

Ercall Wood Technology College

Inspection report

Unique reference number	123595
Local authority	Telford and Wrekin
Inspection number	380696
Inspection dates	20–21 June 2012
Lead inspector	Gwendoline Coates HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	684
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ken Wagstaffe
Headteacher	Chay Davis
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2009
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

Inspection team

Gwendoline Coates

Her Majesty's Inspector

Janet Bird

Additional Inspector

John Mallone

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Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors spent approximately 15 hours in lesson observations, observed parts of 39 lessons, one assembly and one tutor period, and saw 41 teachers. Meetings were held with groups of students, members of the governing body, staff and representatives from the local authority. Inspectors took account of the small number of responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation and its improvement plan. Account was also taken of the 48 parental questionnaires, 120 student questionnaires and 14 staff questionnaires received.

Information about the school

Ercall Wood is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. The proportion of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. Most students are White British, and the proportion with minority ethnic heritage is below the national average, with the largest group being Pakistani. The proportion of students for whom English is an additional language is above the national average. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported by school action plus or with statements of special educational needs is well above the national average. More students join or leave the school at other than the usual times than is the case nationally.

The school is experiencing considerable difficulties in recruitment to and staffing of mathematics.

The headteacher and most of the senior leadership team have been appointed since the previous inspection.

The school meets the current floor standards set by the government, which determine the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. Satisfactory teaching, overall, means that students do not make good progress, especially in mathematics. Absence and exclusions are above average, but both are improving. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Achievement is satisfactory, but progress in mathematics lags behind that in other subjects. Students' skills in reading, writing, communication and mathematics are satisfactory, but literacy and numeracy are not practised enough across the curriculum.
- Teaching, overall, is satisfactory, much is good and some is outstanding. Teaching in mathematics is weaker than in other subjects because of the lack of specialist staff. Teachers do not always match work closely enough to the learning needs of students of differing ability. Teaching in some subjects, including science, information and communication technology (ICT) and history, is good and reflected in students' achievement.
- Behaviour is satisfactory. In most lessons it is good but a few students are, occasionally, disruptive, particularly with temporary teachers. Students feel safe and secure in school and are confident that the school takes, very seriously, its care of them. Rates of exclusion and absence are improving, but are not yet good enough.
- Leaders and managers have introduced robust systems to manage performance and to drive improvement and the positive impact of these systems is evident in already improving teaching, behaviour and achievement. The broad and balanced curriculum generally meets students' learning needs well, but literacy and numeracy are not practised enough. There is good provision to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development but this has not yet had full impact on the personal development of every student.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the proportion of students making expected progress in mathematics by ensuring that all mathematics lessons are taught by teachers who are well trained to deliver the relevant curriculum.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that the rate at which students make progress in their learning is accelerated. Do this by:
 - improving how well teachers in all lessons, but particularly in mathematics lessons, match teaching and learning strategies to the needs of students with different abilities, ensure there is sufficient challenge for all students and provide learning activities that fully engage them
 - promoting literacy and numeracy more effectively in lessons across all subjects in the curriculum
 - spreading the best practice that is available in the school so that all students experience as good quality teaching and learning in all their lessons as they do in the best – for example, those observed in science, ICT and history.
- Develop and embed systems and processes to accelerate further the reducing rates of exclusions and absences.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The progress students make from their significantly below-average starting points is satisfactory. Attainment is improving rapidly and is now broadly average. Inspection findings are not fully endorsed by the small number of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire, who judged that their children make good progress. However, inspectors found that some groups of students, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, do make good progress because they receive support well tailored to their needs. Rates of progress vary between subjects. In science, for example, it is at least good. In mathematics, it is satisfactory at best. Reliable school data show an average percentage of students now making expected progress in English, but below this in mathematics. Students make better progress at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3 because more specialist teaching is available in Years 10 and 11, particularly in mathematics. Improvement is rapid at Key Stage 4, where many more students are now gaining better GCSE results. In 2009, 37% of students gained five or more GCSEs at grades C or above, including English and mathematics. In 2011, this figure reached 51% and reliable school predictions indicate further improvement for 2012,

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Gaps are narrowing between the performance of different groups of students in the school compared to that of all students nationally. For example, the progress of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, students of Pakistani heritage, those for whom English is an additional language and students with statements of special educational needs has improved significantly.

In lessons observed, most students had positive attitudes to learning and made at least satisfactory progress. In some subjects, for example, in science, ICT and history, where teaching was particularly good, they made good and often better progress. Students develop and use reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills satisfactorily across the curriculum, but practice varied too much between groups of students and between subjects.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is satisfactory overall because, although a majority of teaching observed was good and some was outstanding, students were, sometimes, not fully engaged or challenged to learn. Teaching in mathematics is weaker than in other subjects because there are insufficient subject specialists, despite the school's best efforts at recruitment. These inspection findings were reflected in negative comments from parents and carers and from students about discipline and lower rates of progress in mathematics, particularly at Key Stage 3.

A comprehensive assessment of skills is carried out when students join the school, which provides teachers with good evidence about students' abilities. The best teaching uses these data well – teachers challenge students and ensure that learning matches the needs and abilities of different groups of students. The pace of learning is brisk. The best teaching promotes students' independent learning and ensures at least good progress. For example, in a Year 7 science lesson, lower attainers, disabled students and those with special educational needs, addressed the question, 'Does the height a ball is dropped from affect the bounce?' Working in small groups, students made predictions, and planned and carried out experiments to test them. They worked very well together, took responsibility for their own learning and discovered knowledge for themselves. The teacher challenged their thinking by asking probing questions and gave excellent support where it was needed.

