



Ludlow Church of England School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123587
LEA Shropshire
Inspection number 281514
Inspection dates 28 June 2006 to 29 June 2006
Reporting inspector John Evans HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Bromfield Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Burway
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1GJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01584 872691
Number on roll	825	Fax number	01584 877708
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr G J Hall
Date of previous inspection	25 September 2000	Headteacher	Mr. Philip Poulton

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 16	28 June 2006 - 29 June 2006	281514

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

This is a medium-sized comprehensive school which serves the town of Ludlow and surrounding rural areas. This catchment area combines characteristics of rural disadvantage with relative affluence. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, and a well above average proportion has statements of special educational needs. Almost all students are from White British backgrounds. The school has been a specialist technology college for the last three years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a happy school which is improving well. Its overall effectiveness is satisfactory, but the school has many good and a few outstanding aspects. There are clear trends of improvement in standards and achievement, which were unsatisfactory three years ago. Students make good progress during Key Stage 3 and test results for Year 9 are above average. Progress during Key Stage 4 is satisfactory and GCSE results are average but improving steadily as data is used more effectively to set targets for students, monitor their progress and to intervene to support learners at risk of underachieving.

Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make outstanding progress because of the high quality of provision and the school's sensitivity to their individual needs. Higher ability students also achieve well.

Personal development and well-being are good. Students behave responsibly and mature well in the environment the school provides. Care, guidance and support for students are good. Particularly strong features are the transition from primary schools into Year 7 and the multi-agency approach to supporting students with more complex needs. The tutorial system is increasingly effective, but assessment information is not always used with precision in setting targets for individual students and monitoring progress towards them.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. There are many good and outstanding lessons, but a greater proportion are no better than satisfactory. The school knows the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning very well. Although improvements have been secured, the quality of lessons remains too variable between subjects. The curriculum is good. Collaboration with colleges and employers has provided good vocational and work-based options in Key Stage 4. Students participate well in extra-curricular activities, especially in sport.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and his senior colleagues provide very effective leadership. Self-evaluation is accurate and contributing to improvement. Promotion of equality of opportunity is outstanding. The quality of subject leadership is too variable. The school provides good value for money and its capacity to continue to improve is also good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Consolidate assessment for learning as an integral part of teaching so that students know what they need to do to improve.
- Take more concerted action to address the inconsistency in the quality of teaching so that a higher proportion of lessons are good and better.
- Develop further the quality and impact of subject leadership by spreading best practice.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall. Students' attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 is broadly average. They make good progress in Years 7 to 9, and achieve above average results at the end of Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 4, progress is satisfactory and GCSE results are broadly average. Standards and achievement have improved significantly at both key stages over the last three years. Since 2003, when progress in Key Stage 3 was unsatisfactory and GCSE results well below average, there has been a clear trend of improvement, which is continuing. The majority of students now either meet or exceed their targets.

Students who have learning difficulties and disabilities are very well supported and make outstanding progress in achieving individual targets and improving their competence in spelling and reading. Many of the most vulnerable students are very successful in moving into post-16 education, training and employment. Overall, the percentage of students continuing to further education and training is exceptionally high.

The development of systematic procedures for assessing and tracking students' progress strongly supports the improvement in standards. These are helpful in identifying possible underachievement, and in setting appropriately challenging targets, but are not yet used effectively by all teachers.

The school's deep commitment to raising standards is reflected in the well focused actions taken to address specific areas of underachievement. Examples include the close analysis of examination results to identify and address the causes of underachievement, and the introduction of well planned strategies to support the achievement of lower ability girls. These are already proving to be effective. The school is exceeding the attainment targets attached to its technology college status.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good with some very good features. Students mature as they move through the school, responding positively to the good opportunities they are given to practise their own leadership skills. Good examples include the students acting as mentors for younger pupils, and being prefects, members of the school council or community sports leaders. Students enjoy their education, behave well and make a significant contribution to the positive atmosphere felt throughout the school. They behave responsibly, feel safe in the school and have confidence in the way that any bullying is dealt with. Attendance is satisfactory.

