



Aylesford School and Language College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 125744
Local Authority Warwickshire
Inspection number 293353
Inspection dates 14–15 November 2006
Reporting inspector David Driscoll

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Shelley Avenue
School category	Community		Warwick
Age range of pupils	11–19		CV34 6LA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01926 747100
Number on roll (school)	979	Fax number	01926 494194
Number on roll (6th form)	142		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Richard Lyttle
		Headteacher	Steve Hall
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–19	14–15 November 2006	293353

© Crown copyright 2006

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 four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Aylesford serves a very mixed area on the outskirts of Warwick that includes small isolated villages and a fairly large housing estate. Relatively few pupils come from an ethnic minority background. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational needs. Most pupils on the special needs register have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school has been a specialist language college for the past four years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Aylesford provides a good education for its pupils. They leave the school with average standards, having achieved well as a result of good teaching. Progress in design and technology and information and communication technology (ICT) is particularly good. However, pupils underachieve in German, where standards are very low. Pupils are not active enough in German lessons, so they do not learn enough. The weakness in German is very important, given the school's status as a specialist language college, as it should be a subject that leads the school in raising standards, rather than holding it back. The school uses its specialist status well in other respects. The good curriculum, for example, is considerably enhanced by the range of activities based on languages, such as foreign visits.

Behaviour has shown considerable improvement over the past year and, like pupils' overall personal development, is now good. Pupils play a significant role in the school community. Good procedures help new pupils settle quickly to the ways of school life. Pupils are happy at school because they receive good quality care, with exceptional attention paid to ensuring they are safe. The school is led and managed well. Weaknesses are identified early, so any problems can be nipped in the bud. The actions taken to improve the school have been successful in raising standards in key areas such as mathematics and pupils' behaviour.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The sixth form provides a satisfactory education. Students make satisfactory progress and leave with standards that are average. Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have good expectations of what students will achieve, but allow them to be too passive in lessons. Students receive good support and guidance in applying to university, helping to maintain a healthy lifestyle, managing their study time efficiently and in their contributions to the whole-school community. They leave with good personal attributes that allow them to become responsible members of the community. The curriculum is satisfactory. Good partnerships with other local schools and colleges have been established to offer a wide range of level subjects, but the choice of courses for lower attainers is much more limited. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Good attention is paid to improving the arrangements for supporting and guiding students, but the same emphasis is not placed on critically and rigorously evaluating the quality of teaching.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve achievement, especially in German and across the sixth form, by ensuring that pupils and students play a more active part in lessons.
- Raise the quality of teaching in the sixth form through more rigorous monitoring and evaluation.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Pupils arrive at the school with standards that are below average. Throughout their time at school they achieve well, so on leaving Year 11 their standards are average and they are well equipped with the skills they will need in later life. Pupils make very good progress in design and technology and ICT, where GCSE results are far higher than the national averages. In contrast, pupils do particularly badly in German, where GCSE results are much lower than they should be.

Students in the sixth form make satisfactory progress, leaving with broadly average standards. Higher-attaining students do well in the sixth form, but lower attainers can struggle when they find the demands of advanced level courses too demanding.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils and students are acquiring good personal skills and attributes to help them develop into considerate young people. They have a good understanding of what it means to be part of a community. They willingly take on responsibilities, with students and older pupils playing a significant role in supporting and mentoring younger ones. Pupils are proud of some of the improvements made in school as a result of actions they have suggested. Sixth formers have been very successful in raising funds for charities and there is a strong sixth form council. They make excellent role models for pupils in the efforts they put into raising funds for charities. Pupils enjoy their lessons and show respect for each other and their teachers. They have a good understanding of the benefits of healthy eating, choosing appropriate snacks and taking plenty of exercise. Pupils know how to stay safe, and who to approach if they are unhappy.

The school's zero-tolerance approach for unacceptable behaviour has led to a high number of exclusions, but has had a positive impact on pupils' behaviour, which is now good. Nevertheless, the number of exclusions remains high, because they are sometimes used when other forms of punishment may be more appropriate.

Pupils' and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They cooperate well in class, mix well socially and understand the difference between right and wrong. They are developing a good level of multicultural awareness through the college language status, art, drama and music.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Most teaching is characterised by high expectations, lively pace and challenging questioning. In such lessons, pupils are prompted to explain themselves in greater depth so they progress at a faster rate and find lessons more enjoyable. High levels of participation are key ingredients of very effective learning, such as in design and technology and ICT, but are noticeably absent in German, where progress is too slow and where students are allowed to be passive. There are similar reasons for progress in the sixth form being only satisfactory, rather than good, as seen in the rest of the school. Too often, students in the sixth form sit quietly, rather than answering questions or putting forward their own views. Instead of challenging this approach, teachers tend to accept single-word answers and do too much for the students.

