

Allertonshire School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121678
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	327547
Inspection dates	17–18 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Christopher Keeler 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	11–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	697
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tony Hall
Headteacher	Mr D Bradley
Date of previous school inspection	23 November 2005
School address	Brompton Road Northallerton North Yorkshire DL6 1ED
Telephone number	01609 772888
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Age group	11–14
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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

Allertonshire School is a mixed comprehensive technology specialist college educating students from age 11 to 14. The attainment of students on entry is generally in line with the national average. Students are almost exclusively of White British heritage. The numbers of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals are below the national average. The current headteacher joined the school in 2006. Since this time the composition of the senior leadership team has changed significantly and a number of staff are relatively new to post.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Allertonshire School is a good school. It is well led by the headteacher who places the needs and welfare of the students at the heart of school. This is why parents acknowledge the good quality care and support for which the school has a deservedly good reputation.

Students make good progress and achieve standards that are above the national average in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave at the end of Year 9. All students are given equal opportunities to succeed and they take good advantage of it. As a result there is no marked difference between the progress made by different groups of students. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make equally good progress as do those students identified as gifted and talented. The school rightly recognises the need to make much better use of the data it is collecting in respect of individual student's progress as a means of raising standards even higher. This is indicative of good leadership and demonstrates how well the senior leadership team, under the direction of the headteacher, is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

The quality of teaching is good and examples of outstanding teaching were observed during the inspection. Teachers display a good command of their subject and are clear as to what they want students to learn. In the best lessons the level of engagement between the teacher and students was high and accompanied by challenging and stimulating tasks. Students respond positively and many are self-motivated to learn and this is why they make good progress. On occasions teachers dominate the lesson and introductions are disproportionate to the time students spend on applying and reinforcing newly acquired skills and knowledge. As a consequence, a minority of students do not apply themselves as well as they might and this hinders their progress.

The standard of behaviour is good. In lessons students work cooperatively and collaboratively and this impacts positively on their learning. Relationships between staff and students and between the students themselves are good. It is not surprising therefore that students enjoy school and this can be seen in the high rate of attendance and the extent to which they participate in extra-curricular activities. Students make a good contribution to the school community through the Healthy School Forum and they have a very good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students is good. A broad and balanced curriculum enables students to develop intellectually and emotionally. The recent focus on thinking skills through 'Learning for Life' is successfully challenging students' perceptions and encouraging them to consider issues more deeply. This is reflected in their good personal development.

The quality of care and support is good. The mixed-year family tutor groups are designed to enable staff to monitor the students' academic and social development on an individual level. This is a good example of the school's intention to focus on the individual and give support as and when required. This is appreciated by students who talk highly of this initiative. However, it is too soon to evaluate the impact of this on standards. The support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and well managed. Academic guidance is satisfactory. A system to track students' performance has recently been established. Some departments, for example English, are making use of it to identify students that require further support. However, this is not the case in all subjects. The analysis of data is not rigorous enough to allow the

senior leadership to have a clear picture of trends in performance or for subject leaders to evaluate strengths and weaknesses within their department.

The headteacher demonstrates good leadership. He has a good understanding of the needs of the school and is conscious of where improvements can be made based on accurate self-evaluation. Since his appointment in 2006 he has overseen a number of staff changes, not least the formation of a relatively new senior leadership team. The senior leadership team share the vision of the headteacher and are successfully working in partnership to introduce a number of initiatives designed to improve the quality of educational provision. Subject leaders, many of whom are relatively new in post, are not sufficiently involved in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and ensuring that agreed practices are consistently carried out, for example, the regularity of homework. The governing body is very supportive of the school and carries out its responsibilities effectively.

What the school should do to improve further

- Use assessment data more effectively to indicate precisely how well students are doing and what is required to help them improve.
- Develop the role of subject leaders in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and ensure that agreed practices are implemented throughout the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The achievement of the students is good. Students enter the school with overall standards generally in line with the national averages. They make good progress in their studies and achieve above average standards by the end of Year 9. Progress is best in English and science, which have been particularly strong for the past two years with a good proportion of students achieving at the higher National Curriculum levels.

Progress in mathematics has been adversely affected by staffing difficulties, but as a result of appropriate actions being taken, students still make satisfactory progress. There are no marked differences between the achievement of different groups of learners. Able students achieve well and develop a good range of knowledge and skills that equip them well for further study. Gifted students are provided with chances to extend their studies: a small group achieved GCSE grades in statistics. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are also well supported and, as a result, make good progress. The school has recently established a mechanism to record students' progress. This information is used effectively to target extra support, particularly for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, the analysis of data lacks rigour.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development of students is good. They are confident, work together effectively and enjoy learning. Students take part in a wide range of out-of-school activities and visits. Physical education and music activities are particularly strong. Many students play sports after school and the school band undertakes regular visits to countries abroad as well as being involved in local community events. Students also value their involvement in school drama productions. These activities, when combined with success in their studies, prepare students well for future life. The Healthy School Forum has extended its role and is proving effective in