Students show responsible attitudes to their own achievement and take an increasing interest and responsibility for their own and others' health and well-being. There is considerable interest and enjoyment in sport and increasing numbers take part in sporting events outside of school. Most eat healthily and work alongside the school to ensure health and safety matters are treated seriously, for example in their use of

the internet and in design and technology lessons. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The development of enterprise skills are not yet being consistently developed across the school and elements of the citizenship programme have been highlighted by the school as needing further improvement.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and good in several subjects. The school knows the strengths and weaknesses well, and is working towards spreading effective teaching across all departments. Specialist status in technology has raised standards in that area, with benefits to other subjects, for example in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support and accelerate learning. The development of literacy is a strong feature of English and humanities lessons. However, such initiatives do not raise standards as tellingly as they might because there is a current lack of co-ordination across the work of the whole school. The same is true of the provision for numeracy and for assessment and marking. In some subjects, students are well served. They know their current standards and what to do to improve them. In others, there is less certainty and focus. The school has correctly identified these matters as priorities for development and has made arrangements to take them forward.

Students at all levels of ability benefit from some excellent teaching, for example in English. Through encouragement, tight planning and energetic pace, they are thoroughly engaged and enabled to meet teachers' high expectations. Teaching assistants are well deployed centrally and make a clear and positive contribution to students' learning, although not all teachers know how to use them to best effect in their lessons. Students with learning difficulties receive close and well judged attention. However, a greater proportion of lessons are no better than satisfactory. Some lack pace, particularly when students are working on tasks individually, and it is sometimes not sufficiently clear how students' skills and understanding are to be advanced by the planned activities. The use of homework to take students forward is also of variable quality. These observations match the school's own judgements concerning the quality of teaching and its impact on students' progress and enjoyment.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is creatively tailored to meet students' needs and aptitudes. There is close liaison with local schools and colleges to offer vocational and other work-based learning appropriate to older students across all levels of ability. Alternative arrangements are put in place for those students who would struggle with a conventional curriculum. These show the great effort the school makes to enable individual students to persevere with, and succeed in, their education. The work of the pupil support centre gives an impressive example of this principle in action. So

does the outstanding general provision for students with learning difficulties and disabilities. Potentially high attaining students are also well catered for by teaching programmes developed to offer them sufficient challenge, to which they successfully respond. The school is well aware of the strengths of its curriculum, for example, English, physical education, design and technology and humanities. It has recognised the need to improve provision in ICT, Religious Education and enterprise education so that students have better opportunities to develop their capabilities. The valuable work undertaken with primary schools in food is being extended to other elements of design and technology. All students benefit from extensive opportunities beyond the normal timetable. There is an exceptionally wide choice of sports activities whose appeal is shown by the high take up of over 60%. Students are also keenly involved in drama and musical events, a variety of charities, and outside visits, carefully planned to enrich their social and cultural experience.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The school goes to great lengths to ensure students receive the high quality care, guidance and support that will enable them to meet their academic and personal goals. Curriculum learning tutors and form tutors oversee students' achievement and intervene when necessary to offer guidance, mentoring and support. Some aspects of care and support are excellent, notably, the liaison between the school and outside agencies and the diligent way that staff ensure that the complex needs of individuals are met. The pupil support centre is a key part of the in-school provision and provides a safe and secure base where pupils' physical, learning or behavioural needs can be met either outside lessons or alongside the regular curriculum. The excellent work and success of this provision have led to a significant fall in the number of students being excluded from school, outstanding progress by those with learning difficulties, and improved attendance. Vulnerable students feel positive about their schooling, making them more likely to remain in education rather than drop out of it, and encouraged either to go on to further education or to seek employment.

