

The Ecclesbourne School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112986
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	325734
Inspection date	17 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Deborah Vaughan-Jenkins HMI

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	11-18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1457
Sixth form	339
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Mrs Lesley Underhill
Date of previous school inspection	7 November 2005
School address	Wirkworth Road Duffield Belper Derbyshire DE56 4GS
Telephone number	01332 840645
Fax number	01332 841871

Age group	11-18
Inspection date	17 September 2008
Inspection number	325734

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

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.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards at Key Stage 4, the quality of teaching and learning for all students, care, guidance and support for particular groups of students, the impact of specialist status and the quality of leadership and management, including how well the school promotes community cohesion.

Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, achievement and attainment information; observation of lessons, scrutiny of documentation provided by the school, observation of the school at work, discussion with senior and middle managers, discussions with staff and students and analysis of parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The Ecclesbourne School, is a large, oversubscribed, comprehensive school for students aged between 11 and 18. There are 1457 students on roll, of whom 339 are sixth form students. Socio-economic indicators are well above average and there are very few students entitled to free school meals. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than average and mainly comprises of students with moderate learning difficulties or students with behavioural, social or emotional difficulties. The majority of students at the school are White British with students from minority ethnic backgrounds making up around 7% of the school population. The school has held specialist college status for technology since 2001. In 2006, it gained a second specialism, this time for the arts, and continues to maintain its status as a Leading Edge School.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The Ecclesbourne School is an outstanding school that continues to provide an exceptionally high quality of education and care for its students. The school's inclusive vision of 'Learning Together for the Future,' is one that permeates all aspects of its work. A key feature of the success of the school is the inspirational leadership provided by the headteacher, who together with a very strong senior management team and a committed and well informed governing body, are dedicated to the pursuit of excellence. Since the last inspection, the school has continued to improve its already high standards and improve behaviour from good to outstanding. This success is testament of a shared commitment from managers and staff at all levels to further enhance students' educational experience. As a result, this school has an outstanding capacity to improve.

The standards reached by students are outstanding. Students enter the school in Year 7 having achieved standards well above the national average. Their progress by Year 11 is good overall and in some cases excellent. A very high proportion of students leave the school with at least five A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics and with very high grades in their GCSE subjects. Sharply focused and swift intervention enables students with specific learning difficulties, or those in receipt of additional learning support, to make outstanding progress in relation to their starting points. All student achievement, including in the sports and arts, is widely celebrated throughout the school. Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding because the school's expectations of them are very clear and consistent. Students learn in a supportive and highly inclusive environment where they feel safe and valued as individuals. The school works tirelessly to give its students a broad understanding of the wider community and as a result, students have an impressive understanding of wider social issues. Students respond extremely well to the numerous local, national and internal opportunities to take responsibility and make outstanding contributions to the community. Several initiatives are set up and run by the students themselves, such as a successful whole school project on recycling.

Teaching and learning are good, and in several instances outstanding. In most lessons, teachers use their strong subject knowledge to plan lessons that proceed at a brisk pace with learning activities that stimulate interest and provide an appropriate level of challenge. Relationships are very positive and the exemplary attitudes and behaviour of students are features of all lessons. Attendance remains excellent. Students have a thirst for learning and demonstrate real enjoyment in school. They thrive when lesson activities are challenging and allow them to take responsibility for their own learning. However, some lessons do not fully engage and challenge students enough to help them maximise the progress they are able to make in the time available.

Students' personal development is supported by excellent care, support and guidance. This is evident in the very positive relationships that pervade lessons and in innumerable informal exchanges between staff and students. Staff demonstrate strongly caring attitudes and students receive excellent personal support and guidance when making option choices. Students' progress is closely monitored and highly effective support is provided for those who find learning more difficult.

The school's quality improvement systems are well established and involve meticulous data analysis, monitoring and review of student performance at all levels of management. Targets

are used very successfully to raise standards. Self-evaluation is thorough and provides a firm basis for improvement. A significant strength is the way the school successfully uses its specialist status in both technology and the arts to raise students' aspirations and further improve standards. The widespread use of new learning technologies in virtually every classroom, for example, has led to far more creative teaching and learning. The school is rightly held in very high regard by both the local community and parents alike. One parent's comments summed up the view of many: 'My child has blossomed at Ecclesbourne due to the encouragement of the teachers and the wonderful atmosphere it creates'.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Students enter the sixth form having already achieved standards that are well above that of similar schools. Overall, they make excellent progress and virtually all students who begin GCE AS programmes successfully complete their second year GCE A-level programme. The proportion of students achieving grades A to B is consistently very high. Students in the sixth form have excellent attitudes to learning and effectively build on the skills developed through the main school to become highly articulate and confident individuals who are exemplary role models for the younger students. Leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding because, as with the main school, there is tenacious approach to improving performance. In 2008, the percentage of sixth form students progressing to higher education rose to 93%.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure all lessons fully engage all students and challenge them to make the maximum progress possible.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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
---	----------------	-------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	1
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?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1	

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.

²IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

Personal development and well-being**Annex A**

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	IE ²
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
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	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

18 September 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of The Ecclesbourne School, Belper, DE56 4GS

I would like to begin by thanking you all for welcoming me and my colleagues to your school on the 17 September. Your behaviour, courtesy and smart appearance impressed us from the outset. We were also impressed with your whole school commitment to recycling! During the day we spent at your school we visited your lessons, met a number of you and talked at length to various members of school staff. This letter aims to outline to you our findings from the day.

We found that your school and sixth form continue to be outstanding in almost all aspects. Your standards of work are very high and many of you leave with excellent GCSE and A-level grades. You develop a firm understanding of mathematics and English, helped very much by your school's specialist status in technology and the arts that prepares you well for life after school. We judged the teaching and learning at your school to be good and sometimes outstanding, although in some lessons not all of you make the excellent progress you are capable of. Therefore, we have left the school with the following area to improve:

- To ensure all lessons engage all students and challenge them so they make the maximum progress possible.

Your headteacher, along with her team, is doing an excellent job in moving your school forward. Your school knows its students well and is committed to making your experience in education fun and successful.

You can of course help maintain your school's outstanding status by continuing to work as hard as you can to achieve your best. You should also continue to share your views through your school council. In this way, the school will know what you think it does well or what you think it needs to improve further.

Thank you again for your help in this inspection and we would like to wish you all the very best in your studies and every success in the future.

Deborah Vaughan-Jenkins Her Majesty's Inspector