



# Ashfield Comprehensive School

Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 122827  
**LEA** NOTTINGHAMSHIRE LEA  
**Inspection number** 281354  
**Inspection dates** 8 February 2006 to 9 February 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr. Dilip Kadodwala LI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Sutton Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		NG17 8HP
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18		
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01623455000
<b>Number on roll</b>	2454	<b>Fax number</b>	01623455001
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr. Gordon Wilson
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr. Ian Fraser

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 18	<b>Inspection dates</b> 8 February 2006 - 9 February 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 281354
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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**

The school is much bigger than most other secondary schools. Around 99% of the students are of White British backgrounds. The remaining minority come from a small range of different ethnic backgrounds. Students' attainment on entry is broadly average. The percentage of students who have learning disabilities and disabilities, including those who have a statement of special educational needs, is below the national average. Although there is deprivation locally, the overall socio-economic background is average. This is reflected in the proportion of students who are eligible for free school meals which is broadly in line with the national average. The school gained a specialist Technology school status in 1998, to which it added languages and vocational specialisms in December 2005. Ashfield is a popular school that is over-subscribed. It achieved designation as a Training School in 2000.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

Ashfield is a good school. The vast majority of parents, students and staff at the school feel that it provides a good standard of education. Inspectors agree with them but also judge that students' personal development is good rather than satisfactory. Processes for review are rigorous which lead to continual improvement. Overall leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and is ably supported by an effective senior leadership team. Standards are average but by the end of Year 11 students make good progress, particularly those of lower ability and those who have learning difficulties. The exception is in the sixth form where students' progress is satisfactory. The quality of teaching is good. In the best lessons teachers have high expectations and make suitable demands. The school specialist status and designation as a training school make a good impact on the quality of teaching and on students' achievement. The school recognises that more should be done to develop the use of assessment information to increase students' progress. Recently introduced strategies are beginning to have a positive impact but more needs to be done to raise standards further in the sixth form. Students' personal development is good. They enjoy opportunities offered to enhance their achievements and are proud of their school. The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. The school has improved well since the last inspection in 1999. Its growth in size has not diminished senior leaders' desire to seek continual improvement. The capacity for further improvement is good. The school provides good value for money in Years 7-11 and satisfactory value in the sixth form.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 3**

The school believes that the effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are good. This is a better picture than the evidence indicates: inspectors judge it to be satisfactory. Attainment on entry is average and students make satisfactory progress. Students' achievement is satisfactory because of the good teaching which creates an effective bridge between GCSE and more advanced courses. However, in some lessons there are not enough opportunities for students to develop independence as learners. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. Although there are extensive systems for monitoring students' progress, the use of assessment information to raise standards and achievement is not sufficiently rigorous. The care and support that students receive beforehand and during their time in the sixth form are outstanding. Students themselves speak appreciatively of the willingness with which teachers offer advice and support. This ensures that the majority of students complete courses which are suited to their capabilities and interests. Strong links with universities and further education colleges, and with a range of training opportunities, ensure that students are properly equipped for their future careers.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the use of assessment information to raise standards further in the sixth form.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Standards are average and students make good progress in Years 7 to 11. In the sixth form achievement is satisfactory and standards are average. Students enter the school with broadly average standards. Taking contextual factors into account, progress throughout the main school is good overall, but it is better in Years 10 and 11 than it is in Years 7 to 9. By the end of Year 11, the progress made by students of lower ability and those who have learning difficulties is particularly good. The progress of boys is better than girls. Lessons observed by inspectors indicate that the progress made by students is good. Results in 2005 were average in national tests and at GCSE. The school was close to the challenging targets set for students at the end of Years 9 and 11. However, the number of students gaining the highest grades at GCSE was below average. Nevertheless, results in 2005 were better than those of 2004, and the number of students achieving the highest grades was good when compared with their prior attainment. The improvement in test and examination results in the last five years has been similar to the improvement nationally. In 2005 the rate of improvement in the proportion of students who achieved 5 good passes at GCSE was significantly better than the national rate. The 2005 examination results in both A level and vocational courses were average overall. Achievement was as expected when compared with GCSE examinations results.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 2**