There are very good arrangements in place to support the transition from primary schools into Year 7. Communications with parents have been strengthened. Parents have welcomed changes to the reporting system and the chance to meet with subject teachers. Their perceptions of the school are overwhelmingly positive. Guidance on option choices and careers is good and Connexions advisers contribute well.

A more variable aspect of guidance and support is the use that tutors and teachers make of assessment information to help them set realistic academic targets and monitor and track progress towards them. There is still work to do to ensure that all pupils achieve their potential and that underachievement, where it exists, is eliminated.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has made certain that the school is extremely focused on raising achievement and standards. The senior management team, collectively and individually, provides very effective leadership. Rigorous subject reviews and other monitoring procedures mean that they have a detailed and accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. This is reflected in the good self-evaluation, which has become an effective tool for improvement, although inspectors feel it is over-cautious in grading some aspects of performance.

The school has improved markedly over the last three years and continues to improve. Most key weaknesses identified in the last inspection have been robustly addressed, but the limited ICT provision in Key Stage 3 and the need to improve functional literacy and numeracy are not fully resolved. Targets set for the school and individual subjects are appropriately challenging and well informed by relevant data. Following several years of underperformance, targets are increasingly being met and some exceeded. Managers and teachers are now more accountable for their own contribution, but within a supportive environment. Staff morale has increased. The promotion of equality of opportunity for all its students is outstanding.

Leadership and management of subjects are mostly satisfactory. Subject leaders are using data more effectively to gain better insight into performance in their subjects and some use this well to target intervention on underachieving groups. Where subject leadership is good or outstanding, such as in English, geography, PE and science, all aspects of the students' experience, including the quality of homework set and feedback on students' work, are monitored well. There is not sufficient monitoring in other subjects. Some initiatives to strengthen middle management are already in place. Lesson observations are extensive and rigorous, particularly those undertaken by senior managers. Staff development, including coaching, is well aligned to school priorities, but the sharing of good practice has not yet been successful enough in increasing the proportion of good and excellent lessons. School and departmental improvement plans are very comprehensive. However, many of the intended outcomes are not specific enough to be properly monitored and measured.

Governance is good. Governors feel well informed and better able to judge school performance. Their individual commitment, expertise and links with different aspects and subjects, enable them to monitor, support and challenge well. The school has developed good links with the local community. Resources are deployed efficiently and effectively and most classrooms provide a pleasant environment for learning. The quality of the senior leadership team, rapidly improving standards, rising levels of achievement and very effective self evaluation provide convincing evidence of the school's good capacity to improve further.

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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

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	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

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

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. We want to thank you for being so welcoming. Here are our main findings

What is good about your school?

- We feel the school is improving well and has many strengths. Many of you commented on the positive atmosphere that has developed at the school. You make the most of the good opportunities the school provides for you to take responsibility, and enjoy sports and performance activities outside of lessons.
- Improvements in the school are helping you to make more progress and achieve better results. Standards and achievement are now good in Key Stage 3 and getting better in Key Stage 4. The curriculum the school provides is well balanced and provides good alternatives to the usual GCSE menu in Years 10 and 11 (although you do need more ICT in Key Stage 3).
- The care, guidance and support the school provides are also good. These are particularly good at helping you to make the transition from primary school and supporting those of you with more complex needs. The provision and support the school provides for students with learning difficulties and disabilities are among the best we have ever seen and, as a result, these students make tremendous progress.
- The school is well led and staff are putting a great deal of effort into making sure that more of your lessons are of a high standard and that you achieve your full potential.

Improvements we would like the school to make

- Improve assessment and target setting, so that you always have a very clear understanding of how well you are doing in each subject and what you can do to improve further.
- Do even more work to make sure that the large majority of your lessons are enjoyable and challenging for every student in the class.
- Make sure that every subject is as well led and managed as the best ones already are.

The inspectors feel that the school is capable of continuing to improve so that it is good in all respects. We wish you well.

Yours sincerely

John G Evans HMI