



Ecclesfield School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 107142
Local Authority Sheffield
Inspection number 287726
Inspection dates 9–10 October 2006
Reporting inspector Bill Keast

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Chapeltown Road
School category	Community		Ecclesfield, Sheffield
Age range of pupils	11–16		South Yorkshire S35 9WD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0114 2461156
Number on roll (school)	1750	Fax number	0114 2570998
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr P Berry
		Headteacher	Mr Michael Nolan
Date of previous school inspection	24 September 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	9–10 October 2006	287726

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The students in this very large secondary school come from broadly average backgrounds. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average. The proportion with identified learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average while the proportion with a statement of need is broadly average. The school gained specialist visual and performing arts designation in September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Ecclesfield School gives its students a satisfactory education and provides sound value for money. Two years ago, the local authority identified concerns over students' achievement, educational provision and relationships within the school. A new headteacher was appointed and, working with senior managers, he has turned the school into one that is now improving. This is confirmed by its recent designation as a specialist school. The new headteacher formed a clear vision for the school. Accurately identifying and prioritising what needed to be done, he took effective action. He has been well supported by a new and strong senior leadership team. There is now a shared clarity of purpose within the staff and relationships, standards, students' achievement, teaching and learning, and students' attitudes and behaviour have all improved.

Current standards are average and students make satisfactory progress. Standards at the end of Year 11 dropped after the previous inspection, but due to strong management they have recovered so that pupils in Years 10 and 11 are now making satisfactory progress. Students' achievement is satisfactory. The achievement of lower attaining students was significantly better in 2006 compared to the previous year. However, the curriculum is not as well matched to their needs as it could be and does not always give these students enough opportunities to succeed in gaining appropriate qualifications. While teaching is satisfactory overall, it is too variable in quality, particularly in linking the assessment of what a student can do to clear targets for what they need to do next and how they might achieve this. The school has only had specialist status for a few weeks but many developments have already been implemented both across the curriculum and within the community. It is too early to see the impact of these on standards. However, plans are in place to share, throughout the school, the particularly effective teaching found in art and drama. Weaker subjects have been clearly identified by managers and action is being taken to make improvement.

Students enjoy school. This is confirmed by parents in their questionnaire responses and by students' improving attendance and their involvement in the many activities and clubs provided to enhance the curriculum. Their attitudes to learning, promoted well by the 'Ready for Learning' targets, have improved and their behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Increasingly, musical and dramatic productions are helping students contribute to their local community. The school council provides opportunity for students to influence the development of their school, although its impact is not recognised by all students.

Appropriate systems are in place for child protection. The school's approach to managing behaviour is strong and consistent. Students say they feel safe. The school is particularly careful to identify and support students' emotional growth. External providers are effectively used to help the school meet students' needs and support their learning.

Several of the key issues raised by the previous inspection have been effectively tackled. As a result of the school's accurate self-evaluation, monitoring is becoming

more sharply focused. Managers are aware that there is a need to provide more consistent challenge for higher attaining students and better provision in lessons for those with learning difficulties. New procedures are in place, appropriate actions have been planned and these are being implemented. However, there has not yet been time for these to show their full impact. As a result of the rapid development over the last two years, the school demonstrates a good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the curriculum so that it better meets the needs of all students and enables them, particularly the lower attaining, to raise their achievement.
- Ensure consistency in the way in which assessment is used to help students recognise their current level of working, set clear targets and help students understand what they need to do next.
- Provide consistent challenge in teaching for higher attaining students to raise their achievement even further.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students' standards on entry to the school are average. At the end of Year 9 standards are average and rising in line with the national trend. All groups of students make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 3. Standards at the end of Year 11 had been falling but a trend of improvement is evident. For example, in 2004 results were significantly below average with a well above average proportion of students gaining no accreditation. In 2005, results improved significantly, notably the proportion of students gaining five or more grades A* to C at GCSE. The proportion of students gaining no awards had been halved. Nevertheless, analysis showed that all groups of students at Key stage 4 underachieved and this was particularly significant for those with lower than average attainment on entry to the school. Results in 2006 improved again. School and national analysis indicate that students' achievement has improved further. Consequently, standards are now broadly average. The school met most of its targets based, appropriately, on what its students might reasonably be expected to achieve. In particular, the highest attaining students exceeded their target for the proportion of students gaining three or more A* grades. The school now has in place a student tracking system which allows students' progress to be monitored effectively.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. They are happy to come to school. A consistent approach to setting and achieving good standards of behaviour and an improvement in students' attitude to learning through the consistent use of 'Ready for Learning' targets have created an environment in which students can learn without waste of time. Their social values are increasingly well developed as seen, for example, in their collaboration during lessons. Discussion

