

Alleyne's High School

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	124417
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	328135
Inspection dates	19–20 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Michael Shaw

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	13–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	928
Sixth form	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Lockley
Headteacher	Karen Lockett
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2006
School address	Oulton Road Stone ST15 8DT
Telephone number	01785 354200
Fax number	01785 354222

Age group	13–18
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Amended Report Addendum

Report amended due to administration error

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Alleyne's High School is of average size but with a relatively large sixth form. This is the fifth year of the school being a technology college. The proportion of students eligible for a free school meal is below average. The percentage of students with a statement of special educational needs is above the national average whilst the proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is low. The school has received a number of awards, including ones for promoting healthy lifestyles, information and communication technology (ICT) and the arts. A new headteacher took up post in September 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Alleyne's provides a satisfactory quality of education both in the main school and in the sixth form. Leadership and management are good. The new headteacher, enthusiastically supported by a radically restructured senior team has, in just a few months, increased the focus on raising achievement. Actions are beginning to have the intended effect, exemplified by the way in which underachievement by some students on A-level courses has been rectified. Students speak highly of the ways in which the school is changing. They praise the new house system for adding to their enjoyment of school and increasing opportunities to take part in sports and other competitions. The school is rightly proud of being a comprehensive school in every respect, providing appropriately for students of all abilities and backgrounds. It is effective in promoting equality and eliminating discrimination. One example is the way in which the access unit makes a good provision for students experiencing difficulties in following a normal school programme.

Students attain average standards, and this represents satisfactory achievement. There is no significant difference in achievement between any groups of students. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as other students. Achievement in mathematics is lower than in other subjects, which is a key reason why overall achievement is not currently higher. Learning is satisfactory as a result of satisfactory teaching. Whilst the best lessons stimulate and excite students, too rarely do students have the chance to explore issues in depth and to test out ideas. Learning does not consistently provide students with enough of the challenges they clearly enjoy. Therefore, whilst the pace of learning is acceptable, it is not fast enough to ensure greater achievement. Nevertheless, the good curriculum provided by the school, working well in conjunction with colleges and industry, provides students with a good range of subjects. This helps to increase motivation and the numbers remaining in education after the age of 16.

Specialist technology status is having a good impact on learning. Standards in technology have risen. The school offers a wider range of courses than before. Achievement has increased and is meeting needs and interests more appropriately. Teachers use ICT well as a tool for learning. The school is making a notable contribution to developing the teaching of technology in partner middle schools. The school is now running a television station, a huge motivator for students. Good use is made of links forged with a range of industrial partners.

The personal development and well-being of students are good. Students demonstrate maturity and act considerately towards fellow students, staff and visitors. They adopt healthy lifestyles. Above average and improving rates of attendance reflect students' enjoyment of school. They are safety conscious and any rare incidents of bullying are swiftly and effectively tackled. Students make notable contributions both to the school community, as shown by the effective school council, and to the local community. They are well prepared for working life. Students have a good moral awareness. However, conversations with some students reveal that their understanding of life in today's multicultural Britain is less well developed.

The quality of care, support and guidance is good. Students appreciate the high standard of pastoral care provided. However, academic support is not as strong. Students know the examination grades to aim for but do not always receive clear, detailed advice on the next steps for improvement.

The school has taken effective steps to bring about improvement since the previous inspection. Currently, it has a satisfactory capacity to make further improvement. Although change is beginning to be effected, it is too early to assess fully the impact of the new school leadership.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Students enter the sixth form with average standards, which they sustain. Achievement is satisfactory. This applies to academic and vocational courses. In 2007 and 2008 students achieved less in the second year of their A-level courses than in the first year. Following detailed analysis of results, guidance to students has been refined so that they are now following more appropriate courses and achievement is beginning to rise.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Relationships are good and students say that teachers are always willing to help them improve their work. The curriculum is good, with a wide range of courses at a variety of levels, encouraging students to remain in education. The enrichment programme complements examination courses well, developing skills such as debating. The personal development of students is good and they make an outstanding contribution to the local community, helping younger students as mentors, serving as role models and raising considerable amounts of money for charity.

