

William Brookes School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123567
Local Authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	340370
Inspection dates	9–10 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Peter Limm 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	938
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Peter Hampson
Headteacher	Mrs P A Cooper
Date of previous school inspection	0 May 2007
School address	William Brookes School Farley Road Much Wenlock
Telephone number	01952 727606
Fax number	01952 728289
Email address	admin@williambrookes.shropshire.sch.uk

Age group	11–18
Inspection dates	9–10 December 2009
Inspection number	340370

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2009

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 25 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at its policies and development plans, its analyses of students' attainment and progress, a sample of students' work, and other key aspects of performance. Inspectors considered the views expressed in 171 questionnaires completed by parents and carers. They also considered the views expressed in 88 questionnaires completed by students of the school and 81 responses from staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- trends in students' attainment and achievement since 2006
- the impact of leadership and management, focusing particularly on how well the school has addressed the points for improvement identified in the previous inspection
- the quality of teaching and learning, especially the use of assessment to improve learning.

Information about the school

William Brookes School is an average-sized school which serves a large rural area, including Much Wenlock and Broseley, with some students coming from parts of Telford as well. The vast majority of students travel to school on buses. The school is a performing arts college and a mathematics and computing college. As Britain's only 'Coubertin School', William Brookes has strong links with Olympic ideals and the Olympic movement. There are very few students from minority ethnic backgrounds and few are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of students with learning difficulties is below average but increasing amongst those joining the school in Year 7. The school has a learning support unit. In 2010 the school will move into new buildings currently being constructed on the same site.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

William Brookes is a good school, where students from a range of backgrounds achieve well. Since the last inspection, students' attainment has risen and is now consistently high. Unvalidated data show that the impressive GCSE results over the past three years were sustained in 2009. This represents a considerable achievement given that, for most of the year, the school has had to cope with a new school being built directly adjoining its current buildings. These factors, together with the school's excellent ethos and philosophy, good processes for self-evaluation and action planning, demonstrate its good capacity to improve.

Students enjoy attending this school and they are proud to do so. The large majority of students work hard, approach their tasks with enthusiasm and demonstrate sustained commitment to their studies. Their good behaviour and positive attitudes towards each other and their work create a positive climate for learning. Behaviour sometimes becomes less acceptable when lesson activities do not fully engage students in their learning. Students are keen to take on responsibility and are influential in shaping important aspects of school life. For instance, some students act as ambassadors for the school community to ensure that the student voice about how the new school should develop, is heard by architects and constructors. Students participate in an extensive range of enrichment, community and charitable activities. They have excellent opportunities to engage with groups of students from different countries and cultures but their engagement with people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds is more limited.

Students' achievement is the result of good teaching and excellent care, guidance and support. In the good and outstanding lessons, teachers' highly effective explanations and examples help students to meet challenging expectations. These lessons provide ample opportunities for students to discuss ideas, work in pairs and generally be fully involved in their own learning. In weaker lessons, teachers take insufficient account of the different abilities within the class and lesson tasks focus on tasks to be completed rather than the intended learning outcomes. The use of assessment to improve students' learning and progress is variable across the school, with some teachers not using their prior knowledge of students' attainment to plan lessons that meet the needs of all students. The curriculum meets the needs of the students well and also makes a strong contribution to their future economic well being.

Leaders, managers and governors have an accurate view of the school, including the strengths and weaknesses of teaching. The high quality of governance ensures that the school is challenged hard on its performance as well as provided with effective support especially during the period of construction work. However, senior leaders are acutely

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

aware that their evaluation of teaching and learning has not yet been rigorous enough to eliminate some pockets of weaker practice.

