



Abbeyfield School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 131969
Local Authority Wiltshire
Inspection number 293905
Inspection date 19 October 2006
Reporting inspector Tom Winskill HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Stanley Lane
School category	Community		Chippenham
Age range of pupils	13-18		SN15 3XB
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01249 464500
Number on roll (school)	914	Fax number	01249 464545
Number on roll (6th form)	86		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	D Sage
		Headteacher	P Shubrook
Date of previous school inspection	2 December 2002		

Age group 13-18	Inspection date 19 October 2006	Inspection number 293905
---------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© 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 two of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

Description of the school

This slightly smaller than average but rapidly growing school, with a sixth form which opened in September 2006, serves the eastern area of Chippenham and nearby rural districts. Sixth form students from Abbeyfield were enrolled temporarily at nearby schools for the academic year 2005/06 pending the opening of the sixth form. It was awarded business and enterprise specialist status in 2005. The proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD) is broadly average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is an effective school which provides a good quality of education for its students who enjoy their learning and achieve well. This reflects the views of the vast majority of parents and is accurately summed up by one parent thus:

'My children are happy at Abbeyfield. They have many opportunities to learn and to develop their interests and skills. I'm always very proud to say they attend Abbeyfield School.'

Why is this a successful school? Students rightly point to the good quality of teaching throughout the school. Much of the teaching is good and some is outstanding. In some subjects the quality of teaching is consistently high but in others less so. Achievement and standards, both good overall, also vary between subject areas and key stages. These inconsistencies prevent the school from being judged outstanding. Pupils feel safe at school and behave well. Care, support and guidance are good with strong links between the school and parents.

A challenge for the school as it has grown has been to provide a curriculum which changes to meet the needs of the students. The curriculum provision is good. Recent changes at Key Stage 4 have improved the provision for a number of students resulting in improved motivation as they follow courses better suited to their needs. The school's accurate self-evaluation shows that provision is not yet as good as it can be and why it is not outstanding. The innovative extra-curricular programme is extensive and well supported.

The school's business and enterprise specialism is helping to promote good personal development and well-being, particularly in helping students develop skills for success in adult life and employment. It has yet to have an impact on achievement and standards. The curriculum is beginning to reflect the specialist status through the introduction of new courses linked with business and enterprise and the provision of effective whole-school events with an enterprise theme.

An important factor in the school's success is the outstanding leadership of the headteacher. She has maintained a clear, unshakeable focus on the achievement and personal development of the students whilst very effectively managing the complex changes in the school as it has grown. She is ably supported by a strong senior team and an effective governing body. A key strength in the school's good leadership and management is the high quality self-evaluation. This enables the school to have a very clear and highly accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. This, together with the school's ability to sustain a good quality of education despite undergoing continuous major change, shows its capacity for improvement is good. This is not outstanding because achievement and standards are not yet as good in Key Stage 4 as they are in Key Stage 3.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Sixth form students enrolled at Abbeyfield have yet to sit any public examinations and so there is no judgement on achievement and standards in the sixth form. Students enjoy their lessons and are well taught. For example, in a Year 12 drama lesson the well planned, challenging content and interesting range of activities enabled students to make good progress. Their personal development is good as they readily take opportunities to support the school. Some, for example, work in different subject areas and help younger students in different ways. Leadership and management of the sixth form are effective and have ensured that there is good curriculum provision through strong links with other schools and a local further education (FE) college. Funding has been secured to improve the accommodation and teaching rooms in line with the planned expansion of the sixth form.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teaching and learning are of a consistently high standard to enable students to achieve highly in all subjects.
- As the school grows further, extend the curriculum provision to enable more students to make good or better progress especially in Key Stage 4.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 0

Achievement and standards are good. At Key Stage 3, standards are consistently above average for English, mathematics and science. At Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils gaining five GCSE grades at C or better is broadly average. The proportion with five A*–C grades including English and mathematics is above average, as is the capped points score which takes into account the best eight results for all students. In 2005, pupils' overall progress from entry to the end of Key Stage 4 was outstanding. Pupils make good progress at Key Stage 3 and at least satisfactory progress at Key Stage 4. No groups of students make less than satisfactory progress and many progress well as a result of good teaching and effective support and guidance. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress and many exceed their targets as a result of good quality learning support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They have a clear sense of right and wrong and feel they are treated fairly. Students take advantage of the good provision for adopting

