

Aylestone Business and Enterprise College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116936
Local Authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	379330
Inspection dates	12–13 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Brian Cartwright 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	605
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Sherwood
Headteacher	Sue Woodrow
Date of previous school inspection	6 July 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. They observed 42 lessons taught by 38 teachers, and held meetings with groups of students, members of the governing body, and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at: records of students' progress, minutes of governing body meetings, the school's self-evaluation and information from the local authority. The team analysed questionnaires from 95 students, 28 staff and 125 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 quality of teaching and learning across year groups and subjects, particularly the effectiveness of assessment.
- The views of students and parents and carers on behaviour, safety, healthy lifestyles, and their voice in school affairs.
- The relationship between the quality of the curriculum, care, guidance and support and outcomes for all students.
- The effectiveness of the recently formed federation's governing body.

Information about the school

Aylestone Business and Enterprise College is smaller than most secondary schools. Student numbers have fallen since the previous inspection. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. There are lower than average proportions of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and of those who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to the national average, but there is a lower proportion of students with statements of special educational needs. The proportion of students entering the school other than in Year 7 is above average.

In September 2010, the school formed a hard federation with Withington Primary School, and established a single governing body for both schools. The school is a specialist Business and Enterprise College.

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

Aylestone Business and Enterprise College has made strong progress since its previous inspection, and is now providing a good-quality education. The excellent leadership of the headteacher and other school leaders is bringing about systematic improvements in the quality of teaching and learning from satisfactory at the previous inspection to good now, with no major weakness. As a result, all students make at least the progress expected from their starting points in all subjects. The majority make good progress overall, particularly in English, science, and information and communication technology (ICT), where attainment is above the national average. The specialist business and enterprise status is a strong factor in improvements to ICT and business studies. The academic and extra-curricular programmes are very varied and well balanced, although opportunities for reinforcing literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across all subjects are sometimes being missed.

Intertwined with this welcome improvement in academic outcomes are equally strong improvements in the behaviour of students, and other aspects of their personal well-being. Consistent application by teachers of the rewards and sanctions policy, well regarded by students, modelling by staff of calm and considerate behaviour, and students' strong sense that they have an effective voice in their school life are all causes of this strength. Students are overwhelmingly positive about school life and, in particular, about how safe and well supported they feel. Students deal with one another gently, because that is how all staff treat them. Parents and carers are also very positive about all aspects of provision at the school. This is because all students receive outstanding care, guidance and support. The inclusion unit is very well resourced and, importantly, located at the heart of the school. Its work ensures every student, including recently arrived students from elsewhere in Hereford, and from other countries, successfully access their full curriculum entitlement and, thus, make good progress in learning.

Teachers regularly assess student progress and report this formally to students and their parents and carers. This information guides additional support where necessary. Students enjoy lessons, and have plenty of opportunities for participating in activities that are interesting and, therefore, motivating; for example, one student in a Year 8 algebra lesson remarked, 'I hope we can do this all lesson – it's so much fun!' Most lesson plans make some accommodation for the different abilities and previous knowledge of students, although not usually via explicit personalised tasks matched to particular groups of pupils from the lesson outset. Marking is regular and normally includes written advice to students on what they can do to improve their work,

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although apart from a few excellent exceptions, students are not habitually responding to that advice directly.

School leaders and managers work collaboratively to bring about improvement, and know precisely what their role is as individuals, and how they can carry it out. Most student outcomes have improved since the previous inspection, confirming an effective capacity for improvement as better provision becomes established. The recently formed federation has a new governing body that is getting to grips with its duties. It has commenced training on how it can independently monitor and evaluate school performance but, until recently, has been too dependent on information and evaluation provided by school managers. Fortunately, that evaluation is accurate and leads to well-focused development strategies.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to become outstanding by:
 - ensuring students respond to the good advice by teachers on corrections and improvements in their day-to-day work
 - increasing the consistency of planning so that lesson tasks always match and challenge the prior attainment and knowledge of students of different abilities in the class.
- Improve the consistency of cross-curricular use of literacy, numeracy and ICT in all subjects.
- Enhance training for the governing body so that members can independently monitor school performance and hold school leaders and staff to account.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The attainment of students on entry to the school has been broadly average, although declining, over time. The group of students who took GCSE examinations in 2011 attained less well on entry than their predecessors, but achieved higher standards, with overall performance measures in 2011 being above average. This represents good progress overall, for all groups of learners. The attainment of boys was significantly weaker than that of girls on entry to the school, but boys made equally good progress to that of girls. Students on the 'School Action' special educational needs register, which is most of the students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, progress well, attaining average standards compared with all pupils nationally. Others on the register make at least satisfactory progress. This is because support for all of them is exceptionally well managed through the inclusion unit, and ensures their full integration into routine lessons. Almost all the students who speak English as an additional language are newly arrived and have no previous English primary school records. They settle quickly and all successfully achieve a range of GCSE qualifications.

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Student’s positive and polite attitudes make a strong contribution to a calm and yet inquisitive learning ethos. In most lessons, students have sufficient time to try new ideas, research information, think and discuss problems with their peers, and carry out investigations and practical work. They enjoy school, know their voice is valued through student councils as well as their teachers, and trust the school to keep them very safe because they know it acts swiftly to deal successfully with any concern.

Attendance is above average and continually improving over time. Incidents of serious misbehaviour are rare and exclusions have fallen to low proportions, as has the frequency of incidents requiring senior staff intervention. This is primarily because all staff operate the behaviour policy consistently, and – in the eyes of students – fairly and correctly. The vast majority of students participate in additional clubs or sporting activities. They were consulted about the quality of school meals and helped to bring about improvements.