The construction of the new school has led to a good debate about learning and education for the twenty first century. Leaders and managers have been very flexible and willing to try new ideas. The plans for improving learning in the new school are impressive. The school's dual specialist status has contributed extremely well to its success through enabling it to offer an excellent range of cultural opportunities for students to participate in school and also to enable them to make an outstanding contribution to the wider community.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Take more rigorous action to address aspects of weaker performance in teaching.
 - Ensure that teachers consistently use the school's assessment and tracking information when planning lessons, so that the needs of all students are met and students know clearly what they need to do to improve their work and attain their targets.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Attainment is high, with 71% of students gaining five good GCSEs in 2008, 64% including English and mathematics. These measures, sustained in 2009, demonstrate improvement in attainment achieved since the last inspection, when it was generally above average. Students enjoy their lessons; they learn well particularly when given opportunities to discuss ideas and work in pairs and groups. They respond well to activities that capture their interest or stir their emotions, as when they watched a video about problems that can occur in pregnancy. Students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress in their lessons and achieve well. Evidence from lesson observations shows that learning and progress in a few lessons are not as good as in the majority.

Students are very confident in the school's processes for ensuring their safety. They know who they can turn to if they have a problem and believe that school staff respond very well when any incident of bullying occurs. Students have an excellent understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, although a small minority felt the construction work had reduced activities for them to be active during school time. Large numbers take advantage of physical activities after school. Students demonstrate a wide range of workplace skills that contribute well to their future well-being, and the vast majority of sixth form students remain in education or training when they leave. Students respond extremely well to the school's many activities that promote cultural skills, and their contribution to the wider community in terms of productions and exhibitions, is outstanding. Students make good progress in their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills, and also attend well. The school's two specialisms have made a good impact on student achievement and personal development.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, with the school's challenging and supportive Coubertin ethos and Olympian ideals ethos contributing effectively to students' spiritual and moral development. Different groups of students mix well, both in lessons and around the school. The majority of students behave well in lessons, and students' questionnaires confirm that most students in the school agree. A small minority exhibit challenging behaviour, but generally respond well to the school's processes for managing behaviour.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Students enjoy positive working relationships with teachers and those who support learning. Teachers' high expectations help students to respond positively to a range of well-planned tasks. In the best lessons, very clear learning objectives with success criteria enable students to recognise what is expected and what they need to do to improve their work. Teaching is lively and support is timely, well placed and helpful in accelerating learning. In weaker lessons, some activities lack challenge, relevance or interest, and as a result small numbers of students lose concentration. The quality of

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

teachers' marking varies, but in examples of excellent practice, teachers give clear advice on how students can improve their work.

The curriculum is well designed and caters well for the range of needs, interests and abilities of students in the school. It is a factor in students' consistently high attainment, above average attendance and below average exclusions. The school has a number of excellent plans for innovative learning when it transfers to the new accommodation, and these plans have not only shaped how space is to be used, but also how the curriculum will be changed to match students' needs even more closely. Trips, visits and visitors enrich the curriculum and enhance learning by providing students with memorable experiences. For example, many students visit a range of schools in different countries and these provide them with excellent opportunities for experiencing different cultures and languages first hand.

The excellent care, guidance and support that the school provides help those students new to the school to settle in quickly. Students feel very well cared for. Support for the vulnerable students is particularly strong and involves school staff with appropriate expertise as well as outside agencies. Pastoral leaders and form tutors know their students well and the vertical tutor group system makes a major contribution to students' personal development and academic progress.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders' drive for improvement has been very effective in many areas of the school. This has been demonstrated extremely well by the way the school's bid for a new building was secured, and also how it has continued to function effectively during periods of disruption due to construction work. Middle managers are supportive of the school's senior leaders and play their part effectively in developing the curriculum and improving the quality of teaching. However, a few staff remain unclear about how the school's vision for the move to new accommodation will be embedded in practice. Senior leaders and managers evaluate the quality of teaching and learning regularly but this has not yet led them to act rigorously enough to address persistent areas of weakness in the quality of teaching in some subjects.

This very inclusive school makes a good contribution to promoting community cohesion. Senior leaders have analysed the school's context and made excellent provision both at the local level and through its strong links with schools abroad. The school

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

acknowledges that that the impact of its actions is not fully evaluated.

