



Ashby School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 120303
LEA Leicestershire
Inspection number 280789
Inspection dates 2 November 2005 to 3 November 2005
Reporting inspector Dilip Kadodwala HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Nottingham Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Ashby-de-la-Zouch
Age range of pupils	14 to 19		Leicestershire LE65 1DT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01530 413748
Number on roll	2032	Fax number	01530 560665
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Clive Jones
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mrs Vivien Keller-Garnett

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
14 to 19	2 November 2005 - 3 November 2005	280789

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

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

Description of the school

Ashby is a specialist school in technology, a status it gained in 1998. The school is bigger than most other secondary schools and is split between two sites. There is also a boys' boarding house with 50 students. The socio-economic background of students is favourable compared to the national picture. Around 94 per cent of the students are from White British backgrounds. There are a low number of students whose first language is not English. The proportion of students who have learning difficulties and disabilities is below the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Ashby is an effective school with some outstanding features. The school judges its overall effectiveness as good and inspectors agree. This is because processes of review are rigorous. Standards are above average and students make good progress. The overall effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form is outstanding. Boarding provision is outstanding. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and is ably supported by an effective senior leadership team.

The quality of teaching is good. In the best lessons teachers have high expectations and make suitable demands. Senior leaders recognise the need to increase the proportion of good or outstanding teaching. There is a well established system for tracking students' progress. However, the use of assessment in lessons, including students' own evaluations of their learning, could be improved. In addition, there is a need for consistency in the monitoring of students' progress by tutors. Students' personal development is good overall, and outstanding in the sixth form, where students make an excellent contribution to the school as a community. The curriculum is good. There are extensive links with outside organisations, especially in relation to work related learning and citizenship. The care, guidance and support given to students are good overall, with outstanding promotion of students' health and safety. Since the last inspection standards have continued to rise and the school's capacity for further improvement is good. Overall the school provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Inspectors agree with the school's view that the effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are outstanding. This reflects the quality of leadership and management. Students achieve extremely well with many performing far better than would be expected following their GCSE results. Results are exceptionally high. The outstanding quality of teaching and students' very positive and mature attitudes are the major reasons for the successes. The exceptionally close links with colleges, the community and higher education add to this effectiveness. Leadership and management are outstanding, and the headteacher and head of sixth form give clear direction, working effectively with other senior colleagues and subject and tutorial staff. The overall provision is very cost-effective and provides students with the academic and personal skills to develop their potential and realise their initial ambitions.

Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision

Grade: 9

The latest inspection report by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (November 2004) stated that the standard of boarding welfare, care and support was excellent, and it continues to be so. It was judged to comply very well with the National Minimum Standards for boarding. The recommendations made in this report have been attended to and thus improved the overall care of the boys. The detailed, comprehensive and

up-to-date policies and procedures are carried out in practice to ensure the protection of the boys and their health and safety. Boarders and care staff enjoy excellent relationships and the boarders made many positive comments. The boys are successfully encouraged to be independent and to take responsibility, which they do with ease. Behaviour is exemplary and boys welcome visitors very warmly, and converse with ease. The induction process and support for new boarders is effective. Boys report that they have the opportunities to maintain good communications with their parents and families. Boys live in one boarding house, known as School House, and recent alterations have enhanced the sound quality of accommodation. The kitchen provides high quality and generous meals, which the boys enjoy. Dining times are orderly and good social occasions. Religious, cultural, medical and personal preferences are well met. Boarders have excellent sports and leisure facilities, through the use of the school facilities and at the local leisure centre. The head of boarding provides effective leadership and management. All the staff operate exceptionally well as a team taking pride in their work. There is good record keeping and effective support for all aspects of the boys' development. Support staff are easily accessible and there is efficient 'on-call' provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the use of assessment in lessons so that students know how they can improve their work.
- Improve the consistency of tutors' monitoring of students' attainment and progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Standards are above average and achievement is good. At the end of Key Stage 4, the percentage of students who achieve five or more A-C GCSE grades is above the national average. In the sixth form students attain extremely high standards. The school's rate of improvement is good but it is not complacent. It sets tough targets to ensure greater challenge, which students mostly meet. The school's thorough analysis of results shows that it can further improve the attainment of some students in some subjects. Effective action is leading to raised standards for middle and lower attaining students.

Students' attainment is above average when they start at the school. Most make good progress with some doing particularly well. Students who have learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported and make good progress. The achievement of learners in the sixth form is outstanding. The action taken by the school has resulted in a rise of the proportion of students achieving the highest grades.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students' personal development, especially their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, is good overall. It is outstanding in the sixth form where students make an excellent contribution to the school as a community. Students enjoy their learning and show pride in their achievements. In tutor groups composed of students from all year groups, the sixth form show outstanding care for the well-being of the other students. There are, therefore, excellent relationships between students of all ages. Students listen well to the views of others and have positive attitudes towards cultural and ethnic diversity. They are enthusiastic about the opportunities offered, both in taught courses and in activities outside lessons. Students prepare well for adult life by taking responsibility in a wide range of activities including caring for others at the annual town fair. Members of the school councils represent their peers in taking an active part in consultation about changes that impact on their lives, such as the introduction of healthy food. All students, including those in the sixth form, agree that the points system introduced to improve behaviour has been effective, but they feel that it is not applied equally across the school. Punctuality in the morning and to lessons has improved and is now good. Attendance is improving although it is still broadly average. Students behave responsibly to keep themselves safe. Sixth form students are productively involved in checking the site for hazards.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Teaching and learning are good overall, as reflected in the good progress made by students. Learning thrives in a positive environment. Some lessons observed were outstanding especially in the sixth form. Students responded well to teachers' high expectations and enthusiasm. For example, Year 12 students relished their learning on the use of materials in a design and technology lesson. Lower attaining students in Year 11 worked with great enjoyment in identifying persuasive language in English. Learning benefits from the teachers' confident subject knowledge and expertise in matching work to students' learning needs. This means that students of all abilities are challenged. Classroom relationships, attitudes and behaviour are good. Teaching assistants and resources, including the use of information and communication technology (ICT), are well deployed. Students involve themselves well, work productively together and respect each other's views. Learning was slowed in a minority of lessons by insufficient pace, and questioning was not sufficiently sharp to secure students' understanding. Students' work is marked regularly, but teachers' use of assessment in lessons, including peer and self-assessment, is not fully developed. Students are not always aware of what they need to do to improve their work. The

