



Droitwich Spa High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116931
LEA Worcestershire
Inspection number 279952
Inspection dates 12 October 2005 to 13 October 2005
Reporting inspector Stephen Minett HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Briar Mill
School category	Community		Droitwich
Age range of pupils	12 to 18		Worcestershire WR9 0AA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01905 774 421
Number on roll	1458	Fax number	01905 777 070
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Peter Evans
Date of previous inspection	15 November 1999	Headteacher	Mr Alan Foulds

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Droitwich Spa High School is a large comprehensive school with specialist sports college status for pupils aged 12 to 18. There are almost 1,450 students in total on the school roll, about 250 of whom are in the sixth form. Over 95% of the students come from White British backgrounds, and none speak English as an additional language. Students' economic and social backgrounds vary widely but overall the area is slightly advantaged when compared with Worcestershire as a whole.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The inspection confirms that this is an effective school with many strengths. The quality of teaching is good, students' achievement and standards are good overall and continue to improve. Students are offered a broad curriculum which is significantly enhanced by very good use of information and communication technology (ICT), and an excellent choice of extra-curricular activities, including many opportunities to participate in sport and games. The school provides good care and guidance for students, who feel safe and enjoy learning. Students contribute positively to the school and the local community; they show initiative and accept responsibility willingly. The school is led and managed effectively by the headteacher and the senior leadership team, who are supported well by good middle managers. Throughout the school there is a focus on providing good teaching, and the provision of an inclusive curriculum that will engage and motivate all students, and enable them to progress well.

The school gives good value for money, using the available resources as well as possible, and fully exploiting the financial benefits of its specialist sports college status.

The school has a good capacity to improve, as indicated by: the improvements that it has made since the last inspection; effective management structures and systems; rising trends in students' achievement and standards; and clear priorities for development.

Areas for further improvement include: the dissemination of good practice across subject areas, the marking of students' work, and ensuring that all students in Year 11 are taught religious education.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The school evaluated its sixth form as outstanding; the inspection team judge that it is good in all respects, with some significant strengths. Students achieve total A-level points scores which are well above the national average. They are successfully encouraged to be active participants in lessons, and are consulted by teachers about preferred learning styles. They are set suitable targets and their progress is carefully monitored. The sixth form offers a wide range of advanced level courses, including vocational subjects, together with excellent enrichment and extra-curricular provision. Students take on considerable responsibilities: for the care and maintenance of sixth form facilities; for academic and pastoral support of younger pupils in the school; and for initiatives involving community service. The students rate very highly the guidance and support that they receive from staff, and enjoy being members of the sixth form.

What the school should do to improve further

- disseminate good practice across subject areas by, for example, identifying and sharing effective teaching features and styles, so that the overall quality of teaching matches the best, and students' learning is optimised
- improve the consistency and

quality of marking of students' work, and ensure that they understand what they should do to improve further • ensure that all students in Year 11 are taught religious education, in order to meet statutory requirements.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards achieved in Key Stage 3 are good. Over the last three years, increasingly demanding targets have been set for the three core subjects, and most of these have been met. Students' overall progress during Key Stage 3 in the core subjects is also significantly better than the national average, and is improving. Standards in Key Stage 4 are generally satisfactory, and overall performance in GCSE examinations is in line with national norms. Variations between subjects have been carefully analysed, and effective action has been taken to improve performance in those subjects, such as mathematics, where results were below expectations. Progress in Key Stage 4 is less than that in Key Stage 3, but it is satisfactory overall and has improved since 2003. Taking Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 together, students' progress from age 12 to 16 has improved over the last three years, and is now good. In both key stages all groups of students, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, make at least satisfactory progress.

Achievement in the sixth form is good. Performance in most GCE A-level, AS and VCE subjects is in line with national averages, and students' individual subject results are at about the level predicted by their prior GCSE results. Their total advanced level points scores, enhanced by their performance in general studies, are much higher than average for maintained school sixth forms. The achievement of the small number of students following one-year programmes in the sixth form is satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development of students is, as the school believes, good. They have good understanding of moral issues and make impressive self-motivated contributions to charities. They understand and respect the views of people from other groups in society and other cultures or beliefs. The atmosphere around the school is calm, orderly and safe, with most students behaving well in class. Students know how to report aggressive behaviour, which is very rare and short-lived. Most parents and students value the education and wider opportunities that students receive. Whilst attendance is average, punctuality is generally good. Students take advantage of a wide range of opportunities to express their views and to carry out their own initiatives, for example, in the organisation of charitable giving by the Karma Army. Students take pride in academic and sporting successes. They appreciate the wide range of opportunities for workplace and vocational education, which give them good knowledge of the world of work. Higher attainers work hard in the after-school courses that broaden their experience. Attendance at the many clubs is high; students particularly enjoy the physical education and sporting activities that are linked to the school's specialist

