



Smestow School and Sports College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104389
LEA Wolverhampton
Inspection number 277146
Inspection dates 2 May 2006 to 3 May 2006
Reporting inspector Marion Thompson AI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Windmill Crescent
School category	Community		Castlecroft
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV3 8HU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01902 558585
Number on roll	976	Fax number	01902 558586
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Ann Wrigley
Date of previous inspection	20 January 2003	Headteacher	Mr Des Ennis

Age group 11 to 18	Inspection dates 2 May 2006 - 3 May 2006	Inspection number 277146
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by a team of four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Smestow School is a co-educational, comprehensive school. It caters for 961 pupils aged 11-19, including a sixth form of 154 students. Almost a quarter of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly of Indian or Caribbean origin. Pupils enter the school having achieved broadly average results in their primary schools.

The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities is above the average, although fewer pupils than average have statements of special educational needs. The school makes provision for 18 visually impaired pupils who are fully integrated into the school. The school was designated a Sports College in September 2004.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The senior management team accurately judges the school as satisfactory, with some good features. Value for money is satisfactory. The school has recently gained sports college status, which has enhanced the range of extra-curricular activities in sport and has helped to promote awareness of a healthy lifestyle. Good quality care, guidance and support ensure that pupils enjoy their experience of school, work safely and are well prepared for the future. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the community.

In Years 7 to 11 pupils reach average standards and their achievement is satisfactory. Pupils are currently achieving better than in the past because the recently introduced behaviour management policy is having a positive effect on pupils' attitudes to learning. A small minority of pupils does not achieve as well as expected in mathematics, despite a recent significant rise in standards. This is because policies for teaching and assessment are not implemented consistently across the department. Pupils with statements of special educational needs, including those with visual impairment, make good progress. Those with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress.

Despite recent improvements to teaching that are making a contribution to pupils' better progress, teaching overall is only satisfactory. Occasionally, teachers' expectations are too low and lesson planning does not meet the needs of all pupils. The introduction of more rigorous monitoring of pupils' progress has led to earlier detection of underachievement and more effective support to help pupils to reach their challenging targets.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides good leadership to promote higher standards by clearly identifying the schools' strengths and weaknesses and taking decisive action. He is effectively supported by a strong senior team and committed and well informed governors. However, the use of statistical data by middle managers to analyse trends and inform lesson and strategic planning is uneven across the school. There is insufficient time for some pupils to study information and communication technology (ICT) in Year 11 and religious education in Years 10 and 11 to fully meet statutory requirements. Improvement since the previous inspection is uneven, but overall satisfactory. The school has satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The school and inspectors evaluate the sixth form as satisfactory. Whilst standards are below average, most students achieve as well as expected in relation to their prior attainment. It offers a good range of provision through working in collaboration with other schools. Most students benefit from policies that encourage independence and personal responsibility.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to improve standards and achievement in mathematics by ensuring that policies for teaching and learning and assessment are implemented consistently across the department.
- Improve the quality of teaching and assessment to ensure that all teaching demonstrates high expectations and lessons meet the needs of all pupils.
- Ensure that all middle managers make use of data to monitor trends in achievement, and to inform lesson and strategic planning.
- Ensure that pupils have sufficient time for religious education in Years 10 and 11 and ICT in Year 11 to fully meet statutory requirements.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are average. Pupils make satisfactory progress in English and science and, by the end of Year 11, attain broadly average standards. Achievement has improved considerably in the current academic year. In 2005, results in Year 9 tests and GCSE examinations were lower than expected. Despite recent significant improvement, a small minority of pupils still underachieve in mathematics throughout the school. This is a result of the inconsistency of the quality of teaching and assessment and inconsistent application of school policies, for example on marking.

Standards reached by Year 9 are average and progress is satisfactory. Pupils are beginning to make faster progress because of the rigorous systems the school has put in place to identify underachievement and the extra help provided to reach challenging targets. Better teaching and pupil management are also contributory factors. Pupils with visual impairment and those with statements of special educational needs make good progress. The wider group of pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress.

Standards reached in the sixth form are below the national average for AS and A2 examinations, but represent satisfactory achievement from students' starting points. The small group of students studying vocational courses make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory, in the school and the sixth form, with some good features. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Positive features include the participation of a large number of pupils in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, the active and influential school and sixth form councils, and the way in which visually impaired pupils play a full part in school life. Pupils enjoy school, attend regularly and are punctual to lessons. Attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory, although there is occasionally some low level disruption in lessons. However, there is evidence that the recently introduced behaviour policy is leading to improved attitudes to learning. Pupils feel safe. They say that the school is generally free from bullying, and that it is dealt with quickly and firmly when it

occurs. The school's expectations of pupils' behaviour are high, and the proportion of pupils, mainly boys, who have been excluded for a fixed period is high. However as better standards of behaviour are becoming embedded within the school, the rate of exclusions is beginning to fall.

