



Devizes School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 126506
LEA Wiltshire
Inspection number 282128
Inspection dates 21 September 2005 to 22 September 2005
Reporting inspector Ian Stuart RISP

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	The Green
School category	Foundation		Devizes
Age range of pupils	11 to 19		Wiltshire SN10 3AG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01380 724886
Number on roll	1071	Fax number	01380 720955
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	11 October 1999	Headteacher	Mr Malcolm Irons

Age group 11 to 19	Inspection dates 21 September 2005 - 22 September 2005	Inspection number 282128
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four contracted inspectors.

Description of the school

Devizes School is a mixed comprehensive school serving Devizes and the surrounding area. It has grown considerably recently and is now bigger than average with over 1200 pupils and students, including 210 students in the sixth form. Its pupils and students come from a wide range of circumstances, reflecting the mixed nature of the area, although there are very few who come from minority ethnic groups or who do not speak English as their first language. Attainment on entry is broadly average. There is a small centre for pupils with specific learning difficulties, but the number of pupils with special educational needs is a little below average. The school operates on one very pleasant site, and became a specialist Sports College in September 2004.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good and improving school with a very good capacity for further improvement. It provides good value for money. Pupils and students believe strongly that the school has improved significantly recently. Inspectors and the school agree on the school's main strengths and weaknesses identified by the school's own very good self-evaluation.

Standards have risen significantly in recent test and examination results and are now above the national averages. These standards are still being maintained and most pupils are achieving well. Nearly all, including those who need extra help with their learning, are making good progress. Students in the sixth form are also achieving well. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school and the good curriculum is varied and interesting, matching pupils' and students' needs well. Personal development is also well catered for through the good care, guidance and support that are provided. As a result, the school is producing lively, friendly young people who will be well prepared as citizens of the 21st century. The vast majority have positive attitudes, behave well and attend regularly.

A catalyst for the school's development has been its recent Sports College status and the benefits of this are already being widely felt, especially in physical education and sport. The school has successfully managed its significant growth through particularly effective financial management. Although there is still much work to do, a lot of imaginative new building and refurbishment has taken place and the new science block is outstanding.

The school is moving forward rapidly because of the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, very ably supported by senior staff, and the very strong commitment of other staff and governors to raising standards. They share a clear vision which is set out in an excellent strategic plan. The school knows where improvements are still needed and is working on them. The school has successfully tackled most of the issues identified in the last inspection report and progress since the last inspection has been good.

Grade: 2

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The school judges the overall effectiveness of its sixth form as good, and inspectors agree. It is well led and managed. The range and suitability of courses have expanded in line with growing numbers. Students are well taught and their progress is carefully monitored. As a result, the achievement of most students on all types of courses is good. There are good plans for development. However, students are right to have some concerns about pressures on accommodation and resources, such as computers.

Grade: 2

What the school should do to improve further

- improve the quality of some middle managers to match the effectiveness of the best, to ensure greater consistency in pupils' achievements in different subjects
- improve the use of assessment information across the school, focusing on ways it can help to improve teaching and learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

For the past few years, standards have been close to the national average and pupils' achievement has been satisfactory. However, the provisional results for 2005 indicate a significant improvement on previous years that raises standards to well above average. This represents good achievement. The achievement of higher attainers, particularly the numbers obtaining the highest grades of A* and A, is notable, though, in other respects, there are no significant differences in the achievement of different groups of pupils.

The school has worked hard in recent years to raise standards. Whilst it has taken time for these efforts to show themselves in last year's improved results, this good progress is now consolidated and is evident across the school. However, there are variations between subjects with, for example, mathematics and geography doing better than modern foreign languages and history. The school's senior managers are well aware of these differences and are tackling their causes. Teachers are strongly committed to raising standards further, despite a few remaining problem areas. This commitment to high achievement is not yet so strong among some pupils.

Most pupils with special educational needs and the very small number from minority ethnic groups make the same rate of progress as other pupils. The school has set sufficiently challenging targets for pupils in Years 9 and 11. In 2005, all Year 9 targets were met and those for Year 11 were exceeded.

The standard of students entering the sixth form is broadly average. Achievement in recent years, particularly in 2004, has been good. Generally, students achieve results better than would be expected, given their standards on entry.

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' social development is good. They work well together in classes. Outside lessons, relationships between pupils are harmonious. For example, older pupils in Year 11 take opportunities to mentor new pupils by supporting them in their early days at the school. These effective induction arrangements have enabled the Year 7 pupils to make a very positive start in the school. Similarly, sixth form students help with the younger pupils in very positive ways such as assisting in classes and sporting activities and helping with reading schemes. Sixth formers have mature attitudes and are very willing to take on responsibility.

