



Airedale High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108278
LEA Wakefield
Inspection number 277941
Inspection dates 30 November 2005 to 1 December 2005
Reporting inspector Ms Georgina White HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Crewe Road
School category	Community		Airedale
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Castleford, West Yorkshire WF10 3JU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01977 722 180
Number on roll	1130	Fax number	01977 722 182
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs E Appleyard
Date of previous inspection	11 October 1999	Headteacher	Mr Paul Frazer

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 16	30 November 2005 - 1 December 2005	277941

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Airedale High is a larger than average comprehensive school serving a relatively disadvantaged catchment area. Just under a third of pupils are entitled to free school meals and this is above the national average. Small numbers of pupils are of minority ethnic heritage and two speak English as an additional language. School data shows that 20% of pupils receive support for learning difficulties and/or disabilities and this is above the national average. The school is a specialist performing arts college. It has achieved Investors in People status, Sportsmark accreditation and the Football Association Charter Standard.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation that Airedale High School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Although the principal and senior leadership team are relatively new in post they have a clear idea of strengths and where further improvement is needed. Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. Standards are below national averages although they are improving and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Most pupils enjoy school. They are beginning to attend more regularly, fewer pupils are being excluded and staffing difficulties have stabilised. New facilities are supporting Year 7 pupils in making a good start at the school. Most pupils behave well in lessons, which challenge them and meet their needs, but there is some unruly behaviour around the school. There is little provision for pupils who become disaffected, although the school is tackling this as part of the work to reduce individual exclusions and to promote inclusion policies. The school provides satisfactorily for pupils' personal development and care. The pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support and make satisfactory progress. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory on the whole and some lessons are very good. Many pupils could do even better with more support in all subjects to help them improve their literacy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. The curriculum is satisfactory. The schools' performing arts status is contributing positively to improvement. Partnership arrangements are satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure middle managers and teachers use information and data consistently to ensure underachieving pupils are identified and supported throughout the school.
- Ensure a consistent focus in all subjects on developing pupils' literacy skills to enable them to participate more fully in lessons and to improve their achievement.
- Provide more opportunities in lessons to develop and enhance pupils' use of ICT to help them learn effectively in all subjects and to prepare them for further education and training.
- Improve attendance to national averages and reduce exclusions.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with below average standards and particularly low levels in reading and writing. Work to tackle weaknesses in literacy has had some recent success in English, but it is not applied consistently enough in all subjects to raise pupils' performance significantly. The standards pupils reach at the end of Year 9, and by the time they leave school at the end of Year 11, remain below the national average. There is an improving trend in standards: the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A*-C passes has risen from 28% in 2001 to 42% in 2005.

In 2005 a high proportion of Year 11 pupils met the targets the school set them. When set against their starting points their achievements are satisfactory. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. More Year 9 boys achieved their targets in mathematics and science in 2005 than did so in 2004, although girls did not do as well. The school is working to deal with this weakness. Achievement in English in 2004 was well below average, owing to staffing difficulties that disrupted pupils' learning. Action to tackle this has been swift. Results in 2005 show that more stable staffing and strategies that have been introduced are leading to improvement: pupils with low levels of literacy achieved particularly well.

Computer systems to improve the tracking of pupils' progress against their targets have not been in place long enough to establish consistent use by all teachers, but have laid firm foundations for the future support of pupils' attainment and progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Most pupils enjoy school. They are co-operative in lessons and collaborate well. Around the school the majority are courteous and considerate but there is too much unruly behaviour when pupils are not directly supervised. In discussions most pupils say they feel safe at school and trust the school to deal effectively with bullying. However, some are less confident and feel vulnerable to the verbal bullying which remains a problem outside lessons and there is similar pressure not to be a high achiever. Attendance has improved by nearly 3% in the last 12 months, although it remains below average. A developing system of support is helping to reintegrate pupils after exclusion, but the level of exclusions is too high. The school council is playing an increasingly effective role in identifying development areas for the school. Pupils are beginning to respond to the school's emphasis on keeping healthy and they make a good contribution to the community through work for charities and through music and drama performances. Pupils enjoy participating in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, as well as their creative work in art, dance and drama. Year 10 pupils reflected seriously in an assembly about World Aids Week. However the pupils have less command of the skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the best lessons, pupils respond very well to teachers' warmth and respect, which show themselves in clear challenges, not indulgence. Teachers are ambitious for pupils, and lessons make considerable demands on their ability and concentration. An interesting range of activities and skilled questioning engage all learners. Where teaching is weaker, too little attention is given to pupils' needs to help them learn effectively. In these lessons the range of teaching methods is narrow, and pupils spend too long listening to their teachers and copying

