

The Arnewood School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116495
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	326410
Inspection dates	8–9 October 2008
Reporting inspector	John Seal HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1087
Sixth form	154
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Elizabeth Cook
Headteacher	Mr Christopher Hummerstone
Date of previous school inspection	23 November 2005
School address	Gore Road New Milton BH25 6RS
Telephone number	01425 625400
Fax number	01425 625426

Age group	11–18
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The Arnewood School is a Specialist Technology College. It has an above average number of students. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average. Most students come from White British backgrounds, although there are an increasing number of students from other ethnic groups. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, including those students with statements of special need. There is a nursery on site, which is not managed by the governing body of the school. The school holds the Investors in People Award, Future Visions Community Award and Enhanced Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Arnewood School is a good and improving school. It has worked hard to develop an outstanding curriculum in Years 7 to 11, which is personalised to meet the needs of all its students. The school has used its specialist subject technology extremely well to substantially increase and enhance the number and quality of subject choices. Tailor-made courses have helped to raise the aspirations and confidence of less able students. The school also plays a leading role in the development of 14-19 diplomas in the area which have the potential to enable students in successfully accessing courses to match their needs more closely.

Students' personal development and well-being is good. Students feel very safe and enjoy coming to school. The support and respect shown by all students for each other is a strong feature of the school. Students participate well in physical education (PE) lessons and in extra-curricular sporting activities. Most students are developing healthy eating habits and lifestyles. Some hard-to-reach, persistent non-attenders keep the school's attendance rates broadly in line with the national average. Generally, most students behave well but there are some instances where some staff do not consistently challenge the minority of students who misbehave.

Care guidance and support are good. Many adults are available to give support to students which is well tailored to their needs. Child protection procedures are secure and regularly reviewed. Health and safety is well managed and risk assessments are accurate and appropriate. Support to vulnerable students and those with emotional problems is excellent. Students are well supported in their academic guidance and their progress is monitored well. As a result, they are able to meet or exceed well-matched targets.

Teaching and learning are good. Most teachers are very successful in creating an environment where students are motivated to work hard, enjoy learning and take pride in their work. A key characteristic of many lessons is very good planning which includes a range of teaching styles and well-matched activities, which engage and challenge students of all levels of ability. In the few lessons where classroom management is less effective, low-key disruption interferes with the lesson and consequently progress of the whole group is more limited.

Achievement and standards are good. Students enter the school with standards that vary from year to year but are never less than the national average and often above. During their time in the school, most students make good progress and at the end of Key Stage 3 attain results in English mathematics and science, which are well above those seen nationally. This good progress continues through Key Stage 4 and after a sustained upward trend, the school's unvalidated GCSE results for 2008 look like being the best ever, with a higher than average proportion of students attaining 5+A* to Cs including English and mathematics.

The headteacher has fostered a collaborative senior management team who have a strong commitment to raising standards. Senior leadership, including the governing body, know the school well and are clear about the next steps for improvement. The headteacher has been keen for the school to be an integral part of local and wider community. As a result, the school works well with other schools, agencies and employers. Because of the improvements since the last inspection, rising standards of attainment and a commitment to community cohesion, the school has good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The increased range of courses caters for a wide range of interests and abilities. The school is now considering ways of extending the variety of courses to meet even better, the needs of the middle ability range. Teaching is good which ensures that standards are consistently above average. Most Year 12 students continue into Year 13 with the majority of students completing their courses. The school has introduced a robust targeting scheme, which enables teachers to monitor students' performance frequently to make sure they meet their challenging targets. Students enjoy being in the sixth form and are appreciative of the help and support that their teachers willingly provide. The good curriculum enables students to be guided well in their choice of sixth form subjects and rigorously supported should they choose an unusual combination. Students enjoy good induction processes into the sixth form where they are carefully nurtured. They are encouraged to be independent and to develop their own initiatives. They are also helped in their choice of careers and are very well supported in their applications for university entrance. Students make a considerable contribution to the school and the wider community. They are encouraged to take on responsibilities and develop their leadership skills through the head girl/head boy and prefect system. The school is keen to ensure that students have high quality independent learning skills and expends much care in developing the organisational expertise and maturity of its students. The sixth form is led well and the new director's vision is beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of provision and students' progress.

What the school should do to improve further

- To ensure a higher proportion of teaching matches the best seen in the school.
- To ensure the behaviour policy is consistently applied across the whole school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The schools' unvalidated Key Stage 3 data for 2008 suggests that the school continues to improve with results continuing to be well above average. The 2008 GCSE results, although not yet validated, look like being its best results ever following a sustained and continuous trend of improvement. Strong performing subjects include mathematics, information technology, technology, history and arts and media. Students make good progress throughout the school. The school has effective procedures and systems and teachers closely monitor students' progress. Based on this information, the school is able to ensure that intervention strategies for those students in need of additional support are timely and well matched to their learning needs. All groups of students, including those with learning difficulties and or disabilities, make good progress and in many cases, their attainment is above that expected nationally.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students enjoy being at Arnewood and feel very safe. They say there are very few instances of bullying but should any occur they are confident it will be dealt with immediately and effectively. Older students also offer their services as and;quot;buddiesand;quot; and younger students feel reassured by their presence. Students have generally positive attitudes towards school and their behaviour is good overall. There are a few occurrences when a minority of students'

behaviour is inappropriate. Most staff are well versed and effective in dealing with these instances although there is not a consistent application of the school's policy and procedures. Attendance rates are satisfactory but there are signs of improvement due to the rigorous efforts of the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the previous inspection and is now good overall. An effective system of lesson observations and sharing of best practice across departments has continued to drive up teaching standards. Students make rapid progress when teachers are enthusiastic about their subject, ask probing questions and allow them to express their ideas in class discussion. Effective and imaginative use of information and communication technology (ICT) helps to engage students and support their independent learning. Teachers' frequent reference to examiners' expectations and marking criteria give older students the confidence to more accurately assess and improve their work. Teaching is less effective when too much time is spent on whole-class teaching at the expense of more inter-active tasks and consequently students' progress is slower. Some students and parents comment that behaviour management strategies are not always applied consistently and decisively enough by all teachers and inspectors agree with this. The standard of marking in several departments is exemplary. This practice is not consistent throughout the school. For example, students are not always challenged about the poor standard of presentation of their written work. In some subjects, advice to students on how to improve is missing or not given in a constructive way.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

A reduced Key Stage 3 curriculum for more able students is now firmly established allowing time for enrichment courses and early GCSE entries. Students who are at an early stage of learning English and those needing additional help with their learning receive good support. The school's family laptop scheme for years 7 and 8 provides a good foundation for the development of ICT and independent learning skills. Increased flexibility of the Key Stage 4 curriculum enables students to choose courses that match their individual strengths, interests and learning styles well. A combination of different individualised pathways provides students with a wide range of academic and in-house vocational courses. The school offers a number of vocational courses and accredited extended work placements in close collaboration with the local college and industry. Careers guidance, enterprise initiatives and work experience, supported by links with external business providers, support students' well in their preparation for the world of work. The school promotes students' awareness of safe and healthy lifestyles through the very good personal, social and health education programme. The school has a well-developed international element to its curriculum and students take part in well-planned language and cultural exchanges with France, Germany and Russia. This effectively underpins the global element of the school's promotion of community cohesion. Students are encouraged to become responsible citizens within and outside the school by actively supporting the community through project work, frequently linked to, and supported through its technology specialism. Students appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular activities offered which provide a greater variety to the school day.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school is fully committed to the care of all its students. Close links with local primary schools ensure that the needs of all students are identified early and transition into school is a smooth progress. Students' attendance remains satisfactory despite rigorous tracking. The school continues to tackle persistent non-attenders and there are early signs of the schools' efforts beginning to pay off.

Academic guidance is well developed. The school provides good information and guidance for students and parents are involved with the option choices. Students receive individual advice on pathway to take. The curriculum is wholly personalised, which reflects the school's commitment to care for and guide every individual student into adult life.

The tracking and reviewing of students' progress have improved significantly through an effective, centralised data system. Students are well informed about progress and targets. Students who need additional help with their learning and those who are at the early stages of learning English receive good support and consequently make good progress within a short time.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's accurate self-evaluation has enabled the senior leadership to focus on developing effective strategies to improve standards of attainment at the end of Key Stages 3, 4 and the sixth form. Consequently, the school has met or exceeded many of its challenging and ambitious targets. To support this, there have been effective developments of electronic assessment and recording systems to monitor the rates of progress of all students. Subject leaders are accountable for the performance of their colleagues' teaching performance and regularly monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. Although this has had a generally positive effect, there are some subjects where there are still inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Senior leaders are aware of this and as a result, a faster pace to achieve consistently good teaching is a priority. The senior leadership of the school has worked hard to ensure that the school is an integral part of the local community. The school works closely with its support agencies, primary schools, colleges and employers. As a result, the school's promotion of community cohesion is good. Governors have a clear view of what the school does well and the improvements required. They are closely involved in key decisions and the school's developments, holding the school to account in a business-like fashion. The school has continued to improve since the last inspection. This improvement allied to the well co-ordinated leadership team provides the school with good capacity to improve.

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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	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?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2	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?	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	
The extent to which 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	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

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	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	

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

21 October 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of The Arnewood School, New Milton, BH25 6RS

When we recently visited your school, we were very pleased to meet many of you, visit some of your lessons, look at your work and have a chance to talk with you. The team were interested in the helpfully completed questionnaires from your parents and carers.

We found that the school provides you with a good education. Your headteacher, staff and governors work well together to improve the school. We could see for ourselves that there are many good things about your school. These include.

- You have learned a great amount about English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 9 and your test results are well above average.
- You have good subject teachers and departments including mathematics, information communication technology, technology, art and media.
- The school provides you with very many ways of studying for different courses and subjects and encourages you to use computers to learn in more interesting ways.
- Very many of you behave well in and around the school and most lessons.
- You have many interesting activities that happen out of school including exciting and interesting trips to countries such as France, Germany and Russia.
- The school cares well for you and is able to help you stay healthy and safe.
- The school is led well by the headteacher and his team.

We talked with the staff and governors about the two things they will be working on to help the school to improve even further.

- Make sure there are even more exciting and interesting lessons than there are already.
- Apply the behaviour policy in a more consistent manner.

The staff and governors are keen to make the school even better and I hope that you will work with them.

Yours sincerely

John Seal

Her Majesty's Inspector