



Office for Standards
in Education

Inspection Report

ARNOLD HILL COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

Unique Reference Number: 122847

LEA: Nottinghamshire

Inspection Dates: 6 - 8 July 2004

Reporting Inspector: Bob Roberts HMI

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INTRODUCTION

This inspection was a pilot of the new arrangements for inspection announced by Ofsted in its consultation paper of February 2004. It was carried out with the support and co-operation of the staff of Arnold Hill Comprehensive School and of the local education authority.

The inspection was carried out by four of Her Majesty's Inspectors accompanied by a lay inspector.

Key for inspection grades:

Grade 1	Very good
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Adequate
Grade 4	Not adequate

Description of the school

Arnold Hill Comprehensive School is a large, mixed, 11-18 community school serving the Nottingham suburb of Arnold. The school's population is drawn from the immediate area, but between 30-40% of its intake comes from across the city boundary. It has 1700 pupils on roll, a figure that has grown in recent years, and a sixth form of approximately 260. The number of pupils claiming free school meals is below the national average, and the number of pupils identified as having special educational needs is well below average. A small number of pupils come from a range of ethnic minority heritages. The school is a specialist college for technology.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

This is a good school. The school has been through a period of transition and has done well to maintain its good standards and to raise standards even further in the sixth form. Attendance is very high and the attitudes of students are positive. Pupils are cared for well. Teaching is at least adequate and some of it is good. Pupils make good progress. The curriculum offers most pupils opportunities to succeed and many pupils also benefit from a substantial range of extra-curricular activities. Leadership and management are effective although there is scope for greater analysis of data. Financial management is sound and the school provides good value for money.

Grade: 2

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Year 13 pupils had left the school before the inspection took place. However evidence from Year 12 lessons, analysis of exam results and other records, and interviews with staff and students, show that provision for sixth formers is good. Standards are high, and boys do better than girls, particularly at A level. Students make good progress and teaching is generally good, reflecting the school's own assessment. Students' personal development is good with students making a rich contribution to the life of the school.

Grade: 2

Improvement since the last inspection

The school has satisfactorily addressed the issues raised in the last inspection, although there is more to do regarding the curriculum and the use of assessment data. That said, there have been significant improvements in information and communication technology (ICT) provision and the accommodation. There is some variation in the standards reached in recent years, but overall they have been maintained, with those in the sixth form rising further.

Grade: 3

Capacity to improve

The capacity of this school to improve is good. A fundamental review of school strengths and weaknesses has resulted in a clear vision for the future. There is an ambitious school improvement framework, with clearly identified strategies. The leadership team is very committed to improvement and the middle management of the school endorse the need for change. Senior leadership team posts have been redefined to focus on learning, and important appointments have been made for September 2004. Plans are to be implemented soon to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Grade: 2

What the school should do to improve further:

- ensure the effective and timely implementation of the school improvement framework
- improve the analysis of whole school data to evaluate the work of the school even more effectively
- develop and support the capacity of middle management to improve the quality of work in their area
- improve the use of assessment data to inform teaching and learning and to track the progress of individual pupils more rigorously.

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

The school's own judgement is that standards are currently good, maintaining the level found at the last inspection. Inspectors agree with this judgement.

The standards achieved at Key Stage 3 are above the national median. Results reached levels well above the national median in 2002, but fell back slightly in 2003. Standards vary between the core subjects, with mathematics and science consistently above national benchmarks. Boys do consistently better than girls.

At Key stage 4 and in the sixth form the standards achieved are consistently above national averages. The progress pupils make is good, as seen in lessons and from looking at their work. Whilst girls progress well, boys continue to do even better, a feature which the school needs to consider.

Grade: 2

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Pupils' personal development is good. The school's view is that it is adequate, but a range of convincing evidence shows that this is a conservative judgement. Attendance rates are far higher than the national average and most pupils are punctual. The school has effective systems to check absence.

The pupils are happy to come to school and show a strong interest in their studies. They approach work with enthusiasm and respond well to teachers' high expectations. Pupils persevere well in an orderly and welcoming environment where they behave well and settle in with ease. A good proportion of older pupils choose to remain at the school to study in the sixth form.

Pupils are eager to contribute to the school community. Sixth form students are enthusiastic mentors for younger pupils. Constructive relationships cascade through the year groups. For example, younger pupils show self-confidence as they take an active part in school council deliberations.

Pupils show generosity of spirit as they organise events to benefit local and national charities as well as their own school. Awareness of multicultural diversity in British society is limited.

Grade: 2

QUALITY OF PROVISION

Teaching is at least adequate and some of it is good or very good. This matches the school's own judgement. Where teaching is effective, teachers' subject expertise and enthusiasm ensure that pupils make good or very good progress. Teachers pitch their explanations and questions at challenging levels. Good planning enables lessons to move forward briskly. A wide range of assessment data is used to place pupils in sets. However, the use of assessment data to guide teaching and learning is not widespread across the school. The development of assessment for learning is one of the school's priorities for the next academic year.

The school's curriculum is broad and balanced. Flexibility of provision helps to meet the needs of individual pupils, notably through widening choices to include vocational courses. The school is effective in removing barriers to learning for the pupils identified as having special needs, including the gifted and talented. Careful attention is paid to enable pupils to learn about healthy living and economic well-being. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of opportunities outside lessons. Large numbers of pupils benefit from participating in the thriving Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.

The school provides good support and guidance for pupils. New entrants settle readily into school routines. Teachers show a keen interest in pupils' well-being. Health and safety issues are given careful consideration and there is a prompt reaction to any concerns. Pupils feel safe.

Good links with outside agencies ensure effective support to meet pupils' individual needs. Child protection arrangements are comprehensive and the school is flexible in its approach to meeting the needs of vulnerable children.

Grade: 2

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Over the past year the headteacher, in collaboration with staff, pupils and the governing body, has developed a clear set of values and aspirations for the school, focused on raising achievement. A new school improvement framework has given a strong sense of direction. The plan is very well-constructed and contains detailed designations of responsibility, datelines, costings, monitoring and evaluation processes and success criteria. The quality of the school's self-evaluation will need to be more rigorous as this framework is implemented.

Since the setting up of the new leadership team, the gathering and interrogation of pupil performance data have improved, but not all staff are trained in the analysis and interpretation of data on the performance of cohorts and individuals. The school is in the process of training faculty leaders in self-evaluation, and this is beginning to provide an accurate audit of provision. Lesson observations and discussions with pupils provide evidence of an inclusive school ethos in which every child matters. Careful attention is given to meeting special educational needs. There is no evidence of any form of discrimination.

Staffing, accommodation and resources are adequate overall, with some strengths such as the new technology accommodation. There are still some problems to be resolved about accommodation for the arts, including music and art. Given the funding it receives, the school provides good value for money.

The school has good links with other local providers of education and care, including local primary and further education colleges. A reciprocal arrangement allows some vulnerable pupils to work with a local special school to meet their special educational needs.

The governing body has ensured that most statutory requirements are met with the exception of the teaching of religious education and ICT. There are plans to address this in September 2004.

Grade: 2

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