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Students enjoy a wide range of activities and speak proudly about the school. During lessons their behaviour is good. Most students are interested and have a positive attitude towards learning. They move around the school quietly and most demonstrate a good level of self-discipline and maturity. The school is a secure environment where students feel safe and well cared for. Attendance is generally in line with the national average and unauthorised absence is low. Students speak positively about the mentoring and care they receive. They help them to stay on course and develop life skills for their future economic well-being. They understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle through sports and healthy eating. Students, including those in the sixth form, contribute well to the school environment and the wider community. They willingly undertake special responsibilities, such as peer mentoring, as well as contributing to activities in the local community. Most students are confident that their views are valued and acted upon through the well established school council. Overall, students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Spiritual development has improved since

the last inspection. Personal, social and health education contributes well to students' personal development. Within areas of the curriculum, students discuss and reflect on a range of spiritual and moral issues. They develop a good sense of social awareness and enterprise skills through careers education and citizenship. Students learn to respect and appreciate the richness of a multicultural society through their study of literature, art and music from around the world.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching is good throughout the school, including the sixth form. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and they use it well to challenge students. Lessons are planned in detail, often cooperatively, to meet a wide range of students' needs. Good use is made of information and communication technology to motivate students and enhance the quality of lessons. Teachers manage their classes well, promoting good relationships and, consequently, students enjoy most lessons. Assessment systems, marking and student tracking are good. The impact of a recently introduced assessment procedure is beginning to have a positive impact, particularly on the progress of the higher attaining students. Students know the level they are working at and what they have to do to improve. On occasions, over-directed teaching constrains independent learning and opportunities for problem solving. When lessons are outstanding, students' understanding is skilfully probed and developed further. As a specialist college, teaching and learning are enhanced by a wide range of resources which are used well to improve learning. Regular monitoring, evaluation and review are bringing improvements to teaching, learning and achievement.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school provides a good and broad curriculum which meets the need of its students. Curricular opportunities are enhanced for students in Years 7 to 9. For example, about half of the students in Year 8 and 9 get opportunities to study two modern foreign languages. Good provision is made for citizenship both through the personal, social and health education and through most subjects. The curriculum in Year 10 and 11 is wide and school based. However, at the present, there is a limited choice of vocational courses. The school is reviewing this in order to allow a more flexible and suitable programme to meet a wider range of needs, with a view to establishing a coherent pathway across the 14-19 age range. Good resources and computer hardware enhance students' learning. A good variety of extra-curricular activities has a substantial take up and enriches students. Different levels of academic and vocational course are offered in the sixth form. This also includes opportunities to re-take GCSE English and mathematics.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. All students are very well cared for and guided in the right direction. They have confidence in their teachers and value the quality of care and support they receive. They recognise that the staff are committed to helping them to reach their full potential. Students are well managed and there are effective procedures to identify those who may be at risk of underachievement. Their progress is closely monitored through a very well organised mentoring system. There is a highly effective support system for students who have learning difficulties and disabilities and they make significant progress. The school has a strong inclusion policy. Arrangements for safeguarding students are robust and the school follows good procedures for the protection of children and the monitoring of all health and safety issues. Teachers are readily available to students and relationships are secure. Students receive well informed guidance from staff when making their subject and career choices.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 3**

The leadership and management of the school are good overall. The headteacher's leadership is outstanding. He is effective in creating an ethos which values openness and dialogue that has, at its core, a concentration on standards achieved by students and their well-being. The focus on raising standards has led to good improvement over recent years. Weaknesses identified by the previous inspection have been tackled effectively. The school's ability in attracting funding, and its efficient use, has also helped to bring about improvement. This includes the procurement of resources obtained through its multiple specialist status. The school's self-evaluation is accurate about its strengths and weaknesses. Self-evaluation processes involve a wide range of staff and governors, and are also informed by views sought from parents and students. Rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning ensures continual improvement. Senior leaders form a cohesive team and drive forward developments effectively. Middle managers carry out systematic reviews which help to inform whole school strategic planning. The headteacher and other senior staff work well with the governing body. Governance is good. Governors are actively involved in the school and have involved local residents in discussions about the school's future re-build. Governors have a secure grasp of the school's expenditure and standards achieved and play an effective role in the school's strategic planning. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Resources are used efficiently and effectively. The continued improvements in teaching, achievement, departmental management and whole school planning indicate a good capacity for future 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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	3
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

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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 taking part in this inspection by talking to us about your school. We enjoyed meeting with you and your teachers. I am writing to let you know about the judgements we have made. Overall, we think that Ashfield is a good school. You are rightly proud of your school. We agree with your teachers that care, guidance and support for you are outstanding. We also think that the leadership of your headteacher is excellent. The other aspects we consider to be strengths are: Teaching is good across the school. This means that most of you make good progress. Your GCSE results have improved over the last five years and in 2005, the rate of improvement for 5 good passes was better than the national rate. Standards and progress in the sixth form are satisfactory. You like the 'traffic light' system which shows you and your teachers how well you are progressing towards your targets and predicted grades. We think this system is already bringing about improvement. Being a specialist school has brought many benefits and has helped to improve what is provided for you. You are very pleasant, well mannered young people. The great majority of you behave well in lessons and responsibly around what is a very large school. We have asked the school to improve the progress made by students in the sixth form. We wish you every success for the future