As in the main school, not all students know the precise ways to improve their work. Sixth form students greatly appreciate the recent changes made to the sixth form, with students in Year 13 being very positive about, for example, the pronounced focus on achievement. There is now a clear vision for the development of the sixth form, and its leadership and management are satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching, especially in relation to the level of challenge presented to students and improve the pace of learning.
- Provide all students with detailed information in every subject on how to improve their work.
- Ensure that all students are well prepared for life in a multicultural society.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students enter the school with standards that are in line with the national average. Standards at the end of Year 9 are also broadly average and this represents satisfactory achievement. In 2008, GCSE standards were at the national average, showing that students had achieved satisfactorily. Standards attained by students currently in Year 11 are also broadly average. These students entered the school with slightly lower standards than the previous cohort. Hence, whilst their standards also reflect satisfactory achievement, they sustain the trend of year-on-year increase in achievement over the last four years. This has been most noticeable in English, where standards have risen from being significantly below average to now being at the national average. By contrast, standards in mathematics remain significantly below the national average and students' progress is not as good. Standards in science and ICT are above average and students achieve well in these subjects.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as other students. Teachers know their needs well and these students are well supported in lessons. Some of these students follow a modified curriculum, meeting their needs well and so helping them to achieve as they do.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Alleyne's students show outstanding social skills. They express their own views with great confidence and listen with consideration to those of others. They support each other well when working in teams. The school council provides valuable opportunities for students to participate in the running of the school, for example when interviewing candidates for the headship or advising the school on the teaching of personal, social and health education.

Students generally behave well around the school. They relate well to each other and to their teachers. They have a strong understanding of right and wrong. Behaviour is satisfactory and too frequently students do not appreciate the need for urgency. They can be slow to move to lessons and movement from one activity to another in class often takes longer than expected, reducing the time available for learning. On a few occasions when teaching is less stimulating, the behaviour of a small minority of students adversely affects the learning of others. Although students' moral and social development is good, their awareness of Britain as a multicultural society is more limited.

Work experience and the enjoyable enterprise days are just two examples of how students develop a good appreciation of working life and economic awareness.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Students and teachers benefit from good relationships, giving students the assurance to participate. Teachers know their subjects well, as they do the requirements of examinations for which students are being prepared. This results in students having confidence in their teachers. In the best lessons, there is an appropriate variety to the approaches and methods used and work is at a suitable level for differing groups of learners. In too many lessons, students spend too long listening to their teachers. Learning is at its best when students are active, rather than passive learners. Students enjoy exploring ideas and taking charge of their own learning. Teachers do not seize opportunities for their classes to learn in this way often enough, adversely affecting the pace of learning.

The quality of marking of work is varied. The best marking informs students exactly the level they have reached and offers specific guidance on the next steps for improvement. When this is the case, students are set demanding yet attainable targets. In other instances, marking is more superficial and, during the inspection, a small number of instances were observed in which students had considerable amounts of unmarked work in exercise books. In these cases, while students had targets for which to aim, the targets might be undemanding or unachievable or the student had minimal understanding of how to reach their expected level.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum offers a good blend of academic and vocational subjects, allowing students to follow and develop individual interests and needs well. The courses at differing ages harmonise well so that, whichever pathway a student selects, stages are smoothly linked. The provision is regularly reviewed, meeting changes in demand well. Collaboration with other institutions is strong and is being developed to allow the school to augment its provision with the new diplomas to be introduced from September 2009. Currently, the impact of the programme of personal, social and health education is not maximised. It is delivered in a rather disparate manner. The school recognises this limitation and is moving to implement a team approach for this work. Similarly, it is taking steps to develop the programmes in place for gifted and talented students. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, including sport and music. A recent talent competition not only provided much good-natured competition and enjoyment but also gave students the opportunity to overcome nerves and perform on stage in front of a large audience. Large numbers of students participate in the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme and the sports ambassadors programme provides valued support to middle schools.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school is rightly proud of its caring ethos. Staff work as a purposeful and committed team to ensure that students are well supported and receive high levels of care. Child protection and safeguarding procedures are robust. Vulnerable students receive good support from well before the time they arrive at the school. The school works closely with agencies such as social services to meet appropriately the needs of all students.

