

Eckington School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112943
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	378614
Inspection dates	23–24 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Robert Barbour HMI

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1349
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joseph Birkin
Headteacher	Patrick Cummings
Date of previous school inspection	4 June 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 49 lessons taught by 49 different teachers. Inspectors held meetings with school leaders, students, members of the governing body, and representatives of partner organisations. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school improvement plan, governing body minutes, school policies and other documentation, 280 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, and questionnaires completed by students and staff.

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

- How good is the progress of particular groups including higher ability students and lower ability boys?
- How well is equality of opportunity promoted by the curriculum, especially in music?
- How well does the curriculum in Year 12 meet the needs and interests of students?
- How successful are middle managers in their roles, and are they effective in driving improvement in their areas of responsibility?
- How much opportunity do students have to contribute actively in their lessons?

Information about the school

Eckington School is a larger than average secondary school serving villages in north Derbyshire. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average and the proportion from minority ethnic groups is low. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average while the proportion with statements of special educational needs is below average.

The school has received an award for the improvement in its GCSE results. It has the Artsmark Silver award, the Investors in People standard, the Careers Mark award and is accredited as an International School at intermediate level. It has specialist status for engineering.

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

Eckington School is a good school that is continuing to improve. This improvement has been inspired and driven by the headteacher. The school has a powerful ethos based on the aims for the school community to 'respect, progress, succeed', together with the values of 'honesty, kindness and tolerance'. This ethos is emphasised in lessons and assemblies and, supported by the school's good curriculum, contributes to the students' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students feel outstandingly safe at school, and they have wide opportunities to participate actively in the life of the school and the local community. Through a system of 'pledges', every student chooses three areas where they will make a positive contribution over the year. This acts as an important and effective focus, encouraging all students to be active in the life of the school or the community. It also significantly contributes to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Many students act most effectively as sports leaders with local primary schools while others are part of a youth section of the local parish council. Projects that result from these links and also from excellent links with the local police have made a material impact on relations between the generations in local communities. As a result, both the extent to which students contribute to the school and the wider community and the effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion are outstanding. The school itself is a highly cohesive community.

The care, guidance and support provided by the school are outstanding. Support is very well targeted and several younger students described the school as having the feeling of a family. When students exhibit particular social needs, the school uses its links with local agencies to intervene effectively at an early stage.

Teaching is good. In many classes, there is now a good balance between the direct teaching provided by the teacher and opportunities for students to take an active part in their learning. Teachers plan their lessons carefully and have developed methods of asking questions that ensure that all students are involved in framing answers. Some outstanding teaching was observed, and in these lessons there were often good opportunities for students to develop confidence in using the specific vocabulary relevant to that subject in a rich way. In some lessons, however, the main barrier to students making outstanding progress is their limited use of such language skills. School leaders make sure that teachers have good opportunities to share practice. As a result, teaching has improved since the last inspection but the programme has not operated on a sufficiently deep level to develop a large proportion of outstanding teaching.

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The sixth form is satisfactory. The progress that students make is in line with national expectations, but is not as good as it could be as there is variability in the quality of teaching. Until very recently, students were taking courses in Year 12 that were proving too hard for them. Entry criteria to the sixth form have been made more demanding, but this is a recent change, and relatively few students still are taking advantage of courses provided by the school that offer more vocational provision.

The school has increased in its effectiveness since the last inspection. School leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and plan effectively for further improvement. In December 2010, an Ofsted survey inspection found weaknesses in the provision for music. The subsequent action taken by school leaders and the teachers concerned has been rapid and effective in bringing about the required improvement, including ensuring equality of opportunity to receive music education. The school's capacity for sustained improvement is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve provision and outcomes in the sixth form by:
 - ensuring that teaching is consistently good or better
 - ensuring that students are guided onto courses that fully meet their needs, aptitudes and interests.
- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - intensifying and extending the programme for sharing best practice between teachers
 - ensuring that students are more confident in speaking and writing in the contexts specific to each subject.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students enter the school with attainment that is average. During their time at the school, they make good progress and their attainment by Year 11 is above average. Results at GCSE have improved significantly over the past three years. Students enjoy their learning and behave well. Year 7 students of all abilities made outstanding progress in a physical education lesson. They were prompt, purposeful and took part enthusiastically in developing their basketball skills. In the food technology lessons observed, students in both Year 7 and Year 11 classes made good progress developing their practical skills, and again their interest and enthusiasm were evident. There are still some lessons, however, where students are less engaged in their learning and their response is largely passive.

Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. In Year 7, they were observed making good progress with basic literacy skills due to the good support from teachers and teaching assistants and the imaginative teaching

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approaches. Differences in progress by other groups of students are narrowing, and there is no difference in the progress made by students of minority ethnic heritage. The progress made by higher ability students in English has improved considerably.

Students are developing good workplace and other skills that contribute to their future economic well-being. Their attendance is above average and they are punctual. Students gain technical and engineering skills as the school's engineering specialism gives good opportunities in the taught curriculum and in special projects such as restoring a barge. This provides a good basis for future employment opportunities in the region. Students' literacy and numeracy skills are now above average, and those whose skills are weaker are making good progress.