healthy lifestyles. For example, many walk to school and choose healthy eating options provided in the school canteen. In lessons and around the school, behaviour is good and often excellent. Those students who do step out of line are dealt with effectively, although a small minority of parents have expressed concerns about poor behaviour. Students are punctual to lessons. Bullying is rare and is dealt with effectively, helping students to feel safe. This contributes to the very high level of enjoyment experienced by students as does the good relationships between students and staff and the wide range of sporting and cultural activities provided. Students make good contributions to both the school and local community through opportunities in the curriculum and other activities. For example, Year 10 students have formed a paper recycling company in school, with support from staff and local organisations. Students are well prepared for the next stage in their lives and, in 2005, almost all students leaving Year 11 remained in education or went into employment or training.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are good and sometimes outstanding. Teaching is better in some subjects than in others. The setting of homework and marking of work are inconsistent. Good teaching is characterised by a range of activities effectively used to engage and interest the students. Lively, confident teaching and well planned lessons contribute to the good progress made by students and the extent to which they enjoy their learning. For example in a Year 8 French lesson, students engaged enthusiastically at a good pace in a number of activities well matched to their ability which enabled all to make good progress. Teaching assistants provide effective support for students with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good because it meets the needs of the majority of students. In particular, changes to the Key Stage 4 curriculum are providing courses for different groups of students. These include courses at the local FE college and additional qualifications for gifted students. Much of the curriculum provision is in the early stages of its implementation and has yet to impact fully on improving achievement and standards. There is a strong and developing provision for work related learning in both the taught curriculum and extra-curricular activities. The programme of enrichment activities is of high quality. Students have a good choice of activities in the compulsory enrichment sessions at the end of the school day. There is a good variety of trips and visits. Gifted and talented students have an effective and well-established extra-curricular programme.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Students have targets and are well informed about how well they are doing and how they can improve. Changes to improve the systems of assessment and reporting are only just being introduced and have yet to have an effect. There is effective use of non-teaching staff to provide care, guidance and support in pastoral matters. This ensures problems are tackled quickly and, in the main, provides good links with parents. The school works well with the education welfare officer and encourages and rewards good attendance. As a result, attendance is consistently above average. Systems for managing and monitoring behaviour are effective and consistently applied so students know where they stand if they choose to misbehave.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good. Leadership at all levels is effective in promoting improvement as shown by the good achievement overall and personal development of the students. It is not outstanding because the achievement of students in Key Stage 4 is not yet as strong as in Key Stage 3. All aspects of the school's work are based on thorough and robust self-evaluation which leads to a focus on improvement. For example, in science, intervention following analysis of disappointing examination results in 2005 led to rapid and significant improvement in 2006. The self-evaluation process includes effective procedures for gathering parents' opinions on a range of matters. Some changes have been made as a result, although a small minority of parents considers the school does not always take account of their views. Systems for monitoring and evaluating students' achievement and behaviour are excellent and contribute strongly to planning for improvement. The governing body has good systems for monitoring the school's performance against its challenging targets and holding it to account. The headteacher's excellent leadership ensures that there are high expectations for all aspects of the school's work and that action is taken where these expectations are not being met. The school has established strong relationships with a wide range of partners to support different aspects of its work.

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

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	2
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	1	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	
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	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	1	
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	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
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	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	1	
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

I am writing to inform you of our findings following the recent inspection of your school.

Abbeyfield is a good school with no major weaknesses. You enjoy coming to school and you make good progress and achieve good standards. This is because you are well taught and well cared for by the staff. You have lots of good opportunities to do different activities both in lessons and at other times. Most of you behave well in lessons and around the school. You feel safe in school and are confident that any bullying will be dealt with by the staff. You know how to be healthy and are well prepared for the next stage of your life or when you leave school. The school's business and enterprise specialist status is helping you develop new skills which will be of great value in the future.

The headteacher and senior staff work well with teachers and governors to ensure the education the school provides is as good as possible. You have an excellent headteacher who is determined that all of you will succeed. She, together with staff and governors, has a very good idea of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This is helping them plan carefully for further improvements to the school.

To become an outstanding school you need to raise your achievement a bit more especially in Key Stage 4. This will lead to better examination results, both for the school overall and for individual students. We have asked the school to make the following improvements to help you raise your achievement.

- The teaching in all subjects should be as good as it is in the best subjects so more of you can make even better progress in more subjects.
- There should be an even wider choice of subjects for students in Key Stage 4 so more of you can follow courses which really interest you and will help you achieve well.

I wish you every success and look forward to hearing about even more improvement at Abbeyfield.