status. These activities, together with the students' choice of healthy options for lunchtime eating, contribute to their healthy lifestyles. Sixth form students make an outstanding contribution to the life of the school especially in the support that they give to younger students and the lead that they give in organising clubs and charitable events.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Drawing on evidence from its regular departmental reviews, the school believes its teaching is good throughout. Inspection evidence confirms this. Students make good progress in the majority of lessons and they achieve well. Successful teaching strategies include careful planning, briskly-paced lessons, demanding questioning which keeps students on their toes, good use of computers, and creation of good classroom relationships. Students usually respond maturely, and most show good attitudes to their work, although a small minority are less responsive. Classroom activities, such as group work, are sometimes limited by the size of rooms. As the school has correctly identified, in some subjects students are not given enough advice on how to improve their work. This is a current focus for improvement, with students being encouraged to assess their work themselves and make it better before they hand it in for marking.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and has some outstanding features. In Years 8 and 9 it is broad and balanced and meets students' needs well. There is an impressive choice of courses for students of all abilities in Years 10 and 11.

The provision for a group of disaffected students in Years 10 and 11 has successfully improved their motivation. Students in Years 12 and 13 choose from a very wide range of subjects. The citizenship course, work-related activities and work experience develop effectively students' economic well-being. The school makes excellent use of ICT throughout the curriculum to support students' learning.

The school provides an outstanding range of enrichment activities in which students participate enthusiastically. Appropriately for a Sports College, there is an excellent range of teams and clubs.

The curriculum fully meets statutory requirements in Years 8, 9 and 10. Requirements are met in Year 11, with the exception of students taking three sciences in Year 11, who do not receive their entitlement to RE.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Inspectors agree with the school that care, guidance and support for students are good. Arrangements for promoting health and safety are thorough, with clear guidelines for risk assessments and child protection. The site is regularly checked to make sure that it is safe. Students are given valuable information and guidance about future options at age 16 and provided with good opportunities for work experience. Support and guidance for sixth form students on further study and applications for entry to higher education are particularly good. Although students know their targets for attainment and discuss them in frequent reviews, marking of their work is inconsistent with too few teachers indicating specific subject-related ways to improve. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are well served by the care taken for their development in collaboration with a range of outside agencies. At present, although there is not access to all teaching areas for physically disabled students, arrangements are made to provide them with all learning experiences. The school works closely with parents, for example to discuss individual needs and to improve attendance.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The inspection confirms that leadership and management are good; the vision and effectiveness of the headteacher and the senior leadership team are strengths. There is a commitment at all levels to raising standards and to improving the quality of the school's provision. Staff share an understanding of the primary aims of the school and work with a common sense of purpose.

The management structure is coherent, with clear lines of responsibility; all leaders, managers and teachers are accountable for the effectiveness of their work. For example, subject leaders are set challenging targets for the performance of students in their subject areas, while being provided with good guidance, support and resources. Middle management is good, and is continuing to develop. The governors maintain close contact with the school and discharge their responsibilities well; they contribute valuably to the leadership of the school by, for example, taking on the role of critical friend, offering advice and support, and holding the headteacher to account for the school's effectiveness.

The school monitors and evaluates its performance effectively; it uses external and internal evidence to maintain a strong focus on students' achievements, and takes account of the views of parents and students. Whilst the school's system of departmental reviews provides a good means of assessing the quality of teaching and learning, best practice in the classroom is not always shared effectively from teacher to teacher or subject to subject. Overall, the quality of the school's self-evaluation is good, and staff at all levels share an understanding of the school's strengths and

priorities for development. However, this evaluation is not reflected fully in the current version of the school's self-evaluation form, which tends to be descriptive.

The effectiveness of leadership and management is a major indicator of the school's good capacity to improve. The weaknesses identified in the last inspection report have been addressed: in particular, students of middle to lower ability in Key Stage 4 are taught well and their achievement and standards have improved, ICT provision is good, and the quality of departmental leadership is more consistent and better.

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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?	2	2
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	2	2
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?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
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?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
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	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	1

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?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
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	1	
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	insufficient evidence

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

Droitwich Spa High School Briar Mill Droitwich Worcestershire WR9 0AA

15 October 2005

Dear Students,

Thank you for being so welcoming when we came to inspect your school. We very much enjoyed talking to you and watching you working with your teachers, and appreciated the constructive way in which you gave us your views of school life.

Our inspection confirmed that yours is a good school, which is run well and has many strengths. You are taught well, and make good progress. The results that you achieve in tests and examinations are good and are continuing to improve. The school offers you a wide range of subjects, so that the work that you do matches your interests and abilities well. You make good use of ICT in lessons, as well as when you are working independently. Those of you who are in the sixth form value particularly the variety of topics that you study and activities that you are involved in outside your main subjects. Whatever your year group, you are able to enjoy a large number of out of school activities, particularly sports and games.

You told us that you enjoy being at school, that you feel safe there, and that you know who to talk to if you have a problem. You are given good help and guidance; older students support younger ones well, particularly those who are new to the school. This is one of the many ways in which you accept responsibility and contribute to the school and the local community.

We have asked the school to improve in two ways. First, teachers should do more to share good teaching methods and ideas between each other and between subject areas. Second, when your work is marked you should be told what you need to do to improve it further.

Yours sincerely,

S Minett

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools