

Allerton High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108057
Local Authority	Leeds
Inspection number	324697
Inspection dates	1–2 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Jan Bennett HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	900
Sixth form	225
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs E Moxon
Headteacher	Mrs E Silson
Date of previous school inspection	5 December 2005
School address	King Lane Leeds West Yorkshire LS17 7AG
Telephone number	0113 3368484
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Allerton High is slightly larger than most secondary schools, it is oversubscribed and the sixth form has grown in recent years. It is situated in a fairly affluent area of Leeds, but there are pockets of social and economic disadvantage within the area. The proportion of students entitled to a free school meal is slightly above average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is growing and is over twice the national average. A high number of students do not speak English as their first language. The proportion of students with a statement of special educational need is above average, but the overall proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than average. The school moved to new purpose-built accommodation in September 2008. Allerton High was awarded specialist business and enterprise status in 2003.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Allerton High is a good school with a number of outstanding features. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership by prioritising well and providing a very clear vision for the school. The promotion of community cohesion is outstanding and Allerton High is a very inclusive school where students from many different ethnic backgrounds and religions work extremely well together. The quality of the care, guidance and support given and students' personal development and well-being are both outstanding. Most parents are very strongly supportive of the school.

Achievement is improving in all key stages, particularly in Key Stage 4 where students are making very good progress and standards are rising year on year. However, standards are not improving as quickly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science in Key Stage 3.

The outstanding personal development and well-being of students is supported well by an excellent personal and social education curriculum. Students feel very safe, there is very little bullying but any incidents are dealt with effectively, and students show respect and understanding for each other. Behaviour is very good and attendance is good and improving. Most students participate in sports and/or community activities and they are very active fundraisers. Students are prepared well for the future and the specialism supports the development of their economic well-being very successfully.

Teaching and learning are good. The school has a very effective and bespoke programme of staff development that facilitates the efficient sharing of good practice. Inspectors agree with the school's records of lesson observations, showing that the quality of most lessons is good or better.

The curriculum is good and has been considerably enhanced since the last inspection offering many more opportunities to personalise learning, in order to meet the many and diverse needs of students. Changes to the Key Stage 4 curriculum are already contributing to the improvement in examination results. There is a particularly good range of courses in the specialist subjects.

Parents and students speak very highly of the outstanding personal support that students receive. As one parent said, 'The school provides excellent pastoral support – it's embedded in the school's ethos.' Academic guidance has been strengthened since the previous inspection and there are very robust systems to track students' progress and provide appropriate support quickly. Vulnerable students are cared for extremely well.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher consults widely so that staff, parents and students feel part of the decision-making process. Nonetheless, she does not shy away from making very tough decisions when necessary. The senior leadership team works well together and they have played a key role in keeping the school operating smoothly during the move to the new building. The move has been managed very well and although there have been a number of 'teething problems', particularly with the information and communication technology (ICT) system, students are extremely positive about the move and are very proud of the new facilities. Governance of the school is outstanding. The senior leadership team is very ably supported by governors who are well informed, but not afraid to question and challenge senior leaders if they feel it is necessary. The main school provides outstanding value for money and has a good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Issues in the sixth form have been addressed more slowly than in the main school. Achievement is improving and although standards are broadly average they are lower on academic courses than on vocational programmes. There is too much variation in achievement between advanced level subjects. The majority of teachers adapt their teaching to match the changing needs of the students, but a minority have been slow to change and achievement in those subjects remains less satisfactory. The curriculum has expanded and is satisfactory. Courses are offered in partnership with other sixth forms, widening the choice of advanced level courses. However, options are limited for students entering the sixth form with fewer than five GCSE passes at grade C. Students are set challenging targets. Successful monitoring systems used in the main school were introduced into the sixth form last year and have contributed to the improvement in achievement. Systems have been strengthened further this year with the appointment of an 'achievement coach' who monitors progress, completion of assignments and attendance on a daily basis and offers immediate support. Advice on entry to the sixth form has improved this year and students receive good support when applying to university, planning a gap year and looking for employment. Many of the improvements in the sixth form have been made recently and it is too early to assess their full impact.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in Key Stage 3 in the core subjects.
- Improve the overall effectiveness of the sixth form.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards in Key Stage 4 are above average and improving year on year. The proportion of students obtaining at least five GCSE passes with high grades has been steadily rising for the last few years and provisional results show a marked rise in 2008. The school's tracking data are reliable and show that standards in Years 10 and 11 are good and improving. The standard of work seen by inspectors in lessons in Key Stage 4 was good and students at this key stage make very good progress. Standards in Key Stage 3 remain around average and achievement is satisfactory. Achievement in the main school is good with students making good progress overall between Key Stages 2 and 4. Students made good progress in the vast majority of lessons observed by inspectors. No group of students, from any of the minority ethnic backgrounds represented in school, underachieves and the progress made by students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. The school has reached or exceeded almost all the specialist school targets set for the end of Key Stage 4 and for the sixth form, but has missed a few targets set for the end of Key Stage 3 in the core subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development and well-being of students is outstanding in the main school and good in the sixth form. Development is supported well by an outstanding personal and social education programme. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, making a significant contribution to the school's outstanding community cohesion. Students are valued as individuals and they respect the beliefs and cultures of others; this enables them

to work and learn together very effectively. Aspects of this work have received national recognition.

Students feel safe in school and are confident that they can turn to an adult for help if necessary. Behaviour in lessons and around school is very good and bullying is rare and managed effectively. Students feel very well supported and say that any problems are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Early identification and support for those at risk of poor attendance have resulted in significant improvements and attendance is now good. The number of exclusions has also significantly reduced.

Students have a good understanding of the benefits of eating sensibly, keeping fit and being healthy. Students have a strong voice in school. The school council provides important opportunities for students to express opinions that influence decision-making and planning. The school council played an important role in the design of the new building and has contributed to school improvement through the development of school policies.

Many students make effective and positive contributions to their own community and further afield. Students regularly raise money for charities and good causes and there are good links with a school in South Africa. Students enjoy supporting others as peer mentors and buddies. The development of workplace skills is outstanding and the school's specialism plays an important part in developing students' financial and enterprise skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Students enjoy learning because of the good and sometimes outstanding teaching in most lessons. A powerful programme of professional development for teachers has enabled the school to identify good practice and spread it widely. As a result, most lessons are well planned, learning objectives are clear and time is used well on a variety of relevant activities that enable students to learn effectively. Teachers usually leave time towards the end of lessons to recap and assess how well students have done. Sometimes, however, this part of the lesson is rushed, leaving too little time for teachers to consolidate and check on learning. Lessons are characterised by a sense of purpose and good relationships between students and with teachers. This is backed up by an unobtrusive, but effective discipline policy that is well understood by students and applied consistently by teachers. In most lessons, the tasks are sufficiently interesting and challenging to engage students so that they focus on the task in hand and are not tempted to disrupt learning. Teachers are using the new enhanced ICT facilities to make learning more enjoyable. Students learn to think critically through frequent opportunities to assess their own work and that of others. Teachers are adept at asking questions that make students think for themselves, increasing their confidence and encouraging them to ask questions of their own.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good overall with some outstanding features, particularly in Key Stage 4, where well planned pathways give students a wide choice of courses to suit the full range of abilities. There is a highly personalised programme for those students unsuited to a fully academic curriculum. A good and increasing range of vocational courses, many of which are

linked to the school's specialism in business and enterprise, form an essential part of most academic pathways and contribute well to students' understanding of the world of work. Students studying three separate sciences can also study psychology or statistics. At least five modern languages are available and talented linguists have an opportunity to take a GCSE in a modern language early. The sixth form curriculum is satisfactory and improvements to the range of vocational courses have been made this year.

A good programme of enrichment, both in school and outside school hours gives all students opportunities to develop additional interests. 'Off timetable' days spent on special topics such as careers or enterprise are effective in concentrating students' thoughts on important issues and developing skills beyond those learned in lessons.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Staff know their students very well and are dedicated to raising the achievement of every individual in this very inclusive school. The appointment of achievement leaders and coaches has enhanced academic guidance and the extremely high levels of pastoral care have been maintained. Support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for those in public care is outstanding and they make good progress. Parents are very appreciative of the support for their children, particularly for those with speech and language difficulties. The school has very effective systems to track students' progress and very good systems to provide support for any student whose achievement shows signs of slipping. Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements and child protection procedures are well established and understood by staff.

Excellent links with partner primary schools result in students' strengths and needs being identified quickly and ensure a smooth transition between schools. The breakfast club is popular and benefits those who attend. Students are very appreciative of the work the school does to support and guide them. They speak highly of the 'buddies' who helped them settle in quickly in Year 7 and of 'peer mentors' who support them in Years 8 and 9. Excellent links with outside agencies ensure that there is a wide range of specialist support available if required. There is very effective communication with parents. Students receive good information and advice about future options enabling them to make appropriate, informed decisions about subject choices and future educational and career opportunities. Care, guidance and support for students in the sixth form are improving and are now good.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's vision and determination to raise the aspirations of staff and students are an outstanding feature. She has set out clear priorities and managed change very effectively. Senior leaders support the headteacher well and together they are promoting year-on-year improvement in standards and achievement. Increasing GCSE pass rates has been a major priority and provisional results for this year suggest a considerable improvement. The school recognises that some middle leaders are initiating change more effectively than others and action is taken where necessary. Senior and middle leaders collaborate very well to manage the performance of staff effectively. Teaching and learning are accurately

monitored and support and training are provided when required. In-house professional development focuses accurately on the particular needs of the school and is a key strength.

The specialist college status provides many beneficial effects in broadening opportunities for students and improving resources. The school's promotion of community cohesion is outstanding and the newly opened multi-faith centre, a self-contained community resource used by five faith groups, is used well by the school to develop students' understanding of cultural differences.

The work of the governors makes a significant contribution to the success of the school. They have a very good understanding of the school's mission and regularly gather information from a variety of sources so that they can provide support and act as critical friends. Governors and managers have worked very hard to minimise the disruption caused by the extensive rebuilding programme and have been successful in maintaining a good learning environment and stability in the school.

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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?	2	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?	1	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	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/or disabilities make progress	2	

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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?	1	2

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for contributing to the recent inspection of the school. We enjoyed meeting you, seeing you at work and hearing your views. Allerton High is a good school that is improving and it already has a number of outstanding features.

Here is a summary of our findings which we hope will be of interest to you.

- You make good overall progress from entering to leaving the main school and your achievements in Key Stage 4 is significantly better than that of students in similar schools. Examination results at the end of Key Stage 4 are improving year on year but results in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 are not improving as quickly so we have asked the school to improve its Key Stage 3 results.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan lessons well and include a wide range of tasks to keep you interested and make you think. Lessons are managed well and they run very smoothly.
- The curriculum is developing well and the choice of courses in Key Stage 4 is very good with programmes to meet everyone's needs.
- You are prepared extremely well for life when you leave school and almost everyone leaving Year 11 continues with their education/training or finds employment. Your behaviour is very good and you feel safe in school. You come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds and cultures and we were very impressed with the way that you work extremely well together and show respect for each other.
- The care, guidance and support that you receive are outstanding and the support for vulnerable students is exemplary. Your progress against target grades is very closely monitored in Key Stages 3 and 4 and help is provided quickly where necessary.
- A number of changes have been made in the sixth form recently, but it is not yet improving as quickly as the rest of the school. Achievement is satisfactory and the quality of some other aspects of the provision is not as good as in the main school, so we have asked the school to improve the overall effectiveness of the sixth form.
- Mrs Silson is a very strong and effective headteacher. She has a good team of managers supporting her and they know exactly what needs to be done to make the school even better. We hope that you will give them your full support.

We were very impressed with the facilities in the new building and you can be justifiably proud of Allerton High. We would like to congratulate you on being part of such a good school and wish you well for the future.