The governing body plays an excellent role in supporting and challenging the school's leaders. Governors have a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and take advantage of opportunities for increasing their expertise through further training. The school engages well with parents and carers through its new website and through newsletters, and parents feel that their views are listened to. However, some parents and carers thought the school could do more to seek their views. The school promotes equal opportunities extremely well and tackles discrimination most effectively. It analyses examination results to identify differences in achievement of different groups of students and has successfully reduced gaps in performance.

The school has excellent procedures for ensuring the safety of students, including all appropriate checks on staff, and keeps meticulous records. The school works extremely well with outside agencies to support the welfare of its students. Regular collaboration at department level helps to share good practice and provide good value for money

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Sixth formers are extremely positive about the education they receive. They appreciate the wide range of opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities and support the work of the main part of the school extremely well. Sixth formers organise charity fundraising activities, provide valuable help and support for younger students and contribute to improvements in school life. In this lively and purposeful environment,

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

sixth form students develop good social and personal skills and become confident and articulate young people. Effective teaching enables sixth formers to make good progress. Most are highly motivated and respond well to opportunities to explain their views and discuss their work.

Excellent leadership and management have been key factors in establishing the sixth form as an integral part of the school. Systems to monitor students' progress and evaluate the effectiveness of the sixth form have built successfully on the good practice already established in the main school. Underperformance in a small number of subjects has been tackled successfully and consequently attainment is above average and the rate of students' progress is good. The curriculum is reviewed regularly to ensure that it meets students' needs and guidance and support is targeted carefully to prepare students for examinations and university applications. Very few students leave at the end of Year 12.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of parents are happy with their child's experience of the school. Parents particularly think their children enjoy their time at school and that they are safe there. A small minority of parents think the school does not sufficiently help them to support their child's learning or take account of their suggestions and concerns. Inspectors thought the school had been experiencing additional pressures due to the construction work being undertaken and yet had continued to seek ways of improving its communication with parents and students, such as through the school's web site. Some of these improvements will only be fully in place when planned use of new technologies for communicating with parents, are embedded more effectively in the new building.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at William Brookes School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 171 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 930 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	47	27	112	65	9	5	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	53	31	105	61	9	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	41	24	106	62	17	10	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	49	29	101	59	17	10	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	38	22	110	64	13	8	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	26	15	105	61	28	16	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	16	110	64	21	12	3	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	40	23	94	55	12	7	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	40	23	108	63	9	5	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	44	26	95	56	19	11	5	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	15	101	59	22	13	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	48	28	100	58	7	4	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	64	37	88	51	10	6	2	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



12 December 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of William Brookes School, Much Wenlock, TN13 6NB

You will recall that recently, together with three other colleagues, I inspected your school. Thank you to all of you whom we met; you were very polite and helpful, and gave your views very openly. This letter is to tell you about what we found.

You will be pleased to hear that we judge William Brookes to be a good school. One reason for this is the school's examination results which have been regularly impressive since the last inspection; another is the way the school helps and supports you all so that you achieve well in so many ways. We learned from speaking to you and reading what some of you said on your questionnaires, that you enjoy attending school, feel safe and make good progress.

You achieve well because of the good teaching that you receive, together with additional guidance such as the advice you get on how to improve. The school's outstanding care and support help you to feel that staff care about your progress and welfare. Most of you behave well and attend regularly.

The headteacher has high aspirations for your achievement, and she has some exciting ideas for how you will learn new things and in new ways once you transfer to the new school. In order to improve the school further we have asked her to:

- improve some teaching further so that more lessons take account of the different abilities within the class, lesson objectives have a better focus and you have more opportunities to learn in an active way and know how to improve your work further;
- check more rigorously that improvements in teaching are happening.

You can play your part in supporting staff when disruptions occur because of the building works and in asking for their help if you do not fully understand how to improve your work.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Limm

Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.