



Ash Green School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 125765
Local Authority Warwickshire
Inspection number 293359
Inspection dates 7–8 December 2006
Reporting inspector Marion Thompson

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Ash Green Lane
School category	Foundation		Ash Green
Age range of pupils	11–16		Coventry CV7 9AH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	024 76366772
Number on roll (school)	652	Fax number	024 76366383
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Michael Harkin
		Headteacher	G Tyrer
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2005		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	7–8 December 2006	293359

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Ash Green is a small school. A relatively high proportion of students has learning difficulties or disabilities. A very small number of students are learning English as an additional language.

The school entered into a federation with another local school, Nicholas Chamberlaine Technology College, in the summer term of 2005. The headteacher of that school became the executive headteacher of Ash Green. An acting headteacher was appointed at the same time. This appointment became permanent in September 2006. Two further senior appointments have been made, a deputy headteacher in September 2005 and an assistant headteacher in April 2006. Following a period of some years when recruitment and retention of teachers was difficult, the school is now fully staffed.

When the school was inspected in October 2005, inspectors judged that significant improvement was needed in relation to achievement, standards, the quality of teaching, subject leadership, attendance and punctuality. The school was given a Notice to Improve.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. Ash Green School offers a satisfactory standard of education with some good features. Under the very good leadership of the headteacher and senior team, the school has made significant and sufficient improvement in the areas identified as inadequate in the last inspection. Standards, which were previously too low, have risen. Although they are below average, this represents satisfactory achievement. Teaching and learning, which were inadequate, are now satisfactory. Improved teaching has been a major contributory factor to rising standards. Whilst there is still a very small minority of unsatisfactory teaching, more lessons are now good or better. Teachers and students now have much higher expectations, which are reflected in students' confident approach to learning and their work ethic. Punctuality to school and lessons, which was previously inadequate, is now good. Attendance, previously below average, is now broadly average. This is, in part, a consequence of the satisfactory curriculum the school has introduced, which is much better matched to students' individual needs. This has had a particularly beneficial effect on the behaviour and attitudes of lower attaining students. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The quality of subject leadership is satisfactory but remains uneven in relation to the evaluation of the work of departments.

There is still further work to do. A minority of more able girls and lower attaining boys do not make as much progress as they should in English in Years 7 to 9 because work does not present the right level of challenge. A minority of boys in lower sets in science do not make enough progress because they are not always managed effectively. The school is working hard, and with some early signs of success, to address these issues.

