



Onslow St Audrey's School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117547
LEA HERTFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 280113
Inspection dates 4 July 2006 to 5 July 2006
Reporting inspector Dr. Tony Beaver AI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Old Rectory Drive
School category	Community		AL10 8AB
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01707 264228
Number on roll	574	Fax number	01707 262332
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs. Heather Dyce
Date of previous inspection	12 May 1997	Headteacher	Mr. Paul Meredith

Age group 11 to 18	Inspection dates 4 July 2006 - 5 July 2006	Inspection number 280113
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Onslow St Audrey's School is smaller than average. Many more boys than girls attend it. The majority of students are from White British backgrounds and a small but increasing number come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Few speak English as an additional language. The school population is stable. Average numbers of students claim free school meals, but most live close to the school in areas of considerable economic disadvantage. Many students have learning difficulties or disabilities, and a higher than usual number have statements of special educational need. The school has an inclusion faculty for both speech and language, and behaviour. It has successfully bid for specialist status in business and enterprise from September 2006. It was in special measures from June 2001 to May 2004.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Onslow St Audrey's School continues to improve since the inspection of May 2004. It accurately judges its effectiveness as satisfactory, and there are good features to its performance. The vigorous leadership and management of the acting headteacher and his senior team, well guided by governors, have led to a shared sense of purpose to improve. Students achieve satisfactorily. Standards have risen from a low base but are still below the national average. The school is becoming more inclusive, with the reorganisation of the inclusion faculty. Students receive a satisfactory curriculum, and many willingly take up the opportunities to develop work-related skills. The recruitment of teachers is a continuing difficulty. However, the school has managed to appoint a suitable range of specialist staff. Extensive monitoring of teaching takes place and ensures training opportunities are well directed, especially for inexperienced teachers. Consequently, teaching is satisfactory overall and some is good. Students' personal development is satisfactory. Relationships are often good, but students sometimes lack the confidence to take the lead in their own learning. Behaviour and attendance are satisfactory, but far too many students are not punctual enough to school or to lessons. Students receive good care and support, and they are usually well informed about their standards. Overall, the school gives satisfactory value for money. It does its best to maintain and enhance the accommodation, much of which is poor and does not match the quality of education that students receive. The continued improvement in the standards achieved, the quality of education provided, and the successful bid to become a specialist school for business and enterprise show strong resolution, skills and capacity to take the school forward.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school that the sixth form's effectiveness is satisfactory. Numbers on some courses are low, and plans to ensure better efficiency by joining a local consortium are in place. Currently, the curriculum is satisfactory. Students receive helpful guidance and support and achieve satisfactorily. Standards on advanced courses are below average, but progress and achievement are satisfactory given students' standards on entry to these courses. Year 13 students gain the places they want in higher education. Students' personal development is good, and they act very responsibly towards the school community. Good leadership and management ensure that teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, and often good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make teaching and learning consistently good so that standards in all subjects reach those of the best.
- Demand more of students so that they engage with learning more actively in lessons.
- Continue efforts to ensure that all students arrive on time at school and at lessons.
- Improve the poor accommodation to help students gain a better quality of learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Most students attain standards below the national average on admission and, overall, standards remain below average by the end of Year 11. However, since the last inspection, there has been considerable improvement in standards reached in the Year 9 national tests and in GCSE examinations. Provisional results for the 2006 tests in mathematics and science and GCSE modular science results show that this improvement is continuing well. Some aspects of performance reach the national average, for example the numbers of students who gain five or more GCSE grades A* to G, and standards in English by Year 9. Standards in literacy are ahead of those in numeracy. Challenging targets have been reached over the last two years and the trend in performance has been above the national rate. Students' rate of progress is increasing. Overall, they achieve satisfactorily given their attainment on entry to the school. In some subjects, progress is good and students achieve very well, as shown, for example, in the exceptional standards reached in GCSE art examinations. Many more boys than girls attend the school, and care has been taken to encourage boys' preferred learning styles. Consequently, boys are progressing at a rate ahead of that of girls, although their standards remain below those of girls. This is an inclusive school in which no group significantly underachieves. The inclusion faculty provides good help for students with learning difficulties or disabilities and they maintain a rate of progress in line with that of other students. In the sixth form, standards on advanced courses are below average, but students achieve satisfactorily, given their attainment on entry to these courses. Year 13 students usually gain the university places they choose.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. In the sixth form they are good. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are satisfactory overall. They confront moral issues well, and gain cultural awareness on 'diversity-days'. They take seriously the periods of reflection in assemblies. Students learn well about keeping themselves safe, and the Youth Crime Reduction Officer is very helpful to them. Students know the importance of healthy eating and drinking. They have successfully campaigned to change the lunch menu and obtain water dispensers. Students successfully effect changes through the school council, for example, on anti-bullying measures. Sixth form students contribute well to the school community by their support for Year 7 students. Students develop a good range of work-related learning skills through enterprise days, work experience, and links with the Connexions service. Attendance has improved, and is in line with the national average. The school recognises that punctuality to school and to lessons is a concern. The monitoring of punctuality is good but sanctions have not been effective enough in reducing the numbers of students late to school. The problem is particularly acute in Year 9. In several lessons seen during the inspection, students arrived late. Behaviour is satisfactory, but a significant number of students are content with less than maximum