school is aware of this and is giving it a priority to ensure that the assessment forms an integral part of teaching and learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. Students do a broad range of interesting work. The school is keenly aware of the importance of matching subjects and courses to students' interests and needs, and plans meticulously to this end. An alternative curriculum has been introduced recently for those who are disaffected in Years 10 and 11, in partnership with a local college of further education. This is already proving successful in improving students' attitudes and behaviour. An extension of this programme, together with that for work related learning, is well under way. Good provision is made for students with learning difficulties and disabilities, and an imaginative range of activities enriches the learning of the most able students. The school's Specialist Technology College status enhances learning in all subjects, and helps the school to forge very close links with the community. These enable the school to be responsive to local needs, and students to have many opportunities to contribute to, and take on, responsibilities in the community. The good provision for literacy, numeracy and ICT helps them to develop key skills needed for economic well-being. Students are well prepared for their future, and education for health and safety is good. They greatly appreciate the exceptionally wide, personalised range of clubs and enrichment activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support given to students are good overall, with outstanding promotion of their health and safety. Vulnerable students are particularly well supported by measures to monitor their welfare and to encourage them to seek help from, for example, local health professionals. The schools tracking system effectively identifies students in danger of falling a grade below their potential. Remedial action leads to improved student performance. Child protection procedures are fully in place. The school has taken effective steps to improve attendance, punctuality and behaviour, although the system is being refined to improve its perception by students and parents. Students are well informed about the choices available to them. At Key Stage 4 students need to be given a clearer understanding of how well they are achieving and how to improve. Tutors monitor students' progress, but there is an inconsistency between tutor groups in how rigorously or frequently this is done. This leads to better guidance in some groups than in others. The school keeps parents well informed, with good quality reports, newsletters and letters about particular issues. The school is aware that some parents feel that they are not well consulted, and have taken steps to improve home-school communication.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The leadership and management of the school are good overall and some aspects outstanding. The headteacher's leadership is excellent and is effective in creating an ethos which values high standards and students' well-being. This ensures that there is a very clear educational direction for staff and students. Her relentless focus on raising standards has led to significant improvement over recent years. There is a strong emphasis on inclusion and as a result every student does matter to the school.

The school's self-evaluation is accurate about its strengths and weaknesses. Self-evaluation involves a wide range of staff and governors. A good range of methods is used to gain the views of parents and students. The great majority of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire are supportive of the school's work. Around a quarter of the responses stated that students and parents should be better consulted. The school is already taking suitable action to improve this aspect. Senior leaders form a cohesive team and drive forward developments effectively. Although no aspect of middle management is inadequate, there is some variability which is being addressed. A thorough cycle of lesson observations ensures that evaluations of teaching and learning are accurate and lead to improvement where necessary. Lesson observation is sharply linked to performance monitoring, training and development.

Governance of the school is outstanding. The governing body and its supporting committees have a strong strategic oversight and suitable accounting arrangements. Governors are highly dedicated and vocal ambassadors for the school. They have good links with individual faculties and review progress on key areas very effectively.

Improvement since the last inspection is good although progress on the role of tutors in monitoring students' academic progress is less advanced. The school's capacity for further improvement is good. Resources are used effectively and the school provides good value for money.

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
--	-----------------------	--------------

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	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	1
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	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	1
The behaviour of learners	2	1
The attendance of learners	3	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	1
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	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	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	1
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	1
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

Ashby School Nottingham Road Ashby-de-la-Zouch Leicestershire LE65 1DT

5 November 2005

Dear Students

Thank you for taking part in the inspection by talking to us about your school. I am writing to let you know the judgements we have made. We enjoyed meeting with you and your teachers.

•Your school is a good school. Some elements of it are outstanding, especially the sixth form. Being a specialist technology school brings many benefits. •The headteacher's leadership of the school is excellent. She, and the people with responsibility, make decisions with your best interests in mind. •We were impressed by your maturity and the confident way you expressed your views. •You enjoy learning and your examination results are very good. We think this is because you are very well cared for at the school. Other important reasons are the high quality of teaching and your own application and positive attitudes to learning. •Most of you and your parents are very happy with the school. A good many of you take part in the wide range of extra activities. •Most of you behave in a very sensible manner. Some of you said that the 'e-behaviour' system is not always applied consistently by teachers. Senior staff are fully aware of this concern and they are seeking ways to improve this system, no doubt with your co-operation.

We have asked the school to do these things to further improve your education:

•You know the grades you are aiming for but teachers need to make sure you fully understand how you can achieve your targets. •All your tutors need to know how well you are achieving in all your subjects and make sure that you get help quickly when you need it. We wish you every success for the future!

Yours sincerely

Dilip Kadodwala Her Majesty's Inspector