



Shipston High School - A Specialist Technology College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 125737
Local Authority Warwickshire
Inspection number 293350
Inspection dates 14–15 November 2006
Reporting inspector Janet Thompson HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Darlingscote Road
School category	Community		Shipston-on-Stour
Age range of pupils	11–16		CV36 4DY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01608 661833
Number on roll (school)	334	Fax number	01608 663459
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Penny White
		Headteacher	Jonathan Baker
Date of previous school inspection	18 September 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	14–15 November 2006	293350

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

This very small school serves a rural area including and surrounding Shipston-on-Stour. The area contains small pockets of deprivation. There are three adjacent selective grammar schools and until the last two years students started at the school with attainment well below average. Attainment of students starting at the school in Year 7 is now in line with average for a comprehensive school. There are very few students from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is well above the national average. The school became a specialist college for technology in September 2004. The headteacher has been in post for two years and other members of the senior team have been in their current posts since 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

This is a satisfactory and improving school which is popular with its students. A growing number of students fulfil their potential and the school has high hopes for its current learners. Students make satisfactory progress and achieve standards a little below those achieved nationally. However, there are significant variations amongst year groups and in 2005 students made good progress. The trend in results is positive and in all but one of the past four years the school has improved standards. Teaching and learning are always at least satisfactory and often good. The recent monitoring of lessons in some departments has helped to evaluate teaching effectively. There is an inconsistent approach to providing academic guidance and too often students do not know how they can improve their work. Although the school works hard to encourage better attendance, some students do not attend school regularly enough. This has had a significant negative effect on their achievement.

Students make good progress in their personal development. They respond to encouragement, they use their initiative and are outstanding in the active part they play in the running and development of the school. The school is exemplary in the way it supports ideas coming from the students and the opportunities made available for them to take on additional responsibility. There is a distinctive ethos in the school reinforced by the high profile celebration of achievement.

The many visitors to the school comment on the friendliness and respect shown by the students. Students support each other well and stated that the best thing about the school is 'The Shipston spirit' – the friendliness and mutual respect between all students and teachers. There are a small number of students who find it difficult to adhere to the code of conduct but the new student support centre has already helped them make good progress in social skills. Students have a good understanding of how to remain healthy. As a result of good behaviour, the support students offer each other and the care from staff, the school is a safe and secure place to learn.

Parents are rightly supportive of the school and pleased with the improvements being made. They are especially proud of the additional opportunities available. The curriculum is a strength and it engages the commitment of learners well, particularly at Key Stage 4. There is a very wide range of options, in partnership with neighbouring colleges, that provides relevant vocational studies as well as extension studies for more able students. The focus on enterprise initiatives has provided students with very good skills across subjects. This prepares them very well for their future role in society. A large number of students from a cross-section of the school community participate in the wide range of popular activities outside the school day.

The senior leadership team is providing a strong guide for the school, having effectively identified priorities for development. This, alongside the recent improvements at the school, indicates that the school is in a good position to improve further. Using its specialist status, the school has improved facilities and developed work with partner primary schools and the local community. The lack of systematic evaluation over the long term has meant that the school's view of its performance is more generous than

the view of inspectors; however, it does accurately identify the significant improvements that have been made over the past few years. The lack of a consistent tracking system across subjects has made it difficult for senior leaders to quickly identify some aspects of practice in need of change. The analysis of results from 2006 was extremely thorough.

There have been considerable restraints on the school owing to a deficit budget. Through careful management the school is now working with a balanced budget and a sustainable plan. Good deployment of resources has resulted in improving the value for money which is now satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure all students are very clear about how they can improve their work in all subjects.
- Establish assessment systems to provide a whole-school view across subjects, years and other groups of students to enable more accurate ongoing evaluation.
- Establish clear measurable outcomes within all development plans so that progress can be identified in an objective way.
- Increase attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards vary greatly across year groups. Although the picture is complex they are below average overall. Between 2003 and 2005 standards rose dramatically at both Year 9 and Year 11, with science in line with the national average and English and mathematics not far behind. At GCSE, mathematics was slightly above average but English was below. In 2006, standards at both key stages fell to the extent that standards in English were well below expectations in Year 9 and in GCSE; both mathematics and science also dipped but good improvements were made in modern foreign languages. Some groups fared better and it is notable that four girls each gained 13 A*-A or A*-B grades.

The students' achievements are adequate although, again, there is considerable variation. Achievement reached a peak for Year 9 students in 2005 and placed the school in the top 2% compared with students in similar circumstances nationally. This very good achievement was spread almost evenly over all groups except for the more able students. Achievement was good at GCSE particularly among 'middle ability' boys. Results in mathematics were stronger than in English and science. Design and technology was the strongest subject whilst art and design was a weak performer. In 2006, the school experienced significant difficulties with student absence, illness, trauma and relocation. This affected a large minority of students in both key stages. Notwithstanding this disruption, achievement was satisfactory.

From the limited data available, from lesson observations and from discussions with teachers, it is clear that achievement is adequate and current standards reflect the

attainment on entry. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities make similar progress and their achievement is also adequate.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The students are well-behaved and helpful. They are very supportive of one another and the school. They make a significant contribution to day-to-day organisation. The students develop ideas to improve the school and take the initiative for leading these. Older students support younger students at the school and work with pupils from local primary schools. The students relish the many opportunities to take on additional responsibility including helping to run special events and enrichment days. The school council is run effectively and ensures students have an influential voice in school development. Participation in sports, musical drama productions and other activities outside the curriculum makes a significant contribution to students' well-being. Students have a good understanding of the impact of health and fitness on their lives. There are many opportunities for developing spiritual and cultural awareness. The students' own reflections on experiences, for example a recent remembrance assembly and a multicultural enrichment day, demonstrate good spiritual and cultural understanding. Attendance is below average and the group largely responsible for this has very low attendance. New strategies to address this have been implemented and there are early signs of their effectiveness.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory and students make at least adequate progress in all lessons. More than half the lessons seen were good. Teachers have high expectations of the students' attitudes and commitment. There is often a high level of challenge although this is not always effectively matched to the students' understanding, particularly where there is a wide spread of ability within a group. Relationships are good in lessons and unsuitable behaviour rarely disrupts progress. Good lessons are typified by a good pace and a range of strategies designed to motivate the students. Resources are imaginatively used in some lessons, including one remarkable science lesson where rat droppings played an important part in stimulating discussion on alternative sources of energy.

Assessment is not used consistently. Few students have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve. Not all teachers use information about students with learning difficulties to help plan lessons although those who need additional help in lessons are usually effectively supported by a teaching assistant. Students are presented with different types and regularity of marking and this is not always consistent in the same subject. In some subjects, such as information and communication technology

(ICT), assessment is used well and students have access to a chart showing what they have achieved so far and what they must do to move on.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's curriculum is good. Specialist status as a technology college underpins students' enterprise skills and understanding. For example, specialist curriculum days utilise support from local businesses to develop students' appreciation of the business environment. As a result, they acquire outstanding speaking, listening, teamwork and leadership skills which compensate for the satisfactory academic progress in preparing them for their future working and social lives. These are further developed in the very wide range of extra-curricular activities, including team games and athletics, performing arts, visits to theatres, art galleries and abroad. There are some good curriculum support programmes, used for example in literacy. In Year 10, students benefit from a wide range of options, supplemented by the school's partnerships with neighbouring colleges. Gifted and talented students benefit from a special programme of additional lectures to challenge their understanding, as well as the opportunity to take supplementary courses through local colleges to extend their knowledge or develop talent in areas such as the performing arts or writing.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Staff have a good knowledge of the individual circumstances of students but do not always have a clear overview of their academic progress. The school has made good efforts to standardise procedures for assessment and is beginning to make good use of prior attainment data to help set appropriate targets for students. However, the data are not being fine-tuned regularly enough. This makes it difficult for teachers to gain a snapshot of current progress and for tutors to gain an overview for mentoring or review with students and parents. The school offers a good range of support for helping students catch up with work including revision sessions out of school hours but these are not always sufficiently well targeted. The learning support department tracks the individual progress of students with learning difficulties and disabilities but does not influence whole-school practice in guidance and support of these students. The separate student support centre, introduced in September, has already helped to improve the progress in social skills made by identified students. However, staff do not always know the expectations of students in different subjects and this means that at times learning is not as good as it should be.

Safeguarding procedures are currently being updated and the designated member of staff has had the necessary training. Although some other staff are due for refresher training they are diligent in identifying concerns about students.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory but have significant strengths. There has been good identification of priorities for development, and the necessary staffing structures have been established. However, expected outcomes are not always clear and the senior team cannot gain an objective picture of how well improvements are being embedded in practice. As a result of rigorous monitoring and very detailed planning the school has moved from having a deficit to a balanced budget. It has been a difficult time for the school but has been extremely well managed. The school has made faster progress recently in addressing the areas for development identified in the last inspection. The school has made good progress in providing more opportunities for students to use ICT across the curriculum. Actions have been taken to improve students' skills in writing and progress has been satisfactory. There has been progress recently in the consistent use of assessment data to raise students' performance. However, there is no comparative overview across subjects. The annual departmental reviews are rigorous. Some departments, for example English and science, are using the information to help improve their curriculum and teaching methods. However, action plans are too variable in quality and some do not clearly indicate the desired outcomes.

The school is very good at seeking the views of parents and students. Recent initiatives to involve students in reviewing teaching in lessons are very popular and the students offer insightful and useful comments from which the school can work. The information gained helps to guide developments and this is a significant strength of the school's self-evaluation.

A new structure for the governing body has led to better use of resources and skills within the group. Individuals have given good support in helping the school to improve. The role of governors in monitoring and evaluating school performance is developing but is not firmly embedded.

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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?	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	3
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	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	1

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?	2
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
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	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

On behalf of the inspection team thank you for your warm welcome and help during the inspection. It was extremely interesting to hear your views and I was pleased that we were able to speak to so many of you during our visit.

Your pride in the school is well placed as it is a satisfactory and improving school. The range of opportunities available to you both during the school day and outside school hours is good. Your contributions to the running and development of the school are outstanding. I know many of you welcome the school asking your opinions and it is good to see your comments influencing the improvement plans. The senior leadership team needs to make sure that it can regularly judge the progress made by the school as a whole as well as that made by individual students.

Technology status has helped to improve the facilities available to you. It has also helped to create positive links with the local community including primary schools. Many of you develop skills across subjects that ensure you are well placed for adult life as a result of the focus on enterprise by the school.

We found that an increasing number of you are making good academic progress but there are still too many of you who could do better. Teaching is always at least satisfactory and often good but we think you need to be given more guidance about how you can improve your work. We have also asked the school to make sure teachers have easy access to information about your progress across all subjects so that expectations are agreed. To increase the achievement you make and to support the school in making the improvements, some of you need to attend school more regularly. The school has high hopes for you all and will need your support to achieve these.