with students show they have a clear understanding of right and wrong, as demonstrated by their understanding of behaviour management strategies that teachers use consistently. Students' spiritual development is weaker because although music, art and drama are strong features there is, for example, too little creativity in other lessons. Although bullying by a minority exists, it is dealt with effectively by the school. Good relationships between staff and students are evident in most lessons. Students have a satisfactory understanding of safety issues and adopting healthy lifestyles. Good and developing international links are supporting aspects of students' cultural development but their understanding of the cultures found within British society is not yet good enough.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The recent rise in standards shows that teaching is becoming more effective in helping students to learn. Lessons are increasingly well structured as a result of focused professional development, and this helps students understand what they are expected to learn as well as how they and their teachers can check what has been learned. The quality of teaching varies due to inconsistency in the demands of the work set for students. Not all teachers mark and assess students' work in a way that clearly identifies what a student can do or what they need to do to improve their work. As a result, not all students have a clear enough understanding of how the work they are given builds on previous learning to develop greater knowledge and understanding. There are lots of examples of good teaching across the curriculum on which the school can build.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum meets statutory requirements. A carefully planned programme using a range of specialists, for example the community police officer, provides good education for health and safety. The school provides a good variety of regular lunchtime and after-school clubs that are well attended. The good range of annual visits, performances and subject support enhances the curriculum well and supports students' personal development and academic progress well. However, the curriculum is not yet sufficiently well adapted to fully meet the needs of all students, particularly those with learning difficulties and those with lower attainment. The school has recognised that it needs to extend the range of vocational courses it offers. The highest attaining students do not always have enough opportunities to demonstrate, and gain accreditation for their work.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Senior leaders demonstrate an energetic and focused approach to care. Procedures for safeguarding students meet government requirements. The community policeman and community liaison officer make a strong contribution to students' well-being. The link with an outside provider makes excellent provision for disaffected and vulnerable students. The support and guidance it provides meets their academic and personal needs very well. Students feel safe, and are prepared well for moving on to their next stage of education or into the world of work. Target-setting is not yet effectively used by all teachers to support students' learning. In particular, targets for students with individual education plans are not robust enough to ensure the best progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The effective leadership and drive of the headteacher, complemented by the strong and enthusiastic leadership team, is the key to the school's recent improvements. The clear sequence of monitoring, identifying weaknesses, planning, taking appropriate action and evaluating the impact of these, is effective at whole-school level and increasingly effective within departments. The governing body did not challenge managers enough in the past but recent changes are allowing it to have greater impact on the school's strategic development. Managers have responded well to parents' concerns about the effectiveness of the school's communications with them. To enable each individual to develop as fully and achieve as well as possible is central to the vision of the school and is what unites and guides many of the new initiatives being undertaken. The strength of the school's leadership and management, as evidenced by the significant improvements made under its direction, demonstrates that these initiatives are proving successful.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
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	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

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

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for being polite and friendly and for your contribution when we visited your school.

Your school is improving and is giving you a sound education. This improvement has been brought about by the strong leadership of your headteacher and other senior managers. I am sure those of you who have been at the school for more than two years will have recognised the change he and the leadership team have brought about. You have responded by improving your attendance, taking more interest in your education by being Ready to Learn and improving your behaviour. Your behaviour is good. You told us, and your parents confirmed it through their questionnaire, that you enjoy school. You feel safe. Your personal development is satisfactory and the school makes a good provision for you to learn about how to keep healthy and safe. The curriculum meets most of your needs but is not as well matched to the needs of those who find learning particularly difficult or who are very high attaining students. You are fortunate to have, and take advantage of, the good opportunities provided by regular clubs and activities and the programme of annual events. Teaching has improved over the last two years. As a result, you are making satisfactory progress. Although both standards and progress have improved, we believe you can make even more progress.

To help you improve your achievement we have asked the school to ensure that the curriculum offers all students courses and examinations which are appropriate to their needs. Some teaching is really good but there needs to be more of it. We have asked, therefore, that the school works on this. In particular, that the regular marking lets you know how well you are doing, that you are given clear targets to improve your work and that you are given guidance to help you understand how you can achieve these.

We are convinced your school has a good capacity to improve and new initiatives, such as your specialist designation, promise exciting times ahead. Good luck.