notes. In some lessons pupils respond negatively to the slow pace of learning. Strategies to enable teachers to deal effectively with disruptive behaviour are at an early stage. Many pupils have weak literacy skills which hamper their learning in most subjects. Insufficient emphasis is placed on strategies to support writing and understanding technical terms. The school is at a relatively early stage in using ICT as a tool for learning in all subjects. Older pupils are well supported with targeted work to help them improve their examination grades and mentoring is particularly effective. Newly qualified teachers feel well supported and their energy and vision are a strong complement to the experience and commitment of longer-serving staff. In humanities, drama and physical education this combination is providing a strong base as the school begins to share best practice.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. Pupils receive a broad and balanced provision which meets all statutory requirements. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support through appropriate courses. In Years 10 and 11 there is a good range of vocational and academic pathways, although provision for pupils who are disaffected is limited and there are too few links with further education or training sectors. Opportunities for younger pupils to learn about work and develop skills to encourage them to continue in learning are underdeveloped. Few pupils continue in education and training when compared to most schools. Specialist school status is beginning to have a significant impact: more pupils are taking up the increasing opportunities to study GCSE drama and dance courses and to work with primary schools. Pupils enjoy many extra-curricular activities, and are well supported by dedicated staff. New arrangements for Year 7 have created a base that is secure and inclusive.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory with some good features. Arrangements for child protection are properly in place and there is careful attention to health and safety. Support for pupils with special educational needs is effective. Staff show a high level of commitment to pupils' welfare: learning mentors provide good support helping many of those at risk to overcome a range of barriers. Support to help a small number of pupils with significant attendance problems has yet to prove effective. The school recognises that currently too little is done to develop alternative behaviour strategies and to address the needs of disaffected learners. Plans are in hand to tackle this. Pupils feel well informed about their choices for the future, and the school works effectively with a growing range of external agencies and with parents to promote and support pupils' welfare.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school judges leadership and management to be good, but this does not take enough account of the impact they have on pupils' progress and achievement. The inspection team judges leadership and management to be satisfactory. The members of the senior leadership and management team are relatively new in post. A collaborative culture is developing and teamwork at this level is good. Effective action is being taken to dismantle barriers to learning that have arisen since the last inspection; for example, attendance and behaviour have improved. Staffing difficulties have stabilised in the last 12 months, although the legacy of this is apparent in the low standards and achievement in some subjects and amongst some classes, particularly in some English lessons. Recent improvements to pastoral care, a new teaching base for Year 7, and changes to the school day have improved its day-to-day running. Staff are hardworking and committed and day-to-day management is good.

Many middle managers are also new to their roles but receive good support and there are new systems to check on their work. The use of performance data to identify underachieving pupils is at an early stage and is not used consistently across the school.

Regular surveys and frequent consultations with staff, parents, pupils and the local authority give senior staff a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Plans to tackle the weaknesses are based firmly on what needs to be done to bring about improvements over the next 12 months. For example, challenging targets have been set to improve standards, raise attendance and reduce exclusions. Systems for checking how well the school is doing against these targets are fit for purpose. The school has the capacity to improve.

Governance is satisfactory. Arrangements to safeguard pupils are closely monitored. Governors and the principal scrutinise the use of resources openly and robustly and, with local authority support, are effectively monitoring the budget. Most parents support the school and like it. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Since the last inspection, the school has improved accommodation and resources for ICT and gained specialist arts college status. This has provided additional opportunities for pupils to enjoy and achieve and has engaged more of the local community in the life of the school.

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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	3	NA
The attendance of learners	4	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4	NA

The quality of provision

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

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	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

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

Thank you for contributing to the recent inspection. We enjoyed meeting you in lessons and around the school and were pleased to have opportunities to talk with you about your work. Here are our findings:

- The school provides you with a satisfactory education. The principal and senior staff have a clear idea of what the school does well and where changes need to be made to make it better and raise standards. The changes introduced recently are working well. The school is calm and runs smoothly. Further changes are planned to improve behaviour and reduce exclusions further and to improve lessons by making sure that teachers share their ideas about what works well. All of the staff want to support you in learning, to help more of you to achieve the best that you can.

- Many of you enjoy school and behave well in lessons but a small minority of you don't behave well around school and need to act more responsibly. We were pleased to hear that many of you feel safe at school and well informed about option choices. You told us you valued the support of learning mentors and other staff. We agree with you that the school has satisfactory arrangements to take care of you and to support and guide you in your education. You told us the school dealt firmly with bullying when you report it. You need to do this more when other pupils call you names or taunt you because you are different.

We have asked the school to:

- improve your attendance. More of you are coming to school more often but you all need to work at this to make sure attendance improves consistently and becomes good;
- to make more use of information and data to see quickly when you are falling behind in your work and to support you better;
- to help you develop literacy skills in all subjects. We have asked the school to provide more opportunities for you to use ICT so that you can make better progress in learning.

With best wishes for the future.