effort, in part because they lack the confidence and self-belief to achieve higher standards.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory, both in the main school and in the sixth form. Some teaching is good. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities are taught satisfactorily. In the majority of lessons, the purpose is made clear to all. Teachers use good subject expertise to challenge and interest students in learning. Relationships are good and teachers usually manage behaviour successfully. Work is suitably matched to students' needs. Teaching methods are effective. For example, good work is done in small groups. Teaching assistants are well trained and give helpful support. Students are guided to evaluate their own work and that of others and gain insights from this on how to improve. In the best lessons, teachers demand a great deal of students and ensure that they achieve at levels beyond those that the students, themselves, believe are within their capacity. Much art teaching is of this high quality and students are inspired with the confidence to achieve very well. However, in a few lessons, teaching does not challenge students to participate actively enough in learning. In these situations, behaviour deteriorates. Written work is usually marked, and often praised in written comment, but guidance is not always given about how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The quality of the curriculum in the main school and the sixth form is satisfactory. There is a clear vision showing how business and enterprise specialist status is to be integrated across the curriculum, and a commitment to expand further the promising range of vocational opportunities to supplement mainstream provision. Students with a range of learning or sensory difficulties are able to access a suitably modified curriculum. Provision for gifted and talented students is less well developed. However, the worthwhile business and enterprise day for them, observed during the inspection, shows that this is a priority. In the sixth form, the impact of small numbers of students and weaknesses in current consortium arrangements restrict provision. However, the school has successfully negotiated membership of a larger consortium to enhance sixth form opportunities. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities. Opportunities to participate in sport and recreational activities are promoting healthy lifestyles and are well supported.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Arrangements for the care, guidance and support of students are good. The needs of vulnerable students are managed with extreme sensitivity. Links with external

professional support are very effective. Appropriate checks are made and records maintained on staff who have good opportunities to train in health, welfare and safety. Risk assessments are in place. The reorganised inclusion faculty is well led and managed. Its work is having a positive impact on the academic and personal development of students with learning difficulties or disabilities. Students at risk of exclusion are identified early and well supported. Therapy for students with speech and language difficulties is good. Learning support in lessons is improving, following training for teaching assistants. Students are well supported when they join the school, and well informed about future pathways. Support from the Connexions service is strong. Students have challenging targets and know their standards. They are not all sure, however, how to progress from one National Curriculum level to the next. Consultation days help to keep parents well informed about their children's progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leaders and managers are maintaining the school's good pace of improvement and accurately judge its effectiveness. Staff, parents and students share renewed confidence in the quality of education provided. There is good morale, inspired by the leadership. The school has a positive ethos. There is a shared sense of purpose to raise standards further, and provisional 2006 Year 9 national test and GCSE examination results show continued improvement. Students are achieving satisfactorily overall; many are achieving well in some subjects. Relationships are positive, and students' personal development and behaviour are satisfactory. Many enthusiastically participate in community and work-related activities. The acting headteacher and his senior colleagues work well as a team and are maintaining the impetus to raise standards further. They have overcome many difficulties in recruiting staff. Staff are helped to improve their skills very well. Several senior managers have done well to maintain improvement in key areas where recruitment of middle managers has not been possible. Below senior level, leadership and management have been restructured, and it is too soon to judge how effective the revised system will be. Some subject leadership is of impressive quality and achieves outstanding results. The sixth form is well led. Governors lead change consistently well, and show good judgement in balancing challenge with support for management. Leaders and managers monitor performance closely, and the process ensures that teaching and learning are satisfactory and often good. They evaluate performance accurately and identify well the areas that require further development. The views of students, parents and the community are taken into account. Leaders undervalue their own contribution which has, in fact, contributed greatly to improvement in the school's performance. The school has the capacity to make further improvement.

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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	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?	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	2
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	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
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?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
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?	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	2	
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

Thank you for talking openly with us when we were in your school recently. We enjoyed seeing lessons and the experience you get at school. This letter is to tell you the outcome of the inspection. You told us that you like attending Onslow St Audrey's and you were convinced that your school had improved a lot. We agree with you that it has improved, and we think it is well placed to get even better. Test and examination results have improved considerably and, generally, students achieve and behave satisfactorily. Results that are already known this year are promising. Some things could be better. If all teaching and learning was as good as the best you receive, your standards would rise rapidly. Inspectors think that many of you do not push yourselves to the limit in learning in lessons, and you should have more confidence in being able to achieve well. Many of you are regularly late to school and, sometimes, to lessons, and miss out on opportunities to learn. Parts of the school building are poor, and we think that you and the staff deserve much better. Inspectors think your school cares well for you and is keen for you to succeed. We noted that it has achieved specialist status in business and enterprise from September and this should give you further opportunities. We agree with you that your headteacher and all the school's leaders are working hard to improve the quality of education you get. If you also put in the work needed, we think you have a good chance to do well, and we wish you every success in the future.