

William Brookes School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123567
Local Authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	292716
Inspection dates	10 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Michael Smith HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of students	11–19
Gender of students	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	818
6 th form	118
Appropriate authority	Governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Hampson
Headteacher	Mrs Penny Cooper
Date of previous school inspection	October 2002
School address	Farley Road Much Wenlock Shropshire TF13 6NB
Telephone number	01952 727606
Fax number	01952 728289

Age group	11–19
Inspection date(s)	10 May 2007
Inspection number	292716

© Crown copyright 2007

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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, personal development and well-being, teaching and learning, care, guidance and support, and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records, policies and minutes, observation of the school at work, interviews with senior members of staff and students, and the parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

William Brookes School is an average-sized school which serves a large rural area. The vast majority of students travel to school on buses. The school has been a performing arts college for the last five years and has recently been designated a mathematics and computing college. As a Coubertin School the school has strong links with Olympic ideals and the Olympic movement. Students generally come from more favourable backgrounds than usual but a significant minority come from areas of either social or rural deprivation. There are very few students from ethnic minority backgrounds and none are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of students with learning difficulties is below average but increasing, and the school has a learning support unit.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

William Brookes is a good school with many outstanding features. It meets its aim to provide 'high quality education across the whole curriculum and for students of the full range of talents, interests and skills' well.

Students feel safe in school. Excellent care and support ensure that they can respond well to the outstanding guidance on how to improve. Students are set challenging learning targets and given support to achieve them, and this helps them make good progress.

Performing arts college status is central to the life of the school and helps make an excellent contribution to the local community. It contributes greatly to students' excellent cultural development and enhances their social skills. It has had a very positive impact upon raising the self-esteem and standards for all students, as well as developing their very good organisational and teamwork skills. These, along with good key skills, contribute to ensuring students are very well prepared for higher education or the world of work.

Students know how to stay healthy. They participate in the many sporting and performance opportunities available and take up healthy eating options. They are also well aware of how to remain healthy by not smoking, and of the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse. Students have a mature understanding of mental and sexual health issues.

Students enjoy coming to school and behaviour is good. However, despite the very great efforts of staff, attendance remains only average because too many students miss sessions unnecessarily or take holidays during term time. Students respond well to the outstanding curriculum and stimulating lessons. The curriculum offers a wide range of appropriate courses and pathways. Students enjoy a rich variety of extra-curricular activities, including the Duke of Edinburgh award, sports, drama and homework clubs. Teaching is good and often better. Teachers have good subject knowledge and have very good relationships with their classes. Good use is made of teaching assistants to support learners in lessons. Questioning is used well to engage students and to develop understanding. The school has concentrated on assessment for learning and in many lessons this is used well. However, in some lessons, work does not always build on students' previous knowledge and marking is not always sufficiently focused on informing students how to improve.

Students enter school with broadly average standards. They make good progress to achieve standards which are above average. The number of students gaining five or more higher GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, has risen sharply over the last few years, at a much faster rate than national results, and is well above average. Almost all students gain five or more GCSE passes, with only a very small number failing to gain any passes. The school is not complacent and undertakes a careful analysis of results in national tests and external examinations to identify how to improve further. This has been particularly successful for mathematics. The school met or was very close to meeting its challenging targets last year, including those relating to its specialist college status.

Students' personal development and well-being are good. They understand right and wrong and their social and moral development is further enhanced by their good understanding of the Olympic ideals, as a Coubertin School. The school's strong commitment to inclusion is demonstrated by its excellent support for vulnerable students and those attending the learning support unit. The strong school council is influential and students take part in departmental reviews and feel they have a real say in the running of the school, including changing the way in which they are taught. Very good opportunities exist for students to take part in the democratic process both within school and by working with local councillors, taking part in the National Democracy week and having a member of the Youth Parliament.

The school has made very good progress since the last inspection and its very strong leadership places it in an excellent position to improve further. It has made significant improvements in the quality of provision and standards within mathematics so that this is now part of its second specialist area. This very clearly demonstrates the leadership's commitment to self-improvement and to tackling any areas which are weaker than others. Middle leaders have a very good overview of their areas' strengths and weaknesses and they have brought about significant improvement. Excellent support is provided by non-teaching staff so that teachers are able to focus on their work within the classroom. This inspection confirms the school's accurate self-evaluation, which includes views from parents and students. Governance is extremely supportive and holds the school very well to account.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The average standards of students entering the sixth form are below the national average, as a number leave school to attend local sixth form colleges, which may be closer to their homes. Achievement improved gradually for a number of years but recently the improvement has accelerated and is now rapid. Students make good progress and achieve well to gain results which are in line with the national average at the end of the sixth form.

Students' personal development is outstanding, allowing them to become confident and mature, with considerable pride in their school and teachers. Students act as exemplary role models, for example, in helping out as teacher assistants in classes and supporting younger students. Teaching in the sixth form is good, both scholarly and challenging, and enables students to become self-reliant learners. An increasing range of advanced level courses is offered and the school makes every effort to tailor courses to individual students' needs.

Incisive and thoughtful leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding and have brought about significant improvements. Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Students feel exceptionally well supported and guidance at critical transition points has been very well received. The school's comprehensive processes for checking progress against target grades ensure students are kept on track through regular analysis of 'working at grades' (WAGs). Intervention is swift and effective when potential underachievement is spotted.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase attendance by working closely with parents and students to reduce unnecessary absences.
- Ensure assessment procedures are used consistently with the best practice by matching work to students' levels and giving constructive comments on how to improve when marking work.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.	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?	2	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage		
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	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	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 learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
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	

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.

Annex B

11 May 2007



Dear Students

William Brookes School, Much Wenlock, Shropshire TF13 6NB

We visited your school recently and met with some of you at lunchtime and talked to others during lessons and at break. We were very pleased with the friendliness you showed us and how helpful you were. Your good school has some outstanding features and we feel that the support and guidance you receive is excellent and allows you to make good progress and gain good results.

Many of you told us how much you enjoy school, the after-school clubs and sports opportunities. You also enjoy the performing arts status of your school and this helps you with other subjects as well as developing you socially and culturally, which will be very useful when you leave school. However, despite the hard work of the school, attendance remains average because too many of you take time off unnecessarily or go on holiday during term time. This seriously affects the progress you make and is an area which you, and your parents, can help the school improve. We were impressed with the work you do within the community and with other schools, and with the support some of you give to younger students.

Teaching is good and you enjoy a large number of lessons. You respond well to lessons which engage you. You felt that through your participation in subject reviews you were able to influence how you are taught. Teachers have a good understanding of their subjects and they have very good relationships with you.

Many of you have a good understanding of what you need to do to become healthy and you have a good understanding of the risks and problems with drugs and alcohol abuse. You also showed a mature understanding of the issues related to sexual and mental health. The curriculum is outstanding and meets your needs very well.

We feel your school is excellently led and that it has a very good understanding of its main strengths and areas which it needs to improve. Like all schools we feel there are areas it needs to improve further. We feel that lessons could be more consistent in the way in which assessment information is used to build upon previous work, and marking could be used better to inform you how to improve.

We wish you well in this good and supportive school and thank you again for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely
Michael Smith
HMI