

Ilkeston School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112945
Local Authority	DERBYSHIRE LA
Inspection number	311065
Inspection dates	7–8 November 2007
Reporting inspector	David Simpson 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	1254
6th form	1035
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Helene Morland
Headteacher	Mr Stephen Daniels
Date of previous school inspection	6 October 2003
School address	King George Avenue Ilkeston Derbyshire DE7 5HS
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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 three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Ilkeston School is a larger than average secondary school. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is slightly below average. The percentage of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average. The percentage of students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below the national average. In recent years, there has been a significant turnover of staff and the school has found it difficult to recruit in some instances. The school became a Specialist Arts College in September 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Ilkeston School is a satisfactory school. It has many good qualities. One person accurately captured the sense of community and support by describing the school as 'an extended family'. The students' personal development is good. They react positively to their education and are welcoming, open and friendly. The school's good care, guidance and support actively promote the students' well-being. For example, its work to ensure that very few students leave the school without going into employment, education or training is impressive. The school works well in partnership with others to improve the support students receive and develop the quality of the curriculum.

Attaining visual arts specialist status has had a positive impact on the school's work. It is contributing to raising standards and broadening opportunities for students to pursue a more motivating curriculum. Recruitment into the sixth form has significantly increased as a result of the improved provision. Students benefit from participating in a wide range of activities, including a fashion show of outstanding quality, and contributing to the planning of local festivals. The school has also helped improve the performance of local primary and secondary schools in the arts. The school has largely met its very ambitious specialist targets for the attainment of students.

The achievement of students is satisfactory rather than good because it is too inconsistent. Whilst by the end of Year 9 the proportion of students who attain nationally expected levels or better has been in line with national averages, the amount of progress all students make is inadequate. Progress improves thereafter. By the time students leave Year 11 standards are above average overall, for example, in terms of the attainment of five or more good GCSE passes or equivalent. However, the school's performance in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT) - essential subjects for future economic well-being - is below average.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The school knows what motivates its students: lessons where there are plenty of opportunities to learn actively, teachers who provide challenging activities and questions, students who understand how their work relates to how they can improve their attainment, and lessons where there are opportunities to reflect on their performance and that of others. However, in too many lessons too much lesson time is taken up with teachers talking whilst students are passive or not sufficiently challenged by the activities.

The curriculum is satisfactory. It has some strengths; for example, the breadth of the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is impressive. It provides a range of courses, which match students' interests and aptitudes well, and contribute to the overall high standards of attainment by the end of Year 11. However, course changes in mathematics and science are embryonic and the school is actively working to improve its Key Stage 3 curriculum to increase opportunities for more active learning.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher's leadership is distinguished by his ambition for the school and the realistic balance he strikes between challenge and support for his staff. The senior team have established clear priorities for school development. Throughout the teaching staff, there is a commitment to improvement and a common sense of purpose. However, these strengths are not making enough difference to what is going on in the classrooms, nor ensuring consistency of teaching. The school acknowledges that it needs

to be more systematic in analysing and evaluating lesson observations and its extensive data on the progress of students, in order to improve teaching and quickly identify and remedy student underperformance. It also knows that middle managers need to be more consistently accountable for the performance of their subjects and year teams. The governing body operates well as supportive but challenging friend of the school. The impact of specialist status, the effective development of the curriculum and the well-planned strategies to support recently appointed staff demonstrate the school's sound capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory. Students attain standards that are slightly below average, which represents satisfactory progress as their starting points were below average. Teaching is satisfactory and sometimes good. The school is accurate in identifying that lessons do not ensure that students take responsibility for their learning so that they become more keenly aware of the next steps they need to take to improve their work. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Students are cared for well. One student spoke of the 'devoted staff and a strong sense of sixth form identity'. However, the academic guidance students receive is not sufficiently robust to enable them to consistently fulfil their potential. Personal development is good and students take advantage of the many opportunities they have to take responsibility; for example, as 'ambassadors' who work with Year 6 pupils from local schools. The sixth form is growing rapidly and is attracting students of an increasingly wide range of ability. Through work with other institutions, the school is successfully providing a good curriculum and this is enhanced by extensive enriching experiences. Leadership and management are sound and the students value the work of the head of sixth form.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English, mathematics, science and ICT.
- Increase the rates of progress the students make in the sixth form.
- Improve the consistency of learning by building on the best practice in the school.
- Use the extensive data in the school to monitor the progress of students more systematically.
- Increase middle managers' accountability for achievement in their areas of responsibility.

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 the next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students' achievement is satisfactory. They enter the school with broadly average standards of attainment. The proportion of students attaining nationally expected levels in end of Year 9 tests is average. However, by analysing the amount of progress students make, the school is aware of some underperformance. Achievement accelerates in Key Stage 4 and overall attainment is above national averages when students leave at the end of Year 11. However, standards in English, mathematics, science and ICT are below average. Standards rose in post-16 examination results in 2007 but the school recognises that there is a lot of work to do to raise attainment in advanced level qualifications. Achievement is broadly average post-16 with significant

variations in the students' performance in different subjects. Notable strengths of sixth form attainment are in specialist subjects such as graphics and a vocational art course.

