



Idsall School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123568
LEA Shropshire
Inspection number 281507
Inspection dates 16 November 2005 to 17 November 2005
Reporting inspector John Evans HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Coppice Green Lane
School category	Community		Shifnal
Age range of pupils	11 to 19		Shropshire TF11 8PD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01952 468400
Number on roll	1254	Fax number	01952 463052
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Adrian Collins
Date of previous inspection	13 November 2000	Headteacher	Mr Don Gibbons

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 19	16 November 2005 - 17 November 2005	281507

© 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 four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Idsall School is a large comprehensive on the outskirts of the market town of Shifnal in Shropshire. The popularity of the school extends well beyond its immediate catchment area and it is oversubscribed. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is 5%, which is below average. About 10% of students come from service families based at RAF Cosford. At less than 10%, the proportion of students with special educational needs is also low. The overwhelming majority of students are from White British backgrounds and less than 1% of students have English as an additional language. Attainment on entry is higher than average. The sixth form is an average size. The school is a specialist sports college.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Inspectors to judged the school's overall effectiveness to be satisfactory, whereas the school itself has judged it to be good. The inspectors agree with the school's own assessment that, although teaching and learning are satisfactory and the progress made by most students is average, the standards achieved are generally well above average and the school has considerable strengths..

Most students enter the school with above average levels of attainment. They make satisfactory progress, more so in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4, and standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are well above average. Students' personal development is good. Their attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning are all very good. These features are strongly supported by the high quality of care, guidance and support provided by the school.

An increasingly broad curriculum meets the needs of most students very well. The school provides an excellent range of extra-curricular activities and participation in them is high. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Whilst lessons are generally effective in enabling students to learn well, too often they fail to challenge students sufficiently, particularly those with higher ability, and so they do not make as much progress as they should.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Senior managers intervene effectively to ensure that students at risk of getting poor results are more successful. But recent initiatives to improve teaching and learning and to track students' progress have not yet had much effect on achievement. Resources are deployed efficiently and the school provides satisfactory value for money. The school has continued to improve since its last inspection and clearly has the capacity to continue to do so.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school's own assessment that the effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are satisfactory. A very high proportion of students complete their chosen courses. They make satisfactory progress in most, but not all, subjects and they achieve standards in line with or above national averages. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The wide choice of courses means that the sixth form has a high proportion of small teaching groups which may limit students' learning experience. On the other hand, students feel the additional attention they receive in small teaching groups helps them to make more progress. Improvements in teaching and learning are slow to have an impact. The sixth form has a good reputation locally because it provides a structured and supportive learning environment carefully differentiated from the rest of the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Take more concerted action to improve the quality of teaching and learning so that students across the ability range make more progress
- Improve the effectiveness of target-setting and reviews of progress in Key Stages 3 and 4 to help students make greater progress
- Monitor the quality of teaching, learning and the assessment of students' work, so that weaknesses are more quickly identified and targeted for improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students enter the school in Year 7 with above average levels of attainment. During Key Stage 3 they make satisfactory progress and achieve standards which are generally well above the national level. Girls achieved as well as boys at Key Stage 3 in 2004. During Key Stage 4, the progress made by students is below the average for similar schools. Nevertheless, standards achieved in Year 11 are high. All key indicators of achievement at GCSE are well above the national average. Differences between standards reached by boys and girls at Key Stage 4 mirror the differences found nationally. Standards in mathematics are particularly high in Key Stages 3 and 4. Students with the highest attainment on entry do not make quite as much progress as the majority of students. At Key Stage 4, and in the sixth form, relatively few students achieve higher grades. The school recognises that it has more to do to ensure that higher ability students realise their full potential. Students with learning difficulties make similar progress to other students. In 2005, standards achieved in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 3 improved markedly, especially for middle and higher ability students. At Key Stage 4 the pass rate declined slightly. In the sixth form, GCE A-level examination results remained close to the national average and AS-level results improved significantly to well above the national average. Whilst standards have clearly improved over time, the consistency of this trend is periodically interrupted by some sizeable reversals. The school has responded effectively to these situations and has improved standards in the following year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of students are good. They very much enjoy their time in school and this is reflected in the high level of attendance and very few instances of late arrivals each day. Students also demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. They apply themselves well in lessons, often displaying a mature approach to tasks set for them. The development of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is good and, as a result, they form excellent relationships with each other and with the adults in school. The daily briefing includes a 'thought for the day', which is considered during morning tutorials. The behaviour of most students is outstanding.

Students are aware of what to do to keep healthy because this is taught well in personal and social education. Many students opt for salads, fresh fruit and water and participate

in the excellent range of extra-curricular physical activities. Students adopt safe practices in lessons and around school. They contribute well both in the school and in the local community. For example, they support each other in lessons, they react to current affairs by instigating fundraising events and they produce food hampers for local elderly residents at Christmas. Over 100 students each year develop their leadership skills through the sports leaders awards. The strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy skills and on work experience and the increased range of vocational subjects ensure students develop valuable skills for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning at all stages are satisfactory and there is much good, and some outstanding, teaching. The school prioritises the improvement of teaching and learning and organises periodic reviews of their quality.

