

# Onslow St Audrey's School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117547
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	326643
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 May 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Jones HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	478
Sixth form	78
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Heather Dyce
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Paul Meredith
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 July 2006
<b>School address</b>	Old Rectory Drive Hatfield Hertfordshire AL10 8AB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01707 264228
<b>Fax number</b>	01707 262332

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The school was invited to nominate a senior member of staff to join the inspection team in their work and the deputy headteacher accepted this responsibility.

## Description of the school

The students of this smaller-than-average secondary school represent a wide variety of social and economic backgrounds although the proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is just below the national figure, although the proportion of those whose first language is not English is just above the national figure. The ratio of girls to boys varies substantially between year groups. The proportion of students registered by the school as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average and so is the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs. The school provides full extended school provision. Attainment on entry has been well below average but is rising. There are a small number of looked after children in each key stage of the school.

Onslow St Audrey's School was granted specialist business and enterprise status in 2006 and has also received the following national accreditations: Healthy Schools Award, Football Association Charter Mark, and the British Red Cross Humanitarian Award. The school was awarded the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust Award for the most improved school in 2007 and again 2008.

## 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 a good school with a number of outstanding features. Care, guidance and support are outstanding and these have been instrumental in the improvements secured in many areas of the school. The quality of education is good; standards of attainment are above average and achievement rates are good, having risen significantly for the last three years. However further progress is required in English and mathematics. Overall, standards and achievement are satisfactory in the sixth form. The students' attitudes to learning are good. The contribution of the current headteacher to driving forward these improvements over the last three years has been outstanding.

Leadership and management including governance are good, having brought about significant improvements in educational outcomes, behaviour, attendance and provision. Leaders and managers at all levels set a clear direction that has secured real improvement in education and pastoral care. Self-evaluation is good and effective action has been taken against the priorities identified; the school's capacity to improve is good. A number of senior leaders were invited to observe teaching during the inspection; the views they expressed concurred with the judgements given by inspectors. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall; over three quarters of the staff were seen teaching and more than half the lessons observed were judged to be good or better. Academic guidance is good. It is better in mathematics and art than in other subjects where there is some inconsistency.

The students' personal development, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and in particular, their behaviour are good. Attendance is above average and persistent absence has been all but eliminated by excellent intervention strategies. The number of students not in education, employment or training when they leave the school is very low and this is an outstanding achievement. The students are guided towards healthy lifestyles by effective physical education provision and access to good quality school meals. Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements.

Students speak with great affection of the educational opportunities provided; they were keen to praise the 'family' atmosphere and the level of commitment demonstrated by staff. Over half those eligible responded to the parental questionnaire and the overwhelming majority of these parents or guardians were full of praise for the school and the leadership of the headteacher. The inspectors received three negative responses from parents dissatisfied with the school but were unable to substantiate the concerns they raised.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 3

The school has a small but satisfactory sixth form. As part of the Welwyn and Hatfield 16 to 19 Partnership for Learning, the school is able to offer a broad range of post-16 pathways. Curriculum opportunities are good, with a wide range of traditional AS and A levels being offered in conjunction with vocational studies, and from September 2009 some of the new advanced diplomas. However the range of vocational opportunities available is underdeveloped. Around three quarters of those Year 12 students who take AS-level courses are taught one or more subjects at other schools within the partnership and sixth form students from other schools are taught some subjects at Onslow St Audrey's School. The school acknowledges that working within the consortium of local schools has helped raise the expectations of students and staff.

Standards of attainment are broadly average and student achievement is satisfactory overall. Those students who complete their A-level courses in Year 13 make above average progress but those involved in Year 12 courses are less successful. Securing broadly average outcomes at A level is a significant achievement for sixth form students when their formative years were spent in a school requiring special measures.

The students' personal development is good and their attitudes to learning are very positive. A wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities are available and many students are keen to make a contribution to the school. Most Year 13 students proceed to university; currently three former students are studying at Oxford or Cambridge.

Care, guidance and support are good. The clear impact of the educational improvement and high quality of care provided for the sixth form by leaders and managers at all levels is evidenced by the very low numbers of students not in education, employment or training when they leave school. Inspectors found the majority of the Year 13 teaching to be good or outstanding, with a significant focus on enabling students to extend their independent learning skills and to make good progress. Very positive professional relationships between staff and students result in adult, purposeful learning environments. Students are given good opportunities to explore new areas of interest and to play an important role in the life of the school, for example in the Red Cross Humanitarian initiative. Effective leadership of the sixth form ensures that high expectations are shared with learners and staff to raise achievement further.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Continue to improve academic standards across the curriculum, placing significant emphasis on the number of students gaining a level 2 qualification in English and mathematics.
- Increase the range of vocational opportunities provided in the sixth form.
- Develop academic guidance across the curriculum to the level found in mathematics and art.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

In the 2008 examinations, the proportion of students who gained five higher grade GCSE passes, 60%, was close to the national average and the proportion who gained five A\* to G grade GCSEs was above the national figure. The proportion of students who gained five higher grade GCSEs that included English and mathematics was significantly below the national average. When the students' educational progress across all measures is considered, achievement is significantly above the national average; the students' contextual value added outcomes ranked the school amongst the top three in Hertfordshire. As attainment on entry was well below average, attainment and achievement are good, standards have risen significantly for the last three years and are satisfactory.