enabling students to make a difference to school facilities and provides opportunities for discussing how to make their school better. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools Award and is increasing the numbers of students taking school meals by involving students in catering decisions and providing healthy options. Students enjoy coming to school and attendance is above the national average. Overall, behaviour is good with most students concentrating in the classroom and being courteous and helpful around the school. However, when teaching fails to engage their interests, a minority of students lack motivation and become restless. This occasionally slows the learning of others. Some parents continue to be concerned about bullying, but the few incidents are dealt with effectively. Students say they feel safe in school and know who to turn to if they have a problem. Students are developing an understanding of how they can learn better and cope with stress. Their spiritual, moral social and cultural development is good and well supported by innovative school programmes. Students make a good contribution to their school and local community and, through a number of curriculum strands, are developing an understanding of Britain as a diverse society.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and demonstrate, model and explain clearly what students are to learn. Lessons are planned in detail to ensure that students learn through a range of activities. There are clear learning objectives so that students know what they are to achieve in lessons. Teachers use questions well to ascertain what students already know and to extend their thinking. Students' behaviour and attitudes are good and they work well independently and with others, often supporting one another in their learning. Relationships between teachers and students in lessons are good. Occasionally, a very small minority of students are distracted when work is less engaging. In these instances teachers dominate too much, lessons lack a brisk pace and activities are not sufficiently challenging. Homework is set to extend students' learning but it is not set consistently across the school. Teachers use a range of strategies to check that students have made progress in lessons, including self-assessment and peer-assessment. However, the analysis and use of data and the implementation of accepted practices in relation to the quality of marking and the use of homework by teachers across subject departments are inconsistent. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to support those students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, making a positive impact on progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced and is designed to meet the individual needs of all students. The most able students study two languages and complete a course in GCSE statistics. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are quickly identified and programmes are implemented to meet their needs. Specialist status has had a positive impact on the development of information and communication technology (ICT) across school and on the recent development of courses to enable students to develop their learning and their thinking skills. Students have also been encouraged to participate in activities, such as creating a garden, that develop their understanding of environmental and sustainability issues. These courses are popular with students although it is too soon to measure their impact on students' achievement. Strong programmes of personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE)

support and promote students' good personal development. The school has recognised the need to develop students' awareness of vocational choices and has extended its programme of careers, education and guidance to all year groups. The school offers a wide range of activities designed to enrich students' learning such as competitions in science, field trips and annual visits abroad. Students also enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular activities, such as sports, ICT and creative activities, in which they participate eagerly.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support provided by the school is good. Students are already benefiting from the recently created mixed aged family tutor groups and the 'Learning for Life' programme. They enjoy supporting those new to their tutor group. Excellent liaison with primary schools ensures that students make a good start in school and the 'Flying Start' programme offers help for those requiring additional support. The dedication and skill of Learning Support and the Social Inclusion Departments enable vulnerable students to thrive, enjoy school and make the same good progress as other students in school. The school is rightly proud of the excellent strategies to support the more vulnerable and those who require additional support owing to their learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Students contribute to the planning of the PSHCE to ensure it effectively meets their needs and the programme is supplemented by activity days such as the Crime Awareness Day which has received national recognition.

The school meets the statutory regulations for safeguarding students all of whom are happy at school and attend regularly. Effective partnership work ensures students receive effective information and guidance relating to health issues and about their future options. Academic guidance, however, is less well developed. Not all students are clear about the standard of their work, targets or what they must do to improve. Inspectors found that behaviour was managed effectively. The vast majority of parents expressed appreciation for the care, guidance and support provided.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher demonstrates good leadership. He has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and this is reflected in accurate self-evaluation. Plans to take the school forward are appropriate and reflect an emphasis on the development of the whole student and raising academic standards even higher. The leadership and management are committed to providing the best possible education for all students. All students are afforded equal opportunities to prepare them for their future well-being. Curriculum initiatives such as 'Learning for Life' and 'Philosophy for Children' are developing student's self-confidence, ability to think and respect for the opinions of others. These attributes are enhancing learning across the curriculum.

At the heart of all that the headteacher does and plans to do, is the needs and interests of the individual student. This is reflected in the recently introduced leadership team structure with family tutors and heads of house focusing on monitoring every student's progress and welfare throughout their time at the school. While it is too early to judge the impact of this innovation on standards, students view it as a positive move. Changes at senior leadership level mean that some subject leaders, particularly in English, mathematics and science, have only been in post

a very short time. They are working hard and beginning to make a difference especially with regard to curriculum development and re-evaluating systems to monitor the progress of students. However, the school acknowledges that some departments, for example, English and to a lesser extent mathematics, are more advanced than others, particularly in respect of the use of data to enhance students' progress and in monitoring what goes on in classrooms, particularly with regard to the implementation of agreed school policies.

Governors are very supportive of the work of the school. They are well informed and discharge their responsibilities well. Given the vision and effective leadership of the headteacher, the emergence of a forward thinking, self-motivated senior leadership team and a governing body that will hold the school to account, the capacity to improve is good.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	1
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
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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
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 your warm welcome when I and the other inspectors visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you during lessons, in meetings and around the school. The opinions that you expressed certainly contributed to our work in inspecting the school. You and your parents had also completed questionnaires that we found particularly helpful.

I thought that you would like to know the outcomes of the inspection.

- Allertonshire School is a good school.
- Standards are above average and you make good progress, particularly in English.
- Relationships between staff and students are good.
- Behaviour is generally good although a minority of students do not focus sufficiently during lessons.
- Attendance is excellent.
- You demonstrate an excellent awareness of what constitutes a healthy life style.
- The quality of teaching is good and this why you make good progress.
- The school is well led and managed. The headteacher provides clear direction and together with the staff is determined to give you every opportunity to succeed in life.

In order to improve the school, I have asked the senior leadership team to do two things.

- Look more closely at data that tells them about the progress you are making and use it to give some of you targeted support to help you improve.
- Develop the role of subject leaders so that they have a good idea of what is going on during lessons and that school policies such as marking and homework are carried out in a consistent way across subjects.

I would like to wish you all the very best for the future.