Behaviour is good in classes and around the school. The positive attitudes that nearly all pupils and students have ensure that lessons are purposeful and time is used well. Attendance for several years has been above the national average.

Pupils' spiritual and cultural development are satisfactory and they have a good understanding of moral values. They are involved in fundraising for charity and have made a positive contribution to the school's behaviour policy through the school council.

Pupils speak positively about their lessons and about the opportunities for activities outside lessons. They particularly enjoy the range of different sports on offer. This is contributing well to their understanding about keeping healthy. During the inspection, pupils' personal development was successfully stimulated through an assembly for each year group marking 2500 days before the 2012 Olympics. The theme encouraged sporting aspirations but also a more general understanding about being involved, taking personal responsibility and aiming high.

Pupils have a secure understanding of the dangers of drugs and of the value of adopting safe practices and a healthy lifestyle. They explore a range of personal and social issues through a well planned programme. Pupils speak highly of the work experience week organised in Year 10 as a very useful insight into the world of work.

Grade: 2

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 11 is good. Good and outstanding lessons have good pace and a range of interesting and varied activities that are well suited to pupils' needs. Teachers are very knowledgeable about their subjects and their enthusiasm rubs off on pupils. As a result, most pupils enjoy their lessons, show good attitudes to their work and to each other, learn well and make good progress. They also learn well because teachers and teaching assistants treat them as individuals and take their needs into account when work is planned. Pupils with additional learning needs are well known to teachers and their specific needs well catered for. Teachers share the objectives of lessons with pupils so that they know what is expected of them. Pupils are being increasingly encouraged to assess their own progress. Whilst most lessons are good, some satisfactory lessons do not sufficiently inspire pupils to work as hard as they are able. This is sometimes because teachers talk too much and do not plan sufficiently well to meet the needs of all pupils.

Most departments are now successfully raising the standards of teaching and learning through lesson observations, listening to pupils' views and looking at pupils' work. In most departments, the marking and assessment of pupils' work are good, thorough and helpful to pupils. Targets are set throughout the school to challenge and inform pupils about their current standards. However, more effective use could be made of the plentiful data from assessment to improve teaching and learning. Teaching

assistants are given specialist training to support pupils and are a real asset in the classroom.

Teaching and learning are also good in the sixth form. Students value greatly the high quality teaching they receive in most lessons. Students' learning is helped significantly through their mature behaviour and hard work in lessons. They develop good independent learning skills which are successfully promoted by teachers.

Grade: 2

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum which is broad and innovative. It meets statutory requirements, including a particularly good programme for citizenship that puts appropriate emphasis on health and safety and preparation for the world of work. Flexible provision meets the needs of all groups of pupils both in academic courses and in vocational subjects, such as the Work Related Learning course, which incorporates time in school, at college and on work experience. Sports College funding has enabled the physical education department to expand and to widen the courses now offered across the school. Local primary schools and community groups are also able to share healthy activities with the school.

An impressive range of well attended clubs, competitions and extra-curricular activities enrich pupils' development and enjoyment both at lunchtime and after school. Pupils speak highly of study and recreational visits.

In the sixth form, the curriculum is also good. A significant expansion in the range of courses offered is successfully meeting the needs of the increasing number of students. Students participate fully in a wide range of extra-curricular and other activities.

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care provided by the school is good. Pupils have confidence that their tutors, year heads and other adults will deal with any problems that might arise. Generally, they value the commitment of staff to provide a safe and secure environment. They speak well about the advice they receive on courses and careers.

The school has recently introduced improved systems to help pupils have a clearer understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. What is happening in design and technology is particularly good practice.

Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with specific needs and most pupils value the one-to-one sessions provided. As a result of this, most of them think they are 'doing all right' at school.

Pupils and parents report that the school is largely free from bullying. Incidents of unruly behaviour are rare and, when they do occur, staff deal with them firmly. Senior

staff patrol the school regularly and the pupils report that this has led to a significant improvement in behaviour in lessons and around the school.

There are well understood procedures for child protection and recent staff training has ensured that they are fully up to date. The school is developing whole school approaches to being active and healthy, in line with its Sports College status. External support is used well to support the drugs and sex education programmes.

There are similar strengths in the care, guidance and support provided for students in the sixth form. They feel they are generally well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Grade: 2

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

An excellent strategic plan guides both innovation and day-to-day operation throughout the school. Evolved through consultation at all levels, it informs the work of the headteacher, senior staff and governors to improve provision and raise standards. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher has brought about a significant improvement both to standards and to the ethos of the school. He is very ably supported by the senior leadership team who have many complementary strengths.