In the 2008 public examinations, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities made similar progress to that of their peers, although those who receive both support from the school and from other agencies did well at GCSE. The small number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds progress as well as their peers.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is good. The school is one of only two in the country to be awarded the Red Cross Humanitarian School Award. Students'

awareness of cultural diversity is enhanced through weekly assemblies, where reflection is encouraged, and through the personal, social, health and citizenship programme. A lunchtime multilingual club and the 'Language of the Month' initiative are helping to raise the profile of modern foreign language. The school takes the safety of its students seriously and nine out of ten say that they feel safe in school and that instances of racism and bullying are rare but are dealt with appropriately. The students value the closed circuit television system and the work of the counselling staff, and were quick to praise the weekly 'drop-ins' run by the Head Boy and Head Girl.

Students spoke positively about the healthy eating options available and the wide range of sporting events and sports leadership opportunities offered; many are involved in leading sporting activities in local primary schools. A particular strength is the Food Hygiene and the First Aid certificate courses taken by all Year 9 students.

Students' pride in and enjoyment of their school have increased since the previous inspection, and this is reflected in their much improved attendance and punctuality, which are now good. Most take part in activities and visits and every eligible student attended the newly introduced school 'prom'. Former students help to emphasise the 'family school' concept by returning to take part in shows and to contribute to inspirational displays. Behaviour around school and in lessons is generally good. Students take increasing responsibility for their own conduct and learning, for example through the Year 7 'Learning to Learn' initiative and the school Parliament, which helped to draft the 'Behaviour for Learning Charter'. Students' charitable fund raising and community group support are two aspects of their excellent contribution to the school and wider community. The students are well prepared for their future economic well-being through an imaginative programme of workplace experience. Lessons emphasise the business and enterprise skills, which arise from the school's status. All Year 10 students benefit from work experience and the range of vocational courses for older students has increased.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Inspectors judged just over half of the significant number of lessons observed to be good and the combination of this solid provision and the students' positive attitudes to learning have helped secure better progress than noted in the previous report because lessons are interesting and well planned. Teachers are well supported through in-service training, and they have gained confidence in using a variety of ways to engage students actively in lesson tasks. The impact of these developments is seen in improved attendance and better classroom behaviour so learning is more consistent and achievement is rising. Students are keen to be involved in the wide range of additional classes and informal support available.

The school regularly monitors the quality of teaching and learning and supports teachers in developing good assessment systems that enable them to know how well they are doing and how to improve. Students note that assessment feedback gives them confidence in their ability to progress.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are at an early stage of learning English are generally well supported, but support staff are not available in all lessons. The school's specialist status has encouraged staff to use practical, 'real-world' contexts.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good because it meets the needs of all learners and underpins the good progress which is now increasingly evident across the school. A particular strength is the provision for vocational-related learning for students in Years 10 and 11, supported through work experience and links with the local business community. There are systems to enable students to get off to a 'flying start' by commencing the Year 11 and Year 13 studies early and this is providing more specialist teaching time in these critical examination years. The school's specialist status as a business and enterprise college has led to significant improvement in preparing students for adult life. Effective contributions to the specialist curriculum from subjects such as mathematics and design technology are helping to raise standards, although more could be done in other subjects.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Care, guidance and support are excellent. Safeguarding procedures, risk assessments and required policy documents are firmly in place and all staff are trained in child protection and digital security. The school works very effectively with outside agencies such as the police liaison officer and the careers-focused Connexions service. Vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties, particularly with speech and language, are extremely well provided for by the dedicated inclusion and speech therapy staff in the specialist unit, whose individual attention ensures that students return to main school lessons and reach their full potential. All students have access to counsellors who create thoughtful strategies to support emotional and behavioural needs. Students new to the school are well integrated on admission and they receive good advice about future careers and subject options. Academic guidance is good overall, because staff have high expectations of students and provide appropriate feedback. However, the best guidance is found in mathematics and art where effective target-setting and early intervention help to identify those in need of support and enable good progress to be made; inconsistency of practice remains in other subject areas.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The leadership and management of the school are good. The significant improvement in GCSE results and pupils' progress has been the result of the headteacher's pertinent decision to focus on the quality of provision and the students' personal development. The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. The improvements secured in teaching, students' progress and behaviour were a feature of an above-average proportion of positive parental responses to the inspection questionnaire. The business and enterprise specialist school status has resulted in curriculum enhancement and rising standards.

Quality assurance procedures are robust and the use of assessment information to inform management decisions has improved rapidly. The school development plan is very clear, reflecting agreed priorities; resource management is good and the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The school provides good value for money.

Senior managers direct improvement and promote the well-being of learners through outstanding care, guidance and support, and this has been at the heart of the improvements made within the school. The governance of the school is good, with a very strong focus on the needs of the local community and the governing body's role as a critical friend. Community cohesion is outstanding, not just because of the significant efforts to support local community initiatives, but on a global basis through the cultural and humanitarian support offered, for example to communities in Uganda.



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

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	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	

<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	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	2	

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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?	1	2

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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?	1	
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**

15 May 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Onslow St Audrey's School, Hatfield, AL10 8AB

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the way you contributed to the inspection of the school.

This was the second occasion in four years I have had the pleasure of visiting your school and I made a point of telling the headteacher and the governors how much improvement I could see. Standards and achievement have been rising for three years and this is wonderful news; however, I was particularly impressed by the good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning the inspectors witnessed.

So many of you were keen to tell us what you like about the school and this was supported by the above average rates of attendance you maintain. Your parents were also very impressed by the school and by the leadership of the headteacher. The proportion of positive responses to the parental questionnaires I received was well above average; please give your parents my thanks for taking the time and trouble to add their personal comments. In order to help the school move forward I have asked the headteacher to focus on:

- the further improvement of academic standards across the curriculum, placing significant emphasis on the number of students gaining a level 2 qualification in English and mathematics
- increasing the range of vocational opportunities provided in the sixth form
- developing the academic guidance in other subjects to the level you receive in mathematics and art.

I hope to visit the school again one day and I wish you well for the future.

Yours faithfully

David Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector