

Ash Green School & Arts College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	125765
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	340836
Inspection dates	10–11 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Ruth Westbrook

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	626
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Walsh
Headteacher	Andrew Clay
Date of previous school inspection	7 December 2006
School address	Ash Green Lane Ash Green Coventry
Telephone number	024 76366772
Fax number	02476 366383
Email address	Head.teacher@admin.ashgreen.warwickshire.sch.uk

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

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 33 lessons and observed 29 teachers. Meetings were held with governors, staff and pupils. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at improvement plans, key policy documents, assessment information, governors' minutes and students' books. Safeguarding procedures were also checked. In addition, 137 responses to the parents' questionnaire were received and analysed, together with questionnaire responses from staff and from a sample of 100 students from Key Stages 3 and 4.

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

- whether the improvement in students' attainment and progress in 2009 has been sustained in 2010
- how effectively the needs of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are being met
- how well teachers use assessment information to plan for the different groups in their classes and set targets for individuals
- how effectively leaders at all levels are monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning.

Information about the school

This is a small secondary school which became a specialist arts college in July 2007. The number of students with a statement of special educational need is above that usually found in schools, but the overall proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. Their needs mainly relate to moderate learning difficulties and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The very large majority of students are from White British families with just over a tenth from a variety of ethnic groups. Very few are at an early stage of learning English. In 2008, the school received an Artsmark gold award and Sportsmark.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Ash Green is a strongly improving school that provides a satisfactory education for its students. Effective strategies have been implemented by senior leaders to tackle areas for improvement. This has led to a reversal of the decline in attainment and achievement seen in the two years following the last inspection. A well-focused plan, backed up by a rigorous system to track students' progress over time has enabled senior leaders to target strategies and tackle areas of underachievement. As a result, gaps in students' learning are closing and all students make at least satisfactory progress relative to their starting points. Care, guidance and support in the school are good. As a result, students' attendance has improved significantly as a result of the implementation of sustained efforts and strategies. Behaviour has improved, and the number of exclusions has significantly reduced, in response to effective support and guidance.

Central to the school's plans for improvement has been the provision of a more appropriate curriculum to meet the range of students' needs. The school has made considerable progress in implementing good curricular plans including developing a number of strong partnerships to provide further vocational enrichment. The school's designation as an arts college in 2007 has made a significant contribution to these developments, including the promotion of a cohesive community with good links to other communities in the local area. As yet, there are few opportunities for students to gain an understanding of diverse communities beyond the school and its immediate locality.

Improving the quality of teaching has also been a primary focus in the school's drive to raise attainment and achievement. The quality has improved as a result of rigorous monitoring by senior leaders and an innovative programme of professional development. An increasing proportion of teaching is good or better across the school but its overall quality is satisfactory. This is because teaching and the use of assessment are not yet consistently good enough to enable students to make good progress in their learning. Where teaching is effective, teachers meet the needs of all students because assessment information is used carefully to plan tasks which are well-matched to their abilities and enable them to make good rates of progress. Where it is less effective, assessment is not used consistently to plan for the full range of abilities and needs in the class, so the pace of learning slows because the level of challenge is inappropriate. Students enjoy their lessons more when they are actively engaged in their learning. There are inconsistencies in the provision of a variety of opportunities in lessons to ensure that students are actively involved in making good progress in their learning. Governors, the headteacher and other senior leaders have shown determination in overcoming barriers to progress. They have established staff teams who are committed