The positive changes in students' behaviour and attitudes noted in the previous inspection have continued. This has strongly supported their improved learning and growing self-esteem. Personal development is now good. Students feel safe in school and enjoy learning. They know how to keep themselves healthy and make a good contribution to the school and wider community. Since a team of community volunteers decorated the school, students feel proud of their surroundings and treat them with respect. These changes have been brought about by good care, support and guidance. Students feel that their opinions are valued and acted upon. Good academic guidance has contributed to the rapid rise in standards.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the attainment of more able girls and lower attaining boys in English in Years 7 to 9 by ensuring work consistently presents a suitable level of challenge for all students.
- Raise the attainment of lower attaining boys in science in Years 10 and 11 by ensuring their behaviour is managed effectively.
- Strengthen subject leadership by ensuring that the evaluation of the work of departments is consistently good across the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are below average and students' achievement is satisfactory in relation to their below average starting points. In 2006, results in GCSE and in national tests in Year 9, which had previously been low, rose sharply. Students achieved most of their challenging targets, reversing the pattern of underachievement of the previous few years. Close tracking of students' attainment shows that standards continue to rise during the current year, especially for more able students. However, some pockets of underachievement remain. A minority of less able, older boys do not make as much progress as they should in science because their behaviour is not managed well. In Years 7 to 9, more able girls and lower attaining boys do not make as much progress as they should in English, especially in extended writing, because work is not always well matched to their needs. Standards in literacy and numeracy are improving from a low base. Students achieve relatively well in history, drama, physical education and music. There is room for further improvement in art and design, design and technology and religious education. The achievement of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is good. The small number of students who are at the early stages of learning English make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including social and cultural visits and trips. Spiritual development is promoted well through the student led worship programme in assembly and most students know right from wrong. They assume significant responsibilities within school, for example as prefects and school council members. Through sports leadership awards, they benefit from the opportunity to support their local community by teaching dance, music and drama at local primary and special schools. Students' attitudes to lessons are good. Students enjoy their learning, particularly when engaged in practical activities. At the time of the previous inspection, students lacked the skills to work together well. This is now a strength. The school has placed a high emphasis on improving behaviour and students in most lessons meet these expectations, demonstrating care, consideration and respect for all. However, in the very small minority of lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory, students occasionally misbehave, slowing the pace of learning. Attendance and punctuality have improved as a result of rigorous monitoring procedures. Students feel safe at school. Regular surveys of all year groups, parents and carers, indicate that bullying is not perceived as a serious issue. Students feel they are able to turn to staff for support. A strong partnership has developed between teachers and students. For example, students and teachers worked together to develop more healthy school meals. The school makes a good contribution to students' health and well-being through physical education. By the time they leave school, good social skills and punctuality and satisfactory basic skills and attendance are a sound preparation for students' future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory throughout the school. In a significant minority of lessons, teaching is good or better. It has improved markedly since the last inspection. Systematic monitoring has identified key areas for improvement and has been coupled with very effective staff development and support. Very few lessons are unsatisfactory. When they are it is usually when students are provided with work that is too easy or too difficult or when behaviour is not effectively managed. In the main, however, consistent management of students ensures that lessons are calm and orderly. Typically, lessons present students, including the most able, with a suitable level of challenge. Students respond positively to teachers' clear expectations that they will work hard. Learning objectives are clearly explained and lessons move at a steady pace, ensuring students make satisfactory progress. Occasionally, teachers spend too long talking to the class and interest flags, but generally there is an appropriate range of activities. Good support is provided to ensure students with learning difficulties or disabilities make good progress. There are increased opportunities to work collaboratively and students work sensibly. Most teachers are using assessment to ensure students have guidance on how to improve their work. There is an increasingly strong focus on developing literacy skills across the curriculum, with especially good practice in history.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and matches the needs of all students. There is good support for students with learning difficulties or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language. The curriculum has been extended to include alternative, vocational and college based courses for students in Years 10 and 11. This has significantly improved the attitudes of students at risk of disaffection. Opportunities to attend after school enrichment classes for all students have contributed to raising standards. The school has made a satisfactory start to implementing national strategies in literacy and numeracy and these are beginning to raise standards. However, in a minority of English and science lessons, work is not sufficiently matched to the individual needs of all learners. The school works in effective collaboration with its federation partner school. As a result, all students, including the gifted and talented, have opportunities to access alternative and additional activities, which include dance, drama and music. This has contributed to the rise in standards of more able students during the current year. Students do not have enough opportunities to use information and communication technology as a learning tool. A programme of clubs and activities has been devised to broaden students' experiences. Personal, social, health and citizenship education makes a positive contribution to students' personal development. Marks of the quality of the curriculum are students' good attitudes to learning and the high take-up rate of all the school offers.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school involves parents and students well in evaluating its work through questionnaires, the student voice and consultation evenings. All issues raised as concerns are acted upon. In particular, prompt action is taken to deal with rare incidents of bullying or harassment. Students know their target grades and what they have to do to improve. Marking is beginning to help the minority of students who are underachieving in English and science to raise their achievement, but guidance in lessons is less effective, especially when work is not pitched at the right level. Students appreciate the support they receive and comment favourably on the many opportunities to extend their learning through additional after school lessons and catch-up classes. The school works effectively with local community support teams to ensure proper student access to counselling and advice. Careers guidance is good. Students' economic well-being is enhanced through work experience opportunities and the newly developed alternative work related curriculum.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Over the past year, the senior leadership team, very well led by the headteacher, has provided a clear, ambitious and purposeful sense of direction for the school. The school's evaluation of its work, based on regular monitoring, is accurate and rigorous. Effective plans have been rapidly and determinedly put in place and have resulted in improvement in all areas of the school's work. This agenda has had the wholehearted and vigorous support of school staff, parents, students and the wider community.

Leadership of subjects is satisfactory. It is improving as a result of good support and guidance from the senior leadership team. A number of key appointments were made in September 2006, so there has not been time for the full impact of the work of some subject leaders to be felt. The school is working hard to promote good quality in relation to evaluation of the work of departments by subject leaders. The most effective managers have clear priorities for improvement, based on detailed and thorough evaluation. They implement effective approaches to help learners improve. This best practice is not consistent across the school.

Governors support the school and are beginning to provide more challenge. Their monitoring of the work of the school is now satisfactory as a result of training. Financial management is now sound and the school has substantially reduced its large deficit budget. Governors have benefited enormously from the federation arrangements.

Over the last year, there have been significant improvements in standards and achievement, in students' behaviour, attitudes, attendance, punctuality and personal development. These show that the school has good capacity for further improvement.

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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	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	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	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?	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?	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	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 making us so welcome. We enjoyed talking to you and hearing your views on your experience of school. Some of you may remember that we inspected your school a year ago. At that time, the school had improved a great deal, but there was still a lot to be done. Consequently we gave the school what is known as a Notice to Improve. We have now come back to check on the progress that has been made. We are pleased to tell you that the school has made good progress and now provides you with a satisfactory education. We know you won't be surprised because you are all very proud of your school and positive about what goes on here.

Here are some of the good things we found.

You work hard and make appropriate progress. In 2006, there was significant improvement in the results at GCSE and in Key Stage 3 tests. Standards are continuing to rise during this year, especially for more able students. These improvements are partly a result of better teaching and effective guidance on how to improve your work. Attendance has risen, so keep it up! It helps you to learn better. It is also a result of your good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. You concentrate well in lessons and work well together. Teachers and other adults value your opinions and treat you with respect. They teach you how to stay safe and healthy. You enjoy many aspects of the new curriculum the school has put in place at Key Stage 4. The headteacher, other staff and governors are working hard and effectively to make sure the school carries on improving rapidly.

We have asked the school to improve standards for some students in top and bottom sets in English in Key Stage 3 by making sure work is set at the right level of difficulty. We would also like to see better behaviour in a few lessons in science at Key Stage 4, especially amongst some boys. We have also asked the school to ensure that all departments plan for improvement as well as the best.

We are confident that your school will continue to improve even further. We hope you will continue to make progress and enjoy your learning.