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	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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching has many strong features. Teachers have clear objectives for their lessons, which are made explicit to students, and which are used to review learning throughout the lesson. Teachers adapt lessons well to the differing abilities of students in their classes. They have good subject knowledge and convey this well in their direct teaching. Relationships between students and their teachers are good. In an outstanding Year 8 mathematics lesson, students explored graphs that arise in everyday situations. While maintaining a good pace to the lesson, the teacher was also able to provide time for discussion in pairs and by the whole class. The teacher mixed closed and open questions and he used the latter to enable students to develop their understanding. The key vocabulary for the topic was displayed, and the

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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teacher both modelled its use and encouraged the students to use these words in their answers. In some other lessons where such specialist vocabulary was not actively developed, class discussion developed at a lower level. For example in a Year 7 art and design lesson, students reviewed each other's work in generalised descriptive ways rather than being able to evaluate their peers' success with subject-related technical terms. In assessing students' progress, teachers make good use of questioning techniques and monitoring students' progress at key points, while the quality of marking of day-to-day work varies between teachers.

The curriculum provides well-thought-out progression for students of differing abilities. Collaboration with neighbouring schools and colleges enables students to experience a wide range of option choices. The engineering specialism is a strength in enabling the provision of an engineering diploma and advanced courses in design and development. A wide range of extra-curricular activities, educational visits and speakers provide good opportunities to enhance students' learning. Able and talented students take part in an engaging programme of additional activities.

The transition from primary to secondary school is handled exceptionally well. Where students have special educational needs and/or disabilities or circumstances that make them vulnerable in any way, their needs are planned for at an early stage, and extra transition days are provided early on. The progress that students make is monitored carefully and effectively. The robust monitoring of attendance has resulted in good outcomes and a trend of steady improvement.

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?

The headteacher and the deputy have been strikingly successful in establishing an ethos of high expectations and continuous improvement. Middle managers have become more effective in fulfilling their roles. They take active responsibility for the progress of their students, but are less confident about being accountable for the quality of teaching in their areas. Good programmes for coaching provide all teachers with an opportunity to reflect on and develop their practice. These have successfully helped in raising the quality of teaching but have not operated at a sufficiently deep level to foster a large proportion of outstanding teaching.

The governing body provides effective oversight of the school and is successful in holding the school to account. Its members understand the school's strengths and

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weaknesses well. The governing body maintains an effective oversight of safeguarding. All aspects of safeguarding are handled effectively. Good links with social services and their early involvement where students' circumstances make them vulnerable is a particular feature in making sure that students are safe.

The school is successful in promoting equality and tackling discrimination. Differences in rates of progress between groups of students are diminishing. The curriculum is varied to meet the needs and interests of differing groups. This variation in provision enables all students to achieve well and does not, as had previously been the case in the provision for music, reduce equality of opportunity. A high quality audit underpins the school's promotion of community cohesion and has led to effective actions within school and the local community. International links have been fostered, including links to schools in China and Germany.

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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Students make satisfactory progress in their work during their time in the sixth form. Their wider development is good, especially through the opportunities that they have to be involved in the school and the wider community. All students, for example, take part in community service.

Teaching is satisfactory. In some lessons, the very small number of students, in some cases as small as one or two, makes the active involvement of students in their learning difficult. In a larger group observed, a teacher planned to enable students to work independently. However, the lesson activities were not set up effectively and students made inadequate progress. By contrast, outstanding progress was made by a Year 12 mathematics class studying the transformation of graphs. The teacher had

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good subject knowledge and the skills to construct a highly productive lesson where students worked independently and in pairs and used laptop computers to investigate within mathematics.

Leaders and managers have made changes to improve the sixth form such as robust tracking of students' progress, more systematic intervention if students fall behind and more rigorous entry criteria to courses. Students speak positively about the changes taking place, but it is too soon to judge their impact.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	3
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers were broadly supportive of the school in the questionnaire results. The results for each question were in the range generally seen in secondary schools. A small number of parents and carers added written comments to their questionnaires. These contained a balance of comments that were supportive of the school and those that were critical of certain aspects. There was no particular pattern to the critical comments that were made.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Eckington 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 280 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1349 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	72	26	177	63	20	7	4	1
The school keeps my child safe	88	31	178	64	9	3	3	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	75	27	173	62	22	8	6	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	80	29	163	58	19	7	4	1
The teaching is good at this school	65	23	183	65	14	5	3	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	53	19	179	64	34	12	5	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	37	13	193	69	36	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)	59	21	176	63	17	6	5	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	72	26	179	64	16	6	4	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	80	29	148	53	23	8	12	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	48	17	164	59	34	12	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	88	31	165	59	11	4	4	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	97	35	162	58	16	6	1	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 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.



25 November 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Eckington School, Eckington, Sheffield, S21 4GN

Thank you for your welcome and taking time to talk to us during the recent inspection of your school.

We have judged that Eckington School is a good school. You are taught well and make good progress during your time at school. Your school has some particularly strong features. You told us that you feel very safe indeed at school. You make excellent contributions to the school and the local community and are encouraged to do so through the 'pledges' that you make each year. Some of you take part in very successful projects such as working as sports leaders with local primary schools. The care and support you receive from the school are also particularly strong and your progress is carefully monitored.

We have suggested to the school that there are two important ways that it can improve further:

- by bringing the effectiveness of the sixth form up to the same level as the rest of the school
- by developing your language skills in each subject so that you confidently use the appropriate vocabulary for that subject.

Your headteacher and the senior staff have worked effectively to bring about rapid improvement of your school over the past few years – to your benefit. You can support them by living the school's aims and values, maintaining your good behaviour, continuing to participate fully in the life of the school and continuing to work hard.

Yours sincerely

Robert Barbour
Her Majesty's Inspector

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