

Henley in Arden High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125733
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	328388
Inspection dates	9–10 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Ahson Mohammed

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	619
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Sturges
Headteacher	Paul Wright
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2006
School address	Stratford Road Henley-in-Arden Solihull B95 6AF
Telephone number	01564 792364
Fax number	01564 792411

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is smaller than most secondary schools. Almost all students are of White British heritage with a few from a number of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. The school has a performing arts specialism, which it gained in 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Henley in Arden High School is a satisfactory school with notable strengths but has some important weaknesses. 'This is a happy, welcoming school', is the message that inspectors received from parents. The school's values underpin all its work and contribute greatly to the students' good personal development and the atmosphere in the school. Students are open, friendly and developing confidence in themselves because of the positive relationships that are evident throughout the school. The vast majority enjoy coming to school and many take advantage of the extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities. Students are well cared for and supported. They are confident that they have someone to turn to if in difficulty and feel safe in the school.

Performing arts specialism has benefited the personal development of many students by raising their self-esteem through active involvement in the organisation and running of productions. Students' success in large-scale performances highlight the teamwork, long-term commitment and additional experiences that many teachers generously give time to provide, especially for the gifted and talented students. This aids and supports the satisfactory curriculum and the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The achievement of students overall is satisfactory but pockets of underachievement exist, particularly for boys in Year 11. This is because there is too much didactic teaching and not enough good, engaging teaching to accelerate students' progress to the point where they reach higher standards. Students do well when teachers take advantage of their willingness to learn, challenge them to work hard and make them think for themselves. However, work is sometimes not matched well enough to students' needs because teachers do not routinely use information gained from assessments to adjust their teaching to more precisely meet students', particularly boys', needs.

Much work has gone into addressing the issues from the last inspection in developing the use of performance data to identify underachievement and to support progress. However, across the school this is not used effectively because departments are inconsistent in their evaluation of assessment data to set challenging targets and in assessing the impact of the provision in their subject area. While some leaders are clear in their role of holding staff to account for the quality of classroom practice and student outcomes, others focus on the provision rather than its impact on learning. This is particularly evident in the variable quality of marking and target setting to let students know how well they should be doing and what they have to do to improve. This reduces the ability of senior staff to bring about the necessary changes quickly. The headteacher and other senior staff regularly monitor the school's work but there is not enough rigour in the evaluation of information gained from monitoring and in some cases the judgements are overgenerous.

Despite these inconsistencies, senior managers have worked hard at improving the fabric of the school building to create an environment conducive to learning. They have ensured that behaviour is consistently good across the school. These successes show the school's satisfactory capacity for improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the attainment and achievement of boys by ensuring that all teaching fully engages their attention.

- Refine the systems for analysing and tracking the students' progress to ensure that data is well used by teachers to plan the next steps in students' learning and to set challenging targets.
- Ensure that marking and target setting consistently help the students to know what they have to learn next and how to improve.
- Ensure that the outcomes of monitoring are evaluated rigorously and used more effectively to shape school improvement.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged 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

The achievement of students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is satisfactory. From average starting points, students reach average standards in Year 11. The progress of some boys is slow, especially in GCSE classes and they reach standards below those of the girls. This is because boys are not always sufficiently challenged by teaching or engaged by the curriculum and so become disaffected with school. This trend has been evident for the past three years, showing the strategies to narrow the gap between boys' and girls' progress have not been effective. Progress in subjects is variable. For example, in mathematics, students progress well, particularly when they are solving mathematical problems, because the good teaching challenges them well. In English, progress is slow because teaching does not stretch students enough and the curriculum is not interesting them sufficiently, especially in their writing. Progress in science and in gaining computer skills is satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students have a strong sense of community and purpose. This is demonstrated by many students' willingness to participate in activities and accept responsibilities such as the eco group and fundraising for charities. However, the attendance rate, although improving, remains below the national average. The school is working towards healthy school status; it has already changed caterers and improved modules in food technology to target healthy eating alongside the already good outcomes for participation in physical activity.

Students feel very safe in school. Instances of bullying are few, and where they exist there is confidence that swift action will be taken to resolve them. Behaviour is good, with students showing mutual respect for each other. The student voice has been strengthened through the school council and mentoring programmes. Students feel they are listened to and that this is an 'open' and responsive school. Their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. This is reinforced by the specialist arts status and demonstrated in the attitudes of students and the coherent inclusive atmosphere.

