



William Allitt School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112938
Local Authority DERBYSHIRE
Inspection number 289470
Inspection date 10 October 2006
Reporting inspector Bob Roberts HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Sunnyside
School category	Community		Newhall, Newhall
Age range of pupils	11–16		Swadlincote, Derbyshire DE11 0TL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01283216404
Number on roll (school)	979	Fax number	01283552932
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Jean Mead
		Headteacher	Mr John Crossley
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2002		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
11–16	10 October 2006	289470

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors over one day.

Description of the school

William Allitt School is an average sized secondary school, which has grown significantly since the last inspection. It is increasingly popular with parents and its performing arts specialist status has helped to develop its standing in the community. Pupils enter the school with average attainments and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is also average. The school is one of Derbyshire's Enhanced Resource schools, being funded to support a number of pupils with significant learning or physical disabilities. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic groups or with English as an additional language.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

William Allitt School is providing a good education for its pupils and is continuing to improve. There is a clear commitment to improvement in the school, stemming from the headteacher, as well as a determination to support and care for all pupils as well as possible. Pupils speak very positively about the school and the vast majority of parents in the questionnaire are supportive of the school. The standards of attainment reached by pupils at the end of Year 11 were below average in 2006, but indications are that standards this year are higher. In the most recent tests for pupils at the end of Year 9, the standards reached were above average. The progress being made by pupils now is good. One reason for this is the quality of teaching. Teaching is good, although not quite as good as suggested in the school's self evaluation. Pupils would value more opportunities for active involvement in their lessons. There is a culture of openness amongst the staff about the quality of teaching, but the capacity of middle managers to evaluate teaching is insufficiently well developed. Since the last inspection, the school has moved forward in several respects. Very good attention is paid to assessing pupils, making sure that they know about their progress, and in setting targets for them. Pupils show an unusual degree of awareness about their own rates of progress. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is satisfactory; there has been a recent investment in equipment. Although the school does not provide the statutory daily act of collective worship, arrangements for pupils' spiritual development have improved. Pupils develop very well at the school. They enjoy coming, behave well, and make outstanding contributions to the life of the school and the community. The school council is very active and the views of pupils are influencing developments in teaching and learning. The school's arrangements to ensure the safety of pupils are excellent and pupils themselves very rarely behave in unsafe ways. The school is entering its third year as a specialist performing arts school. This has had clear benefits. The curriculum has some good performing arts elements and the school has become a vibrant arts centre for the local area. Many pupils take advantage of the wide range of opportunities offered. The school has a clear sense of direction. The principles of planning and review are well established and the school is implementing a much more rigorous system of departmental reviews. Some strategies, such as the literacy strategy, require closer monitoring and further development. The school does not always monitor the progress of initiatives in a way that is clearly measurable.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the leadership and management capacity of heads of department, in particular to evaluate teaching and learning.
- Improve the mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating developments within the school so that progress is measurable and clear.
- Develop, monitor and evaluate the integration of literacy strategies across the curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The most recent results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 show pupils reached above average standards, indicating that pupils have made good progress from average attainments when they entered the school. Results have improved markedly in English, from the previously poor results in 2005. The more able pupils are reaching the higher standards expected of them. Results at the end of Year 11 in GCSE exams for the last two years have been below average. In 2006, girls reached the standards that were expected of them, but the boys did not. The school had difficulty with a small number of boys in that year, and although every effort was made to support them and keep them in school, their exam results did have a negative impact on the results overall. There is no indication that this situation is likely to recur. Standards in the current Year 11 are higher this year. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress and achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Many parents in their responses to the survey said that their children enjoyed school and this was confirmed in the discussions held with pupils during the inspection. The school's attendance figures bear this out, with an exceptionally small amount of unauthorised absence. Behaviour in lessons is good. There is very little bullying, and the school deals well with what little there is. The number of pupils excluded is low. The school has achieved the Health Promoting Schools Award and pupils demonstrate a good understanding of health issues. Pupils feel safe, and the school is a cheerful community. Many opportunities exist for pupils to make a positive contribution. For example, there is an extremely active school council with a number of sub groups, and pupils' views, gathered through focus groups, are beginning to contribute to the reviews of teaching departments. Almost all pupils progress to further education, training or employment when they leave school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Relations between teachers and pupils are good. The pace of most lessons is brisk and pupils respond willingly to questions. Teachers are well aware of the attainment levels of pupils, including the most able, and what is needed to challenge them as individuals. Pupils enjoy lessons most when they have opportunities for active involvement, something they would like more of. The development of literacy has been a priority for the school for some years. Although