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to improvement and who have a clear understanding about what is required to meet identified criteria for success. Senior leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses because of rigorous and well-established systems to evaluate the impact of actions taken. The significant improvements made last year and this in improving provision and the outcomes for students demonstrates the school's good capacity to improve. Middle leaders contribute regularly to the school's self-review and the rigorous checking of students' progress in their areas of responsibility. However, their contribution to developing effective strategies to improve the quality of learning in their subject area is less well developed.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- – Ensure consistency in the quality of teaching by:
 - making sure that teachers use assessment information on a regular basis to inform differentiated planning
 - and use assessment information to intervene in lessons so that students and groups of students make good progress.
- Increase the opportunities for students to work collaboratively and independently by:
 - improving the impact which middle managers have on the quality of teaching.
- Extend the range of opportunities in the curriculum for students to increase their knowledge and understanding of communities beyond the school's immediate locality.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Students enter the school having achieved standards that are broadly average. By the time they leave the school at the end of Year 11, their attainment is in line with expectations, indicating satisfactory progress. In 2009, the number of students reaching five or more GCSE passes at grades A*-C, including English and mathematics increased significantly. There is variation in the attainment of students in different subjects in GCSE examinations. In art and design, music and performing arts, students have consistently reached standards which are above average. In mathematics and English, standards rose in 2009, but remained just below average in both. In computer studies, geography, history and social and religious education, standards are particularly low. Early indications for examinations in 2010 are that the improvement has been sustained. Most subjects are predicted to achieve average standards and a majority above average. These predictions have been very accurate in recent years. Students with statements of special educational need make good progress because they receive good support from teaching assistants. The progress of other students with special educational needs

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and/or disabilities is satisfactory because there is sometimes insufficient planning for their needs in classrooms. Students who are at an early stage of learning English make similar progress to their peers, benefiting from the focus on developing literacy skills for all students.

The quality of students' learning in lessons is only satisfactory overall because the quality of teaching is uneven. When actively involved in their work, students show high levels of interest and enthusiasm and make accelerated progress. This is generally the case in the specialist subjects where students have a good mix of independent and collaborative study. In a Year 8 performing arts lesson, for example, students' learning about theatre from other cultures was outstanding because they had opportunity to work in a group and to show initiative through independent learning. In many lessons, students do not have enough opportunities to interact with each other in discussion and group work. There are also insufficient opportunities for students to engage in independent learning and exercise initiative.

Good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development underpins students' good behaviour in and around school. They are friendly, welcoming and polite to visitors. They willingly take on leadership roles which serve the school and local community; these include charity fund-raising, staging community arts events and sports leadership in local primary schools. The school council actively takes part in decisions which contribute to improvements to students' well-being. Recently they planned to provide outdoor seating and give suggestions for school uniform. The school's specialism provides a significant force for students' engagement with the local community. Many students adopt healthy lifestyles, taking part in regular exercise both in and outside of school. They understand how to keep healthy and safe. They say they feel safe in school and that bullying and racism are rare occurrences. Adults are seen as readily available to help students when they have problems. They have a good awareness of internet safety. A recent assembly led by students on cyber-bullying made a valued contribution to this awareness.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3

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

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The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is satisfactory and improving. The recent focus on monitoring and evaluating classroom practice and the well-planned staff development programme are beginning to iron out inconsistencies. Lessons have a clear plan and structure and learning objectives are shared with students. Teaching and learning is closely and effectively managed. As a result, students behave well. In the lessons seen during the inspection where teaching was good, students were quickly engaged in their learning by a range of activities. Effective planning used assessments to build on previous learning and meet the needs of different abilities within the class. A good example of this was seen in a Year 11 mathematics lesson where students were revising quadratic equations. The teacher knew the ability of individuals on this topic from previous assessment and was able to guide them to the appropriate level of work. Students were encouraged to assess their own performance during the lesson to gauge the level of support they needed. In the lessons seen where teaching is satisfactory, planning is less effective in meeting the different needs of students and does not consistently take account of assessments of what they have learnt before. Because of this, teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are not always as high as they should be. The use of assessment to set targets for students and give feedback on their progress towards them is stronger at Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3, where practice is inconsistent.

The good curriculum provides well-organised and effective opportunities for learning. It is modified to meet the needs of specific groups of learners. Specialist days support the delivery of themes to develop aspects of personal and health education. Throughout the school, there is a strong emphasis on developing literacy, numeracy and information communication technology skills. Super learning days provide good experiences in cross-curricular investigations. Through the specialist subjects, students develop confidence and interpersonal skills. This good range of opportunities helps students to develop a good understanding of the world of work and prepare them well for future choices and pathways. The school has a wide range of extra-curricular activities which are well-attended, including an extensive revision programme. Some recent staffing

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constraints have led to less breadth in the range of opportunities and courses offered to students.

Good partnerships with external agencies support the school's work in protecting vulnerable and disabled students, ensuring that support and intervention are tailored to individual need. Effective strategies to promote attendance and reduce the number of students who have persistently high absence have resulted in significant improvement to the levels of both. Year 7 students make a smooth transition from Year 6. They value the support from older students on arrival to school. Careers advisers from Connexions provide clear and helpful advice on future options beyond Year 11. Students with a statement of special educational need have effective plans which clearly identify their needs and the strategies to meet them. The plans for other students with special educational needs are less precise, and as a result, there is sometimes insufficient planning in the classroom to meet those needs.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

There are clear plans in place which articulate the vision for the school to all members of the school community. These have been appropriately focused on raising attainment in key subjects. Senior leaders have implemented rigorous and sustainable strategies to improve the quality of teaching and raise attainment. A significant hard-core of underachievement has been tackled effectively and firm foundations have been established on which to build further improvement. Most subject leaders have contributed well to the implementation of plans and are well-placed to take a greater part in the next stage of development. Good use is made of data by all leaders to track the progress of students towards GCSE examinations. Its analysis results in timely intervention and, increasingly, strategies ensure that challenging targets are met. A number of specific interventions have been successfully targeted at particular groups. Boys' achievement improved in 2009 as a result. The school is monitoring the progress of all groups, including those with special educational needs, so that equality of opportunity can be ensured and any discrimination eliminated. Many governors are relatively new to their post. They are a committed group who are playing an increasingly effective role in offering the school a balance of challenge and support. The school demonstrates that all policies and procedures to safeguard students on the school site are securely in place. Good progress has been made in promoting community cohesion

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in the school and the wider local community. The organisation of arts events by students for local schools and a special school have increased students' understanding of the community in which they live. However, plans to promote community cohesion in the national and global context are less well developed.

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents' and carers' questionnaire returns were positive. A very small minority were concerned that the school did not take account of suggestions and concerns. The inspection found many examples of instances where concerns and suggestions had been taken in to account, including a recent consultation on school uniform changes. The headteacher expressed his commitment to provide more opportunities for discussion and dialogue, including developing the school web-site as a more dynamic tool for communication in the near future.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ash Green School & Arts College 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 137 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 626 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	40	29	86	63	9	7	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	50	36	83	61	3	2	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	47	34	77	56	12	9	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	46	34	85	62	4	3	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	29	21	98	72	9	7	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	20	81	59	18	13	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	12	94	69	21	15	1	1
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)	30	22	85	62	10	7	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	21	97	71	9	7	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	36	26	86	63	10	7	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	17	83	61	21	15	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	35	26	90	66	9	7	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	45	33	81	59	5	4	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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 pupil's 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 May 2010

Dear Students,

Inspection of Ash Green School & Arts College, Coventry, CV79AH

Thank you for the help you provided when we visited your school recently. We received a warm welcome and your comments and questionnaires were very helpful to us. The quality of education provided throughout the school is satisfactory and improving strongly.

You make satisfactory progress in your learning, reaching average standards by the time you leave school. The standards in most subjects improved substantially in last year's examinations. Your attendance is average and the number who are frequently absent has reduced. You understand how to lead healthy and safe lives and most of you feel safe in school and that there are people to help if needed. You make full use of the opportunities which being an arts college bring and this has a good effect on your personal development. Many of you do things for others both in school and the local area although the opportunities to find out about communities further afield than Ash Green are more limited. We were impressed with the way you organise events yourselves, for others to enjoy, like assemblies and arts festivals. Your headteacher and his staff look after you well and give you good support and help at different stages of your school life. All of these things are helping to prepare you well for the time when you leave.

You told us how you enjoy lessons when there are activities which engage you. We saw how the quality of your work increased when this was the case. You work better when there is a careful match between your ability level and the work you are asked to do. We have requested teachers to make sure that your work includes enough challenge and support depending on your needs. We have also asked them to include a range of activities which give you opportunities to work together in groups and independently on different tasks. We noticed how learning increased for some of you when you were able to talk about your answers with someone else.

We hope that you will do your bit to help the school improve even further by striving to do your very best in your work and helping your headteacher and staff put these improvements in place.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Westbrook

Lead inspector

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