Future economic well-being and preparation for the world of work are systematic and focused in terms of careers advice, enterprise education and work experience. However, some students', particularly boys', economic well-being is hampered by their slow progress in literacy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers' knowledge of their subjects is good and the relationships established with their students are generally good. As a result, most students listen and take an interest. The variety of activities provided by teachers in their lessons are generally enjoyed by girls but less so by boys. Where teaching is good, effective use of interactive whiteboards enhance presentations and students' understanding of what is expected of them and, as a result, they know what to do. Challenging questions enable teachers to evaluate students' understanding of what they have learned.

Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, teachers do not target specific students with their questions so that their assessment is less effective. Although all lessons seen had challenging learning objectives, the tasks set to enable students to meet them were sometimes not tailored to the learning needs of different groups. This means that all students were expected to carry out the same task, regardless of their different abilities. Students are not generally guided to assess their work for themselves so that they can set their own targets for improvement or relate their work to the targets set for them in that subject. Teaching assistants are deployed well to help students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that they are helped to make satisfactory progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Opportunities for learning have been strengthened by the links the school has established with other schools and colleges to broaden avenues for study, linked to students' career aspirations. Students are positive about these additional courses. The personal development programme is providing opportunities for students to develop healthy outlooks, safety awareness and skills for the future but the impact of this provision has not been evaluated. The curriculum is enriched by a variety of after school and lunchtime activities that are well supported by the students.

The impact of the performing arts specialism is satisfactory. Its drama work with feeder primary schools and the local community is good. The number of students participating in performing arts clubs has risen, as has the range and breadth of clubs on offer. Performing arts teachers are beginning to help teachers from other curriculum areas to sharpen their skills: for example, by helping them to plan the use of role play in geography lessons so that learning is more enjoyable, especially for the boys.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Staff are fully committed to ensuring the well-being and success of all students and this is understood and appreciated by all. The school works in partnership with outside agencies to ensure that those who are vulnerable, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those at risk of disaffection, are sensitively supported. As a result, these students gain in confidence and self-esteem. The 'Inclusion Zone' provides flexible support to help students to manage their behaviour and make progress in skills. Guidance at each stage of the students' education is good. Safeguarding procedures are secure and meet current government requirements. Appropriate use is made of mentoring programmes, including external support

provided by outside agencies. School targets are set, sometimes in partnership with parents. However, marking and guidance on how to improve at classroom level are variable in quality and lack rigour.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

School leaders have helped to motivate staff so that all share in the commitment to improve the school. Improvements to the building and resources have had a positive effect on students and adults alike. The school has good relationships with parents. Parents' views are sought and acted upon. They are appreciative of what the school does for their children. The headteacher has rightly identified that subject management is underdeveloped and this forms part of the school's development plan. Although a useful tool in supporting the drive for improvement, the plan does not contain enough information to guide initiatives, particularly with regard to evaluating their impact. The tracking of students' progress, although in place, is not used effectively across the school. This, and the inconsistent use of assessment data, has hindered school leaders in setting challenging targets. Governors are supportive of the school but they are less adept at calling the school to account. Nevertheless, they are now beginning to play a more active role in decision making. They manage finances well.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
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	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

11 December 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Henley in Arden High School, Henley, B95 6AF

On behalf of the inspectors who visited your school recently, I would like to thank you for your warm welcome, and for your contribution to the inspection. We enjoyed talking to you and were grateful for your help. Your school provides you with a satisfactory education. The school has many strengths, some of these are: the friendly and caring atmosphere in the school; your good personal development along with the behaviour of the great majority of you in lessons and around the school; and the committed, friendly and supportive staff.

We have asked the school to improve your academic achievements, particularly for the boys, by making the teaching more engaging, to use your assessment marks to plan the next steps in your learning, and to set you challenging targets. We want all teachers to make sure that your work is regularly marked and that you know how to improve. We have also asked the school's leaders to check very carefully how the school is doing, so that improvements can be made more quickly.

We feel the staff and governors have the skills to make your school even better in the future. We hope you will play your part in this by attending regularly and by making sure you know exactly what you need to do to improve your work.

Thank you again for all your help in the inspection and we wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Ahson Mohammed Lead inspector