for those wishing to pursue a GCE A level route, there is an extensive range of subjects to choose from. Many students take a mixture of academic and vocational courses. The wide curriculum is possible due to large numbers in the sixth form and well managed partnership arrangements with other providers. Intermediate level courses are available for those who need them. Retention in the sixth form is excellent. Students speak very highly of the support they receive, and the opportunities to take responsibility within the school and the wider community. Teaching is generally good, though opportunities are sometimes lost to develop independent learning appropriate for advanced levels students. Levels of attainment are in line with national averages. Many students enter the sixth form with lower than average attainment levels. They make good progress in most subjects, particularly on vocational courses. On GCE A level courses, they make good progress in some, but not all subjects. A high proportion of students who wish to progress to university successfully achieve this goal.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth Form	2
Taking into account: 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 proportion of parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire was slightly lower than the national average. Those who did respond were very pleased with the quality of provision the school provides across all aspects of its work. They mentioned the high level of support offered to their children and the good progress they made. Parents and carers believe this is a well run school and praise the work carried out by leaders and staff.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Alsop High School Technology & Applied Learning Specialist College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 187 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,790 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	67	36	114	61	4	2	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	92	49	89	48	3	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	91	49	85	45	7	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	101	54	81	43	4	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	104	56	80	43	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	86	46	86	46	11	6	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	77	41	100	53	7	4	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)	87	47	95	51	2	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	87	47	96	51	2	1	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	83	44	93	50	6	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	74	40	99	53	6	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	96	51	87	47	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	103	55	81	43	1	1	0	0

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 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.



23 September 2011

Inspection of Alsop High School Technology & Applied Learning Specialist College, Liverpool, L4 6SH

Dear Students

As you know we recently inspected your school and I am writing to tell you our findings. Thank you for helping us to find our way around and for giving us your views on the school. We agree with what many of you told us, that this is a good school that has a number of outstanding features. You feel staff care about you and give you lots of help to succeed. The majority of you behave very well and try hard in class. As a result you make good progress and examination results have risen considerably in recent years. In a few lessons we saw, we thought your progress could have been better. We were very impressed by the range of courses you can choose from as you move through the school and by your level of participation in all kinds of activities outside of lessons. We think you make an outstanding contribution to the life of the school and the local community. You told us you feel safe at school and that it is a good place to be. Attendance is improving and we encourage you to try and get that even higher! We think your school is very well led and managed. In order to improve it even further we have asked the headteacher to:

- build on the good practice that exists in many lessons to ensure that, in all lessons, you are motivated to work hard and achieve your full potential
- make sure that students in the sixth form who are taking A levels make good progress in the minority of subjects where they are not reaching target grades.

May I take this opportunity to wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Sue Harrison
Her Majesty's 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.**