the principles behind this are well established, in practice in classrooms the emphasis on literacy skills is still underdeveloped.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's curriculum meets requirements and has good features. A learning skills course in Year 7 helps pupils adjust to secondary schooling effectively. Dance, music and drama in Years 7 to 9 reflect the performing arts status of the school, and good opportunities to pursue arts courses exist in Years 10 and 11. There is good flexibility in the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 to meet the needs of individual pupils, such as the Supported Study group and the link courses with the local further education college. There is scope to further improve this individualised provision for pupils. Activities out of school are wide ranging, especially those linked to the arts, and high numbers of pupils take part in the regular activities as well as the residential trips.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The inclusion of all pupils in what the school offers is taken very seriously, as shown by the efforts during 2005 and 2006 to support some very challenging Year 11 boys and keep them at school. There are excellent links, through the Support and Guidance Team, to external agencies such as the Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS) service. Teachers monitor the progress of pupils very closely and pupils speak very well of the mentor systems that support pupils who are identified as needing help. Teachers provide extra support for pupils outside the classroom, such as the catch up opportunities for those doing coursework. The school safeguards and promotes the welfare of pupils extremely well and consequently they make good progress academically and personally.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good overall and the headteacher provides a clear direction for the school. Focussed and determined leadership has led to improvements in provision and standards are rising. Arrangements to review the work of departments are well established and are becoming more rigorous. The progress of pupils is closely monitored and the school uses information well in its monitoring and target setting. School improvement planning is thorough, although there is insufficient emphasis on mechanisms for measuring progress. There is a strong commitment to equality and inclusion, as shown both by the reluctance to exclude very challenging pupils and the good provision for pupils with severe learning difficulties and disabilities. The morale of the staff is very good and there is a collaborative atmosphere which works to the benefit of pupils. There is a healthy, open culture among staff about sharing ideas and the role of the professional tutor is very effective in supporting and encouraging teachers in their development. However, the school's understanding of what constitutes

outstanding teaching and learning is not clear enough. Governance is satisfactory and provides challenge and support for senior managers. The school offers good value for money and has the capacity to improve further.

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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?	2
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	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

11 October 2006 William Allitt School, Sunnyside, Newhall, Derbyshire, DE11 0TL Dear Pupils

As you know, your school was recently inspected and this letter is to tell you about the results of the inspection. I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to the school, especially meeting some of you and coming in to watch your lessons. The inspection found a great deal of which the school can be proud. There is a positive and happy atmosphere. You have a very good group of staff, both teachers and support staff, who are highly committed to their work and to your care and guidance. It is clear that you enjoy school, both from talking to you, from the school's attendance figures, and from what your parents said. Many of your parents responded to the questionnaire that was used as part of the inspection and the vast majority were supportive of the school. Most of you behave well, and the ways in which you contribute to the life of the school are excellent. Being a performing arts specialist school has obviously had benefits for you and the local community. The academic progress you are all making at the school now is good. The standards pupils are reaching at the end of Year 9 are good. However, the results at the end of Year 11, at GCSE and in other exams have been below average but I think they are likely to get better. You can all make a contribution to this, of course, by doing your best! There are some other areas where the school can develop. The quality of teaching is good but could improve further, particularly by providing you with more opportunities for active involvement in lessons. The ways by which the school measures its progress could become clearer and more needs to be done across all lessons to help your literacy skills. I am sure that the staff at the school will be able to meet these challenges. In conclusion, my view is that you are going to a good school. I wish you all well for the future. Bob Roberts (Her Majesty's Inspector)