The targets the school sets for itself are appropriately challenging. However, the expectations teachers have of students is variable. An effective system of monitoring progress is emerging in Key Stage 4, but this is yet to be applied to Years 7 to 9.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The students enjoy taking part in the wide range of activities that the school offers, in particular the sporting and artistic events, such as the summer fun nights and fashion shows. Students have a good understanding of the need to lead a healthy lifestyle through regular physical exercise and healthy eating. The school forum is particularly pleased that their suggestion of introducing a healthy 'Pasta Bar' was a success. The school forum is an active body, which gives students a good opportunity to express their opinions. This is aided by an elected associate school governor who can represent students' views to the governing body. A minority of parents have expressed concerns about behaviour. However, inspectors found behaviour to be good and judged that the school has effective systems to deal with any disruptive students, including a newly established 'Inclusion Unit'. Students also have access to peer mentors and the school nurse, as well as to all staff, to express any concerns. Attendance is in line with the national average and the school works effectively with outside agencies to tackle poor attendance. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. In lessons, students reflect well on social and moral issues, such as marriage and divorce or anti-social behaviour. Students develop their enterprise skills in planning and setting up their own businesses and undertake work experience placements, which has a positive impact on their future economic well-being. However, they make no more than satisfactory progress in developing literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. Students make a positive contribution to the community through good links with primary schools and groups such as the local Art Club.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In some good lessons, students make good progress and enjoy learning when teachers employ an interesting and stimulating range of resources to help students reflect on and consolidate their learning. As a consequence, behaviour is good and students enjoy opportunities to learn independently. However, this good practice is not evident in many lessons. Too much lesson time is taken up by teachers talking and there are too few opportunities for students to become actively engaged in their learning. The school's new homework and assessment strategies are in the early stage of development and, although there is some good practice, the impact on students' progress is not yet evident. In too many instances marking consists of checking if work has been completed, or in giving general praise, and does not sufficiently inform students of the next steps they need to take to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school has appropriate plans to revise its Year 7 curriculum to improve opportunities for students to learn actively. The school is beginning to build on good practice to motivate learners, such as connecting work across subjects and organising days focused upon developing creative skills. However, the present Key Stage 3 curriculum does not consistently meet the needs of different learners. Thereafter, from Year 10 onwards, the curriculum increasingly meets the interests and strengths of individual students, and the range of specialist subject courses has enhanced this. The school has accurately identified that the provision for English, mathematics, science and ICT has not always enabled students to fulfil their potential. As a result, new courses have been introduced in mathematics and science and the school is actively seeking more appropriate examination courses for English and ICT. The school provides an extensive range of enrichment activities, including a wide range of sports, in which many students participate. There is good support for more able and talented learners and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; for example, the nurturing programme and additional literacy support.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

A range of carefully thought-out procedures, building upon the school's caring tradition, ensures that the provision for student welfare is good. There are effective procedures for identifying and supporting students who may be at risk and arrangements for the safeguarding of students are robust. The school meets the statutory requirements with regard to child protection. There is good support for students who find learning difficult, with effective individual targets to ensure that these students make at least satisfactory progress. Relationships between students and staff are good. There is effective support and guidance for students, especially at important stages in their school life. The induction of students into Year 7 is good and many commented that they settle into school quickly. One Year 7 student said that, 'We were made to feel really welcome and cared for when we came to the school.' There are very effective links with outside agencies, especially the Connexions service to meet students' career needs. 'Dialogue days' provide a useful focus for students, parents and tutors to set academic and personal targets. However, it is not always clear what action is taken if students do not demonstrate that they are making sufficient progress over time.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school has worked hard to increase the involvement of its community in making decisions. It has also established good working relationships with a range of partners to improve the school and provision in the local area; for example, to increase sixth form opportunities through working with other educational providers and using specialist status to enrich cultural activities. The headteacher and senior team know the school well and they have accurately identified the strengths and areas to improve. The development of lesson observations, through close

collaborative training, has resulted in an accurate picture of teaching. The school's self-evaluation process is thorough in gathering evidence of activities in the classroom. However, the school knows it needs to be more systematic in using the evidence it has to promote improvements in the standards of teaching and learning. The school has several middle managers who understand their accountability for the performance of students in their area of responsibility, but these expectations are not consistently well understood. Governors give informed support and they are developing their role in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. The senior team have done much to put in place systems to support new and inexperienced staff. This is helping to resolve historical difficulties in recruitment. The professional development of staff addresses the school's priorities, but some of the exciting activities, where departments have worked together, are not consistently increasing the opportunities for students to experience active learning.

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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	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	3
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	3	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	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	2
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	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	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	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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	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

8 November 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Ilkeston School, Ilkeston, DE7 5HS

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team into your school. We appreciated your readiness to talk to us. We're sorry we didn't get to see all your classes; I know one of you asked an inspector when she was going to come into your lesson! Your views and the opinions of your families have helped us to understand what Ilkeston is like.

We could see that you got along with one another very well and that you have good relationships with the adults who work at the school. The opportunities you have to contribute to decision-making are good and we were pleased to hear that you had a voice on the governing body. We were impressed with the difference that becoming a specialist visual arts college has made to your education. Events like the fashion show are real landmark occasions, which bring you all together to celebrate some outstanding work. It has also meant that you have more opportunities to show how well you can learn independently. We were impressed with how many of you were choosing to study BTEC art or media studies and the enjoyment you got from your achievements in these subjects. Overall, you are making satisfactory progress in your time at the school. You are achieving successfully in some subjects but many of you find English, mathematics, science and ICT difficult. These are important subjects, and qualifications in them might make a difference to how you get on in the future. So, we've asked the school to make sure you do better.

Our other recommendations for what the school can do to improve further are:

- in your lessons, give you more opportunity to learn through asking questions, conducting your own investigations and evaluating how well you and other young people in the class did
- increase the progress sixth formers make so that they fulfil their potential
- use the information the school has about your performance and the skills of the managers in your school to make sure you do well.

Thank you again for making our inspection so enjoyable and rewarding.

Yours sincerely

David Simpson HMI