In many lessons, teachers set learning tasks that are either too difficult or too easy for some students, inhibiting their progress. Although many students join the school with low levels of literacy, there is too little focus on building their reading and writing skills in lessons other than English. Teaching assistants and other adult support are deployed well and facilitate successful learning for individuals and groups, including for students who speak English as an additional language.

Other than in mathematics, all teachers have good subject knowledge and use it well to develop students' knowledge, skills and understanding. Good use was observed of lively starter activities that engaged students' attention – as in a highly effective

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'quick fire' question-and-answer session in Year 9 ICT. In many lessons, teachers successfully enthuse, engage and motivate students. For example, in a Year 9 lesson on the Treaty of Versailles, the teacher's high expectations, enthusiasm and very good understanding of how students learn ensured outstanding progress. In the best lessons, teaching contributes well to aspects of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development because they require students to reflect deeply on a range of important issues and to respect and listen carefully to the views of others.

Teachers often use good questioning to encourage students to think deeply and respond thoughtfully. Others pose closed questions and settle for monosyllabic answers that do not indicate whether students' understanding is secure. The quality of teachers' marking and feedback varies in quality across subjects, but generally ensures that students know how to improve and reach target grades.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour and safety are satisfactory overall because, although behaviour was good or better in most lessons seen and attitudes to learning were good, there was, very occasionally, low-level disruption. Students indicated that this occurred particularly in lessons taken by temporary teachers. Absence, lateness to school and exclusions are above average. However, attendance has significantly improved and continues to do so, but systems to ensure good attendance are not yet fully effective. Punctuality to school is better managed and improving. Punctuality to lessons is good. The behaviour management system is a strength and gives strong focus to dignity and respect for the individual. The headteacher's strong stance about what is acceptable behaviour meant an initial increase in the rate of exclusion, but this is now declining. School leaders apply rigorous systems to ensure learning is not disrupted and students' attitudes to learning have, consequently, improved and are usually positive.

Students are well supported and pastoral leaders ensure the needs of disabled students, those who have special educational needs, and those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are well met. Different types of bullying are well understood by students. Racist and other bullying incidents are rare and, if they occur, are dealt with promptly and effectively. Students say that they feel safe at school, know who to speak to if they have any concerns and are confident that the school tackles concerns promptly and effectively. This was echoed by those parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire. Peer mentoring is very effective; younger students speak positively about the support they get from older ones.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good because the headteacher and the senior leadership team have ensured robust systems have brought about, and sustained, improvement. These systems have improved the quality of teaching leading to better achievement. Leaders have high expectations and a clear vision for the future of the school – to take learning further forward and raise attainment. School self-evaluation is accurate and well informed by comprehensive systems for tracking and monitoring

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performance. Resulting interventions to support progress are effective. Teachers receive good opportunities for professional development and work to challenging targets. Robust performance management is in place, but best practice in teaching is not fully shared across the staff.

Middle leaders take an increasingly strategic approach to improvement planning. In some subjects, for example, science and ICT, planned priorities are having positive impact on provision and outcomes. Pastoral leaders competently promote acceptable standards of behaviour. The governing body is well informed and provides strong support. Leaders' high professional standards and full accountability at all levels have led to much improved achievement and behaviour. Although weakness remains in the teaching of mathematics, other subjects are now well taught. Consequently, the school shows good capacity for further improvement.

The curriculum has an appropriate balance of academic and vocational provision that meets the needs of students well. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well within the regular timetable and via a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. The good provision is reflected in most, but not yet all, students' positive attitudes to learning and behaviour. The school has many students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. It responds very well with well-resourced and well-targeted learning support. There is respect for diversity in race and religion, for example, in provision for Muslim prayers and the celebration of Eid. Equality of opportunity is embedded in school practice, and any discrimination is tackled promptly and effectively. Safeguarding is a strength in the school; staff are well trained, statutory requirements are met and robust systems are in place.

Parents and carers responding to the questionnaire were mainly very positive about the impact on all aspects of school life of the headteacher and senior leadership team. A few responses commented on staffing in mathematics and the impact of this on their children's progress and discipline in lessons. The school is absolutely committed to ensuring good-quality mathematics teaching. While continuing to recruit suitable mathematics specialists, leaders have agreed additional funding for restructuring the mathematics department from September 2012, aimed at minimising the impact of any future staffing problems.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



22 June 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Ercall Wood Technology College, Telford, TF1 2DT

Inspectors enjoyed their visit to your school and particularly enjoyed meeting many of you. Thank you for contributing to the inspection.

We judged Ercall Wood to be a satisfactory school, but one that is improving. The headteacher and the senior leadership team have made improvements that are leading to better teaching and better outcomes for you. This can be seen in the rapidly rising proportion of those of you gaining five or more GCSEs at grades C or above, including English and mathematics. As you are all aware, the school has found it difficult to recruit specialist mathematics teachers and we recognise what impact this has had. We also recognise that a few of you fail to behave well enough or attend regularly. Some subjects in the school are exceptionally well taught and many of you spoke very positively about a range of subjects that you enjoyed, including science, ICT, physical education and design and technology.

We have therefore asked the headteacher to do three things.

- Ensure that your learning in all subjects is as good as in the best and mathematics has specialist teaching. We want all teaching and learning activities to match your particular needs and challenge you well.
- Develop your literacy and numeracy skills more effectively across all subjects.
- Carry on reducing rates of exclusion and absence.

You can help your school to improve further by attending regularly and punctually, by behaving well at all times and by working hard.

Yours sincerely

Gwen Coates
Her Majesty's Inspector

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