Students receive helpful guidance as they move through the school. They speak with praise of their interviews with senior staff shortly after joining the school. Students are well supported by advice when choosing courses. The quality of advice on how to make academic improvement is not consistently of the same quality as these other facets of guidance.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The new leadership is in the process of forming a fresh evaluation of all aspects of the school's performance. Robust methods have been adopted and data are analysed thoroughly and rigorously. The emerging picture is providing a powerful tool for future improvement. Understandably, given the time since the new head instigated this process, the success of this work is not yet fully evident. The quality of self-evaluation is currently satisfactory but improving at a good rate. A significant development has been the changes made to the system of setting targets for the school. In the past, this process had limited effect because some targets were exceeded by large amounts while others were missed by equally wide margins. This process has now been radically refined to focus far more closely on prior attainment of individual students. It is, as yet, too early to evaluate the full effect of this new system.

Middle managers share the vision emanating from the new headteacher, and her enthusiasm to raise achievement reflects clearly throughout the school. Actions are being taken to tackle areas of underperformance, an important example being in mathematics where steps to improve

management are being taken. The school gives good value for money, particularly in providing a good curriculum and bringing about good levels of personal development. It has avoided high levels of staff turnover or recruitment difficulties which might accompany this level of income and so provides good value for money.

Certain aspects of the school's work to develop community cohesion are good. Different groups of students achieve equally well. Students contribute significantly to the school and local communities. Links with schools in other countries such as Poland and South Africa help students develop an understanding of the global community. Whilst there are some opportunities for students to work actively with others from different ethnic, religious and social backgrounds, these are not yet sufficiently strong so that all students have a secure understanding of the nature of society in modern Britain. Overall, the school's work in this area is satisfactory.

The school consults widely with students and parents. Parents are, in the main, supportive of the school. Governors have a good, detailed knowledge of the school and provide the school with good levels of support. They have the potential to make an even greater impact by becoming involved in the school's processes of self-evaluation at an earlier stage, so giving this process an additional input.

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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?	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	3	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/or disabilities make progress	3	

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	3	
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	2
The attendance of learners	2	3
The behaviour of learners	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3	3
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?	2	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	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3	
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 January 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Alleyne's High School, Stone, ST15 8DT

On behalf of all the inspectors who visited your school this week, I would like to thank you for making us feel welcome and assisting us with our work. You impressed us by the mature way in which you informed us about life at Alleyne's.

Our judgement is that Alleyne's provides you with a satisfactory quality of education. The standards you reach are in line with the national average and this means that you make satisfactory progress. Mathematics is one subject in which you do not achieve as much as in your other work. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. You get on well with your teachers and they have a good understanding of what you need for examinations. But you would learn more if you had more challenge in some of your lessons. You learn best when you are actively involved in the lesson rather than when just listening to your teacher.

We know that you have targets for all your subjects but you could make better use of these if you were told precisely what to concentrate upon for the next steps of improvement. Some teachers already do this.

The curriculum is good. You have plenty of choice so you can choose subjects that are right for you. Your personal development is good. You adopt healthy lifestyles and are well prepared for working life. However, it seems that some of you have only a rather sketchy view of life in our present day multicultural society. You respect one another. Some of you take too long getting to lessons or moving, in class, from one activity to the next. This means that, overall, your behaviour is satisfactory. The school cares well for you and we were impressed that you all felt confident that school staff would help you with any problem you might have.

Like you, we are impressed with the leadership of the school and the changes your headteacher and her team are bringing about. The school is well led and managed. To help the school develop further we have asked the school to do three things.

- Provide you with more challenge in lessons. When this happens, make sure you get involved; do not just think it's for someone else.
- Give you helpful advice on exactly how to meet your targets in every subject.
- Make sure you develop your awareness of life in multicultural Britain.

Best wishes

Michael Shaw

Lead inspector