

St Ivo School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110874
Local Authority	CAMBRIDGESHIRE LA
Inspection number	310449
Inspection dates	10–11 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Alan Alder 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 pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1836
6th form	349
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sue Campbell
Headteacher	Mr Howard Gilbert
Date of previous school inspection	15 September 2003
School address	High Leys St Ives Huntingdon Cambridgeshire PE27 6RR
Telephone number	01480 375400
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Age group	11-19
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

St Ivo School is situated about 16 miles north-west of Cambridge. About half of the pupils live in the town; the others live mainly in the surrounding villages. Most students are White British, the number from minority ethnic groups is small. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is small, as is the proportion eligible for free school meals. The headteacher has been in post for two years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

St Ivo School is a satisfactory and improving school. Pupils' personal development is good, and in some respects outstanding. The standards pupils achieve in their work are above average, though the progress they make is satisfactory. The school provides a well-organised, very supportive environment where the majority of pupils are happy, confident and enjoy school. Good supervision ensures pupils feel safe and that the school runs as an orderly community. Pupils' awareness of how to stay safe is well developed through the personal education programme they receive. Both behaviour and attendance are good, and pupils know how to lead healthy lifestyles. A small minority of parents expressed some concerns about behaviour, but the inspectors' view is that it is good. Along with attendance, it has improved since the last inspection, as a result of the actions taken by the school's leaders. Pupils develop good literacy, numeracy and computing skills. Many pupils, particularly in the sixth form, make an outstanding contribution to the community, for example through fund-raising for charities and helping and supporting others within the school. One parent referred to the school as having 'a big happy family feel with the older students helping the younger ones'. Pupils are well prepared for further or higher education and future employment.

The headteacher has clearly identified the reasons for pupils' progress being satisfactory and not better. As a result, he has introduced well-considered strategies to bring about the necessary improvement. For example, some fundamental changes to the organisation of the school have been implemented. These include the modification of the curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 so that it caters better for their broad range of interests and allows more time for the study of some subjects. Data about pupils' performance is now being routinely collected so that underachievement can be identified and corrected. There is an increased focus on the quality of teaching and learning. In addition, a systematic evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of subject departments is undertaken.

These changes are beginning to have an impact. The school did not achieve several of its targets for the national test and GCSE results in 2007. However, standards are beginning to rise further and pupils are beginning to make better progress. There is good progress in identifying those pupils in Year 11 who are at risk of missing their target grade and in providing support for them. This and the other recent improvements demonstrate that the school's capacity to improve is good.

There are some aspects of the school's work, however, which are reducing the impact of the changes. These are largely to do with inconsistencies in the way some of the new developments are being applied. For example, in judging the quality of teaching some leaders and managers focus well on how well pupils are learning, but others focus too much on the actions of the teacher and not their effect on learning. The observations are often not sensitive enough to accurately judge the quality of teaching and lead to over optimistic judgements. In addition, whilst in some parts of the school the work done to develop teaching quality is systematic and thorough, in others it is too ad hoc. The use of the data to identify and support individual pupils is not carried out consistently enough, including by pastoral leaders and form tutors.

There are inconsistencies in the setting of homework. It is used well in some subjects but sparsely in others. The differences between subjects are the result of too great a variation in the work of different subject leaders.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

A large number of students, with a variety of abilities and from a wide range of backgrounds, stay on into the sixth form. They make good progress and attain highly, especially in AS level examinations, although there are marked variations between some subjects. Students enjoy the opportunities for independent learning and discussion with each other and their teachers. Attendance is good and the number who leave before their course is complete is very small. Sixth formers make an outstanding contribution to the life of the school through lunchtime supervision and engagement with younger pupils in lessons and extra-curricular activities. The curriculum is good and the school recognises the scope for further improvement through widening the number of applied learning options.

Students receive very helpful advice and guidance so that they know what they need to do to improve their work. Preparation for future education and working life is excellent.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching and learning by more accurately evaluating it, providing more systematic support for its improvement and monitoring the impact of the support.
- Improve pupils' achievement by more promptly identifying those pupils who are falling behind and by taking more robust action to counter it.
- Ensure that the successful strategies used by some subject and pastoral leaders to bring about improvement to pupils' learning are employed by all.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall and good in the sixth form. The standards that pupils have reached by the time they enter the school are broadly average; they remain so at the end of Year 9. This shows that pupils make satisfactory progress. Pupils' standards are above average at the end of Year 11. An independent analysis of the 2007 GCSE results shows that pupils made slightly less progress than that made by similar pupils in other schools. The percentage of pupils obtaining five or more higher grade GCSEs is similar to that at the time of the last inspection. In some subjects, for example mathematics, the proportion gaining the higher grade passes is well above the national average, and pupils make good progress in history. The progress made by pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to other pupils and is satisfactory. Pupils' current work confirms the picture of satisfactory progress by all groups of pupils, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, though girls perform markedly better at GCSE than do boys.

The standards reached by students in the sixth form are well above average at the end of Year 12 and above average at the end of Year 13. Over half the students obtain the higher grades of A or B in their A-level courses. Attainment in the vocational advanced courses is better than in A-levels. The students make good progress throughout their time in the sixth form.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Pupils are proud of their school and demonstrate good personal development. Their moral, social and cultural development is good. Spiritual development is satisfactory because there are insufficient opportunities to engage in personal reflection. The personal development of pupils from minority ethnic groups is good because of the targeted support from school staff and from the wider community.

Racial harmony is good. Pupils relate well with each other and to adults. Bullying does take place but is dealt with effectively and the school council, which plays an active role in the life of the school, has been instrumental in improving the anti-bullying policy. Pupils increasingly adopt healthy lifestyles and enjoy the healthy eating options available in the dining room.

Sixth formers play an important role in the school community especially through mentoring younger pupils and the 'Books over Breakfast' club. They also support a wide range of extra-curricular activities and charity fund raising days. The personal development of sixth form pupils is outstanding.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. There are a number of examples of good and occasionally outstanding teaching but there are also a small number of examples of inadequate teaching.

Teachers have very good subject expertise, and almost all have excellent relationships with their pupils. Pupils generally behave well, particularly when they are able to share the teacher's enthusiasm for their subject. Pupils develop good enquiry skills and become successful independent learners. Some lessons, for example a Year 7 mathematics lesson, have a very well judged level of challenge that pupils respond to with evident enjoyment. They show good powers of concentration. However, the provision of work to challenge pupils of different abilities is not a feature of most lessons. While usually pupils know what they are expected to learn and focus on, in some lessons the objectives are not sufficiently clear.

Time is not used effectively in too many lessons. Sometimes the activity used to start the work lasts too long and often its purpose is not clear enough. Time is also lost because the pace is too slow or the lesson finishes early. Yet, there is often too little time given at the ends of lessons to help pupils consolidate their learning and for the teacher to assess pupils' learning to inform planning for the next lesson.

The quality of marking is too variable. While in some subjects pupils are given guidelines to help them improve, in others the marking is superficial. Pupils are not given enough opportunities to assess their work against examination criteria, and homework is not set regularly enough.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good and meets all statutory requirements. As a result of the addition of vocational subjects, and a partnership with the local college, the curriculum provides courses that suit the range of capabilities and aspirations of pupils of all abilities. The sixth form curriculum is also good. Students' views are noted as part of its review, but the range of vocational subjects is limited.

Weekly drama and dance lessons enrich the curriculum for students in Years 7 to 9. In Years 8 and 9, pupils are able to take a second modern foreign language. Pupils who are more able are well catered for in that they receive extra support to enable them to take two languages at GCSE. There is also a good variety of enrichment activities. The use of computer technology in lessons has greatly increased; it is particularly well used to support teaching and learning in humanities subjects. Those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported by a well coordinated learning support programme. Support for pupils who are in the early stages of learning English is very good. Work related learning programmes, well organised careers education, and work experience ensure that students are properly prepared for their future working lives.

The wide range of extra-curricular activities, involvement in community projects and a good variety of trips and visits make a significant contribution to students' personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Care guidance and support are good. Teachers demonstrate care and concern for their pupils and pupils respond positively to the support they are given. There are well-established procedures to safeguard pupils and the comprehensive programme of training for staff includes a range of first aid training. Child protection arrangements are robust and fully meet requirements. The school's Pathfinder Trust provides good support for vulnerable pupils. There are very effective transition arrangements that ensure a smooth entry to the school in Year 7. Pupils are given good access to guidance on careers and pathways to further education. Monitoring and support for pupils' learning is however too variable. There is not yet consistent and rigorous use of assessment information to inform pupils and monitor achievement. Consequently, too many pupils are not sufficiently aware of their progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The headteacher provides strong leadership. He and his senior team have established a clear commitment to develop the school, focusing on helping learners to make good, rather than satisfactory progress in their work. Strategies for improvement are thought through well and some fundamental improvements have been made to the work of the school.

The school's targets are challenging. They are now well used in conjunction with the monitoring of pupils' progress to identify where extra help is needed in examination classes. This has had a good impact in some subjects. The use of targets by classroom teachers to help increase progress more generally is as yet underdeveloped. The role of pastoral leaders in ensuring pupils achieve highly is too limited.

The school's self-evaluation, whilst generally accurate, over estimates the quality of teaching and has not identified that the widely varying strategies to improve it are having mixed success. The school is successful in ensuring that no group underachieves, though boys perform markedly less well than girls, a matter which the school is striving to overcome. Governors know the school well, are hardworking, provide challenge and have high aspirations for the school. Overall, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
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	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	1
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	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	1

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 A

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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	3	
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

12 October 2007

Dear Pupils and Students,

Inspection of St Ivo School, St Ives, PE27 6RR

Thank you for your help when we inspected your school. We spoke to quite a number of you during our two day visit. We found that you are proud of your school, and we can understand why. The atmosphere in the school impressed us. You are well-behaved and the school is a calm place. You develop well as individuals and show a good level of maturity and confidence. Relationships between different groups of pupils are good, as they are between pupils and teachers. Your attendance is good and many of you said that you enjoyed school. It is impressive to see the ways in which you help the community. The sixth form students in particular do a lot of work of this sort. For example, some go into primary schools to help pupils there, as well as helping younger pupils in your own school. You also raise a good amount of money for charities.

There are some ways in which we feel your school should get better. Although we saw some good and outstanding lessons, we feel that more lessons should be like the best ones. That would help you to make faster progress in your work. We also decided that a closer check should be kept on how well you are all doing. This is so that if any of you do not make the progress you should be making, something can be done quickly to put it right.

You can help yourselves to make more progress too. Making sure you do your homework and classwork to the best of your ability is important.

Best wishes for your future,

Alan Alder

Her Majesty's Inspector.