Lessons are generally well planned and structured. Resources are very effectively used. In a physical education lesson, for example, the use of video cameras provided instant feedback that helped pupils to improve their gymnastics skills.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

In the main school, the curriculum is broad, with appropriate emphasis on modern languages, in keeping with the school's language college status. Pupils who need individual help with reading and writing are well provided for in small groups, but not enough attention is paid to consistently developing all pupils' literacy skills in other subjects. In personal education lessons, good attention is paid to healthy lifestyles and preparation for life after school. Practical subjects such as science, physical education and design and technology place a good emphasis on teaching pupils how to stay safe. Many opportunities arise for pupils to participate in lunchtime and after-school clubs and there are many residential and foreign exchange visits. In the sixth form, consortium arrangements increase the variety of A level courses to choose from but there are not enough courses for lower attainers.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school has improved its systems for tracking pupils' progress, which are now producing good, accurate data. However, the data is not yet being used consistently by teachers in order to provide clear guidance on what pupils need to do to improve their work. Nevertheless, the system of setting targets for pupils each term is helping to improve standards.

Several pupils commented that 'the school makes sure everyone is looked after'. Improved arrangements for teaching assistants to offer in-class support to pupils with learning difficulties are helping these pupils to benefit fully from the lessons taught and have improved their achievement. Many pupils on the special needs register have behavioural difficulties. The school is successful in improving their self-control, and the behaviour of others. Nevertheless, the number of exclusions could be reduced by using a different sanction for some low-level offences.

Students in the sixth form receive very effective guidance on their future working and educational goals. The tutorial system, alongside other initiatives, is helping to raise students' ambitions and preparing them for employment or further and higher education. Their achievement is less rigorously managed and tracked.

There are outstanding arrangements to safeguard pupils and students, with many checks and balances in place to ensure that procedures are carried out. The good induction procedures ensure a smooth transition from the primary school to help pupils settle quickly into new routines. Pupils receive good guidance and advice when making decisions about their GCSE option choices. The work experience for Year 10 pupils, together with the languages in business course, is giving them an invaluable insight into the world of work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The headteacher and senior managers have a clear understanding of the main school's strengths and weaknesses. Systems for checking on the quality of teaching set high standards, which staff are keen to achieve. Data from tests and examinations are analysed particularly well, so the school can quickly spot any emerging underachievement. Governors also play a strong role in holding the school to account. They asked for a report on the extent of disruptive behaviour, for example, and what was being done about it. Together, the headteacher, governors and senior staff form a formidable team who clearly have the skills necessary to improve the school still further.

Once managers have prioritised the main areas for improvement, they put effective plans into place. Standards in mathematics have improved dramatically, while those in English and French are rising steadily. Nevertheless, further work is necessary in German, where the school is failing to meet its target. The school has sensibly placed most emphasis on improving standards in the main school. However, the systems that are employed to such success in the main school are not used with the same rigour in the sixth form, so students do not achieve as well as pupils do in the main school. In particular, the Head of Sixth Form is not sufficiently involved in the monitoring and improvement of academic standards.

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
--	-----------------------	--------------

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	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
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	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	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	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	3
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 to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	3
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	2	
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	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	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

Aylesford School and Language College, Shelley Avenue, Warwick, Warwickshire CV34 6LA

Many thanks for helping us with the inspection of your school. We were most impressed by how polite you were and by your good behaviour. You spoke to us honestly and openly, which helped us to get a clear idea of how you felt about your school.

You go to a good school. Most of you enjoy your time at school, and we can see why. You are well looked after and the school has your best interests at heart. Those of you in Years 7 to 11 are taught well and leave with examination results that are better than those we would usually expect, given your standards on joining Year 7. You do particularly well in design and technology and ICT, but not well enough in German. You feel that you are not involved enough in German lessons, and we agree. Those of you in the sixth form make satisfactory progress and leave with average results. Your teachers give you difficult work to do, but like pupils lower down the school, you too could play a greater part in lessons. Because of this, we have asked the school to make sure that you participate more in lessons in German and in the sixth form. You can help by making sure you always try to answer questions and, especially in the sixth form, explain yourselves more fully.

The headteacher and others who run the school are good at making improvements. As you pointed out to us, behaviour is now much better. They have also made subtle changes to the way that lessons are taught, but you may not even have noticed them. This has meant that you are making better progress in Years 7 to 11. They have not yet placed the same emphasis on improving the sixth form, so we have asked them to turn their attention to teaching in Years 12 and 13, which is satisfactory. This will mean that the improvements seen in the main school can also be brought about in the sixth form, so the satisfactory education provided there will be as good as in other years.

With all our best wishes for your future, and thanks again.