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	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	2
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	2
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is securely good, with about three quarters of lessons observed by inspectors judged as good or better and nothing less than satisfactory. That consistency is a powerful testament to the degree to which good leadership and management of teaching and learning is shared by heads of faculty and other middle managers. In the best lessons, students know what it is they are going to learn, and teachers match their strategies to students’ learning styles. Teachers monitor progress during lessons to ensure students are challenged and motivated, but not

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

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discouraged by the demand of the work. Students of all abilities, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are expected to make good progress and rewarded with praise when they do. Students get clear and detailed feedback, including guidance towards inspirational grades, which encourages them to aim higher. The activities themselves are interesting, which in turn motivates students to want to learn more. For a minority of lessons where learning was satisfactory overall, too much time was spent in whole-class discussion that did not actively engage and involve every pupil. Limited practical resources led to some delay in conducting experiments.

The curriculum is strengthened by good partnerships with other local providers that ensure an extensive Key Stage 4 programme of study covering a wide range of subjects. It is flexible and meets the needs of a wide range of learners. Presently a low proportion of students are studying a modern foreign language, although this is rising as the school secures permanent staffing for the subject and shares teaching with another provider. There are additional studies of subjects, such as geology and astronomy, in after-school sessions, a very rich range of sporting clubs and performing arts activities, and a good programme of trips and visits. The specialist school resources have substantially improved the ICT hardware and infrastructure, including a useful virtual learning environment used by 85% of students outside lessons. Specialist enterprise whole-day events are popular and further enrich the curriculum. There are, however, missed opportunities across all subjects to reinforce literacy and numeracy skills, and for wider use by students of ICT in lessons other than ICT, design and technology and business studies.

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding, exemplified by the work of the inclusion centre. This has been instrumental in ensuring students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, new arrivals from other English schools and students newly arrived from overseas are quickly surrounded by a network of caring teachers and support staff. The students become immersed in school life and make good progress as a result. The enrichment room is very well equipped, sending a clear message that the school seriously values its potentially vulnerable learners, who in turn respond and flourish. Good partnerships with other agencies complement the day-to-day support for students with complex learning needs.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

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In the three years since her appointment, the headteacher is transforming outcomes for learners both academically and in their personal development. Despite large reductions in student and staff numbers, morale has remained high. Staff are committed to further improvement and are proud of the progress the school is making. They are fiercely loyal to their headteacher. She personifies the inclusive, gentle and hardworking culture she wants for her staff and students. This approach is inculcating a very strong sense of teamwork among managers. It provides a motivating mix of responsibility and ownership delegated to middle managers, who are now aware of their part in the comprehensive school development process.

The work of the inclusion unit is at the forefront of good community cohesion and in ensuring good equality of opportunity, as it brings about the involvement of a high proportion of students new to the area, and the country. This modelling of hospitality and equality for all children, of all nations and faiths, makes the school a leader of these attitudes towards its more established community beyond the school gate. Statutory responsibilities are met, including good child protection procedures and policies to ensure equality of opportunity for students and staff. The strong endorsement by students and parents of the work of the school in creating a safe and secure learning environment is testament to the good quality of safeguarding procedures.

The sharply reducing budget, which is a consequence of reducing numbers on roll locally, is being managed well. The school site, however, is far too large for the resources available for its proper maintenance. Urgent action is needed to reduce the burden of maintenance, rationalise the available space, and resolve a legacy of budget deficit so that the current generation of students is not disadvantaged by these circumstances arising from the past.

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	2
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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

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Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire agreed with every statement. Most responses were more positive than for most other secondary schools. A very few parents and carers wrote of an individual concern to them, but these had no common element. The school systematically surveys parents and carers' views and provides lively, frequent news sheets that keep them well informed of school life. One response typified many others in saying school leaders have 'worked wonders in making Aylestone an excellent place for learning in a safe environment, with excellent ground rules and communication channels to parents and carers'.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Aylestone Business and Enterprise 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 125 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 605 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	42	34	75	60	6	5	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	40	32	82	66	1	1	1	1
The school informs me about my child’s progress	35	28	79	63	8	6	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	34	27	82	66	5	4	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	38	31	77	62	7	6	1	1
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	29	24	76	62	14	11	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	19	88	72	10	8	1	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)	36	30	78	64	3	2	1	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	29	23	79	63	12	10	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	34	27	78	63	5	4	6	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	19	82	66	11	9	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	44	35	74	59	4	3	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	47	38	68	54	8	6	1	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	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 are 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.



14 October 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Aylestone Business and Enterprise College, Hereford, HR1 1HY

Thank you for your kind and considerate welcome to myself and my team during our inspection of your school. We are delighted to say that Aylestone is a good school, thanks to excellent leadership, good teaching and a very positive approach to learning from you, its students. We are pleased with the commitment you show to lessons, particularly when you are carrying out investigations, or research, or performing, or other activity that involves you in discussion and debate. Most of you enjoy the rich range of additional activities beyond lessons, including the sporting and performing arts clubs.

The school is a pleasant and safe place for you to learn, because of the gentle, polite and purposeful way school staff treat you and, in turn, the way you respond with hard work, good humour and a strong sense of loyalty to the school. Your performance in GCSE examinations continues to rise quickly, with most of you making good progress.

Your school agrees with us on what will improve it further.

- It should give you more organised opportunities to respond to the good marking and written advice by teachers.
- It should make sure you have tasks in lessons that challenge you at your own level.
- You should have more opportunities to develop your literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across all subjects.
- The governors, the people who hold the school to account, must be fully trained to monitor its performance.

Yours sincerely

Brian Cartwright
Her Majesty's Inspector

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