Teachers know their subjects well and plan lessons so that they link to previous work and ensure continuity of learning. Planning does not always meet the needs of the full ability range, however, and there is often a lack of challenge for the more able. Lessons include a variety of learning activities that keep students interested and engaged. Teachers' explanations are very good: they relate well to students' abilities and lead to progressive learning. Relationships between teachers and students are especially good and their interaction through question-and-answer techniques is a strong feature of lessons. Students are encouraged to think for themselves and articulate their opinions and there is a clear focus on literacy skills. Information and communication technology (ICT), including the well developed school website, is increasingly being used to support learning across the curriculum. In most lessons, routine assessments are used well to check students' understanding. Learning objectives, however, are not always clearly defined nor are outcomes adequately checked at the end of the lesson.

The quality of marking is inconsistent. Marking is too infrequent in some subjects and it often provides insufficient guidance to indicate how the work could be improved further. Classroom management is good. This, together with pupils' good attitudes and behaviour, has a positive influence on learning. The deployment of support assistants according to their strengths, and their good relationships with teachers, enhance the learning and progress of those students with special educational needs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and some aspects of it are excellent. Teaching time has been increased to meet national recommendations. At Key Stage 3, the curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 provides a wide and varied range of academic and vocational courses. The latter are supported

by effective links with partner schools and local colleges. Courses are planned to meet the varying needs of students and they reflect the rural environment of the school and local employment opportunities. All students have two weeks' work experience. There is a modified curriculum for those students with special educational needs. The broad choice of courses in the sixth form is supported through collaboration with the local sixth-form college and the use of distance-learning options.

An excellent range of extra-curricular activities is available to all students. In addition to the extensive choice of sporting and fitness activities that reflect the school's specialist status, there are also a number of cultural and academic activities. These are much enjoyed and appreciated by students and hence the participation rate in 'session six' is high. An especially large group of students take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. The 'odyssey club' provides an opportunity for gifted and talented pupils to extend their interests beyond the formal curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

These aspects of the school's work are strong. Students feel well cared for and, because relationships are very good, they know they can seek help and support whenever they need it. Staff are quick to identify any concerns regarding the well-being of students and child protection arrangements are secure. The school's involvement in the safer schools initiative has helped to reduce the occurrence of accidents and 'near misses'. However, some health and safety procedures lack rigour. For example, risk assessments and record keeping are not comprehensive.

Well established links with external agencies ensure a good range of support is available to students. Students receive good advice and guidance about their option choices in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Careers development is good. Particularly noteworthy is the use of the careers resource, 'The Real Game', throughout the school. This involves students in regular role-play situations that expose them to real-life and work situations. They learn to match desire and ambition with academic and personal achievement. Although the school has developed procedures for tracking students' progress, these are not implemented effectively. Many students are unaware of how well they are progressing or what they have to do to improve. The use of information forms to trigger prompt intervention by form tutors is effective.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides a clear lead and is well supported by other members of the leadership team and by middle managers. The school is setting itself challenging targets for improvement after concerns about students' progress in recent years. These targets were partially met in 2005. Examination results are thoroughly reviewed and evaluated and the outcomes are used in planning. The school has adopted a broad range of strategies to improve teaching and learning. Some of these, for example setting and sharing lesson objectives, are slow in becoming

standard practice. The school's monitoring of the effectiveness of teaching is satisfactory but is not rigorous enough to support the high priority given to this aspect of its work. Whilst leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory, the quality of provision is not sufficiently monitored or evaluated and consequently areas for improvement do not receive enough attention. Governors take a keen interest in all aspects of the school's life and have a clear overview of its strengths and areas for improvement. Governors do not have a good enough understanding of performance data to challenge managers sufficiently. The school makes every effort to consult parents and take their views on board. For example, the school's proposals for a change to the school day were modified after consultation with parents. Equal opportunities are promoted well to ensure students are not discriminated against in their learning. The sports specialism makes a major contribution to the life of the school. For example, it supports the mathematics curriculum and provides the coordination of the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. There are very effective sports links with feeder primary schools and the sports facilities are successfully shared with the local community.

The school's self-evaluation is detailed and largely accurate. However, the grades awarded for leadership and management and overall effectiveness are overstated given the average level of progress made by students. The school has continued to raise standards since the last inspection and has good capacity to improve further.

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?	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	3	3
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	2	2
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?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
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

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?	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?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
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	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
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

Idsall School Coppice Green Lane Shifnal Shropshire TF11 8PD

21 November 2005

Dear Students,

A few weeks ago a small team of Ofsted inspectors visited your school. We met and talked to many of you and observed several of your lessons. We also met teachers and had many letters from parents. Throughout this process, you were helpful, friendly and open with us. We would like to thank you for that. Here are our main findings about what is good about your school:

- we feel Idsall is a school with some very clear strengths. One of its key strengths is you. We were very impressed by how much you enjoy going to school, how easily you can describe what you like about the school and how hard you find it to think of things you would change. Your behaviour, attendance and attitude to learning are all very good
- most of you achieve standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 which are well above average and in the sixth form standards are at or above average
- the school provides you with a good range of subject options and an excellent range of extra-curricular activities
- most of your lessons provide you with a good variety of different activities and keep you interested and engaged
- the school provides good care, guidance and support for students, and both you and your parents are very positive about the school's qualities
- examination results have continued to improve and the school has the potential to become even better than it is now.

We would like to see you make more progress between Years 7 and 9, during Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form, so that you achieve even better results. In order to help you make more progress we would like the school to make the following improvements:

- take further steps to improve the quality of lessons so that they provide enough challenge for students of all abilities
- improve the effectiveness of target setting and reviews of progress in Key Stages 3 and 4, which should also help students to make more progress
- introduce closer monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, including the assessment of your work, to help it all to reach the highest standard.

We wish you well.

Yours sincerely,

John Evans HMI Lead Inspector