Many pupils participate in extra-curricular activities, especially sport. They are aware of how to live a healthy lifestyle. The extent to which pupils adopt safe practices is good. Pupils have a sound appreciation of the world of work and the contribution they make to the community is satisfactory. Pupils and students accept responsibility, for example, through fund raising and drama productions.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Whilst teaching and learning are satisfactory in the school and sixth form, there is good teaching in a minority of lessons. Teaching is better at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form than in Key Stage 3. Teaching has improved over the last year due to the effective range of strategies and actions taken by the school. It now contributes to better pupil progress. In the majority of lessons the work is carefully matched to pupils' individual needs, behaviour is well managed and the level of challenge is good. However, occasionally teachers fail to engage all pupils, and the pace of learning is a little slow. Expectations are not quite as high as they need to be to make the necessary improvements. Occasionally, low-level disruption is not effectively managed. A generally good feature of teaching is the clarity of teachers' explanation to pupils of what they are going to learn. Lesson objectives are reviewed at the end of the lesson and this helps to give pupils a good insight into their own progress. Unfortunately, this does not happen in mathematics because the end of lesson reviews are often too rushed. Students enjoy lessons most where there is a good variety of interesting activities and opportunities for practical work.

The quality of marking and feedback to pupils is satisfactory but inconsistent within and between departments. It is good in English, where teachers give a clear indication to pupils about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Assessment strategies in mathematics are not clear and marking is often cursory.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is satisfactory overall, but for some pupils, too little time is allocated to religious education in Years 10 and 11 and ICT in Year 11 to fully meet statutory requirements. The recently introduced options system provides a wide choice with good opportunities for pupils to follow vocational courses in Years 10 and 11. Pupil groupings have been rearranged in Years 7-9 and have promoted more positive attitudes to learning, particularly for lower attaining pupils. Students with visual impairment

are well catered for and have good access to the school's curriculum. In the sixth form the curriculum is good. It is inclusive and through consortium arrangements with other schools provides a broad range of courses. The school provides an extensive extra-curricular programme, especially in sport, which is supported by its Sports College status.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. Recently improved monitoring of pupils' performance is rigorous and is now used well to identify underachievement. The quality and accessibility of information, advice and guidance about future choices is good. The care, guidance and support for pupils with special educational needs, including the visually impaired and those in public care, are good.

Sixth form provision is good. Arrangements for monitoring progress are effective. Students' targets are appropriate and there is a good balance between freedom for independent study and support. All students have access to careers and higher education advice and are well prepared for the next stage in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides good leadership, based on a clear identification of strengths and weaknesses. He takes decisive action to achieve required improvements. He has built an effective senior management team who have strengths in strategic management and in providing clear direction for middle managers. The team is clearly focused on raising attainment. At departmental level analysis of performance is effective in identifying underachievement in individual pupils. However teachers and heads of department do not consistently use assessment information to inform lesson and improvement planning. The quality of middle management varies between good and barely satisfactory. However, it is improving because of better monitoring and support.

Management of the sixth form is satisfactory and improving. The students particularly appreciate the community atmosphere as well as the quality of provision in the sixth form.

The school works hard to meet the needs of all pupils, including a number of visually impaired pupils who are well integrated into the school. Governors provide an effective forum to challenge and support the senior management of the school. Financial planning and control is good. The views of parents and pupils are considered, and have influenced the way the school operates, for example in the report format. Overall parents are supportive of the work of the school. The school works well with partners, for example the Wolverhampton sixth form consortium. The school has a sound capacity to continue to improve.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Dear Pupils and Students

We very much enjoyed our recent visit to your school and would like to thank you all for making it so enjoyable, especially those of you who took the time to have lengthy discussions with us.

The things we liked about your school were

- You achieve as well as you should in school and the sixth form.
- Your teachers identify very quickly when you fall behind in your work and help you to catch up.
- Pupils with visual impairment play a full part in school life and make good progress.
- The headteacher is working hard to improve the school, with good support from the senior management team and governors.
- The behaviour policy is resulting in better attitudes to learning in class. Most pupils and students enjoy school.
- There is quite a lot of good teaching.
- You enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular activities, especially in sport. This is helped by sports college status.
- Teachers work hard to ensure you are safe and happy, and get the right advice and guidance for the next stage in your life.
- The independence and personal responsibility given to sixth form students.
- The good choice of courses offered by the sixth form consortium.

We have asked the school to improve

- The standards you reach in mathematics.
- Teaching and learning, so it is all as good as the best.
- The use of information about how well you do, to improve the quality of planning.

We have also asked the school to increase the time allocated to ICT and religious education in Years 10 and 11 so you cover all the areas you should.

Best wishes

Marion Thompson Lead Inspector