Continuous monitoring of the work of all staff, allied to a culture of honest, good quality, self-critical review, now permeates the way the school works. Senior managers are aware that the use of assessment information needs to be further refined in order to identify areas for improvement in teaching and learning. Through rigorous self-evaluation, senior managers know where change is needed and introduce it when appropriate and possible. The impact of middle managers on standards and achievement is more mixed. There is some very effective practice that can serve to set standards for the whole school and reduce variations in performance.

The school has skilled staff. Recent recruitment has added much creativity and effectiveness to the staff team. Managers have provided good learning resources. Although there is still much to do on the buildings, funding has been used imaginatively for some new buildings and the refurbishment of various teaching blocks. The science block now provides an outstanding learning environment. As a result, the school is an attractive place in which to learn. Pupils and students respect the facilities offered and behave responsibly.

Although parents express high levels of satisfaction with the school, there is scope for more regular consultation with them. However, the school has set up good links with local employers, the youth service and institutions of further and higher education to enrich provision and extend opportunities. The award of Sports College status greatly enriches the provision for pupils' and students' health and fulfilment. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The success of the sixth form can be seen in its very significant recent growth. Increasing recruitment both from the school and from a neighbouring 11-16 school demonstrates the attraction of the wider

curriculum, offering a broader appeal and successful outcomes for most students. The work of the governing body is good. The very experienced chair has ensured that governors are fully involved in strategic planning and in determining the use of resources to provide good value for money.

Overall, leadership and management are good. Aspects, such as the strategic planning, are outstanding. They have led directly to rapidly improving educational standards and the growing popularity of the school. The school has a very good capacity for further improvement.

Grade: 2

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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?	2	2
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?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

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	3	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
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	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	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

23rd September 2005

Dear Pupils and Students

Thank you for your friendliness and courtesy during our time inspecting your school. We enjoyed being with you very much. We interviewed some of you and met many more of you in class and elsewhere. We value very much the help you have given us in understanding your school. Your views are very important.

I am writing to you now to summarise our main findings. We hope you will discuss these in your school council, sixth form committee, tutorials and elsewhere so that you can work with your teachers and governors to celebrate and maintain the many good things and make improvements where necessary.

We think that Devizes School is a good school. Nearly all of the older pupils and sixth formers we spoke to think the school has got much better recently. We agree with you. Certainly, test and examination results were much better this year in Year 9 and at GCSE, and results in the sixth form continued to be good. Although you achieve better in some subjects than in others, the work we saw during the inspection indicates that most of you are doing well this year. We have confidence that this will continue because your teachers and teaching assistants are working very well together to raise standards and have excellent plans for future developments. They and you are fortunate to be led by an outstanding headteacher who has a very clear vision for the future successes of the school. He and his senior staff know the school very well, and, just as important, know the sorts of things that need doing to make it even better.

Your school is good at helping you develop as people. It is clear that you are growing in confidence and maturity as you get older, and many older pupils and sixth form students play a most valuable role in helping younger pupils in many different ways. You benefit from good quality care, guidance and support. Most of you attend regularly and behave well. It was encouraging for us to be told by many of you that you think behaviour has got better since the system of having a senior member of staff going round the school during all lessons was introduced. We are also pleased that you think that bullying is nearly always dealt with quickly. Although some of the buildings you use for lessons are worn out and need updating, the general standard of the school's teaching facilities and resources is good. The site, as a whole, is attractive and some of the buildings are splendid. The science block, for example, has been most imaginatively rebuilt and provides you with a superb learning area. We believe it is important that you have good conditions in which to work, and it is very clear to us that your school thinks the same and is doing its best to show that you are important.

So, there are many good things about your school. But all schools can improve and you can help make your school even better. We hope that, in your discussions about the full inspection report and this letter in the school council and elsewhere, you will have suggestions to make about improvements. We are asking the school to look at two things in particular:

reduce variations in how well you do in different subjects; at present, you do better in some subjects than in others and you need to do equally well in them all

improve the way teachers across the school use information about your progress and abilities to help them improve their teaching so that it matches your learning needs better.

I hope this short summary has been helpful to you and that you will play your full part in making Devizes School even better than it already is. The school has an exciting time ahead of it. Your headteacher and others have worked very hard to gain Sports College status for the school and

the benefits of this and many other developments are already allowing the school to move forward rapidly. I wish you all good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Ian Stuart Lead Inspector