

Aylesford School and Sixth Form College

Shelley Avenue, Warwick, CV34 6LA

Inspection dates

26–27 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students make good progress and examination results are above average. They have risen significantly from a dip in 2011.
- The sixth form is good. Students make good progress and the great majority stay on to finish their courses. Hardly any student is without a place in education, employment or training when they leave.
- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. Students are inspired to learn successfully in lessons where teachers show enthusiasm for their subject. They use their subject knowledge and questioning skills expertly.
- Teachers usually demand high standards of students' work and behaviour. Lessons proceed at a good pace and provide time for students to consolidate new learning.
- Students are positive about their school and feel proud about their contributions to it. They behave well in lessons and around the school. They feel safe and say that bullying is rare and is dealt with swiftly.
- Leadership is effective and this has resulted in the improvement in students' achievement, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Leaders, including the governing body, are rigorous in monitoring students' progress and the quality of teaching. Consequently, previously lower-attaining students are closing the gap rapidly on students nationally.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching. Some lessons do not involve students actively in their learning. Although the most effective teaching is shared occasionally with other teachers, it is not done systematically.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 35 lessons across all year groups, observing 35 teachers, and some teaching assistants. Four of the lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors attended an assembly and made shorter visits to some lessons, focusing on disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- Inspectors held meetings with five groups of students, senior leaders, groups of teachers including some middle managers, and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors examined a questionnaire completed by staff, along with 36 responses submitted by parents and carers to the online website Parent View.
- Inspectors heard a number of weaker students read and scrutinised workbooks.
- Inspectors examined the arrangements and records kept to safeguard students.
- Inspectors looked at the school’s improvement plan and self-evaluation, as well as assessment data that teachers use to monitor students’ progress. Inspectors also looked at documentation relating to performance management and the monitoring of teaching, behaviour and attendance. They examined the minutes of the governing body’s meetings.

Inspection team

Dilip Kadodwala, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Kath Twin

Additional inspector

David Wolfson

Additional inspector

Rosemary Myers

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized school and sixth form. The school converted to an academy in January 2012. As the academy was established in 2012 this school does not yet have confirmed results to compare to the government's floor standards.
- The large majority of students come from White British backgrounds. Other students come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds; the largest group is of students from Indian backgrounds.
- A below-average proportion of students are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which gives the school additional funding for children in local authority care and students known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportions of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are below average, as is the proportion supported by school action. The proportion supported by school action plus or statements is low.
- The school has received a number of national awards including Healthy Schools status, and the International School and Eco awards.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that more of it is outstanding by:
 - maximising opportunities for students to be more active in learning so that their progress is accelerated
 - systematically sharing the outstanding practice evident in the school to help lift more of the teaching to the very best.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students enter the school with attainment that ranges from broadly average to below average. They make good progress in their time at the school, including in the sixth form. 2012 unvalidated results show that 68% of students attained five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C including English and mathematics. This is a significant improvement from the 2011 results of the previous school.
- In 2011, students' achievement in mathematics had dipped, particularly for the less-able students. This has been reversed through effective leadership and improvement in teaching.
- The progress of individuals and groups of students is monitored well through an effective tracking system. Because teachers are good at using this information, underachievement is tackled quickly, underpinned by strong line management systems. These account for the good progress made by disabled students and those who have special educational needs.
- The effective use of the pupil premium also contributes to the good progress of students known to be eligible for it.
- Consistently good progress is made by the small proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- Some students enter the school with weak reading skills. Through careful interventions and expert support, these students go on to make good progress. Across different subjects students are expected to practise literacy skills and are encouraged to read widely.
- Responses to Parent View and the analysis provided by an external parental questionnaire conducted earlier this year indicate that most parents are pleased with the progress that their children are making.

The quality of teaching is good

- Lessons typically show an excited buzz of learning and very strong relationships of trust and respect. This is the case over a wide range of subjects and year groups, including in the sixth form. As a result learning often moves on at a cracking pace.
- Teachers' use of probing questions is a particular strength. For example, in a Year 10 English lesson this helped to engage students and ensured that all made good progress. Questioning also helps teachers to reshape tasks. This promotes the effective learning for students of different abilities.
- Good or better teaching of reading, writing and mathematics is a feature of lessons in English and mathematics and is not restricted to these subjects. For example, inspectors saw students being asked to use literacy skills in history, science and information and technology lessons. Similarly, mathematical skills were used in science and geography.
- In numerous lessons inspectors saw thoughtful use of peer- and self-assessment which supported teachers' own use of their tracking information about individual students' progress. For instance, in a Year 10 music lesson and in a Year 9 art lesson students were adept at evaluating performance and work and could clearly see how improvements could be made.

- Teachers' effective marking of work helps students to improve their work. Homework is often set. Some of it lasts over several weeks. This enables students to carry out in-depth studies.
- The use of teaching assistants to support individual and small groups of students who have additional needs is successful. This makes an important contribution to these students' good progress through clear dialogue between assistants and class teachers. Support is balanced, encouraging students to be increasingly independent.
- In the very best of lessons, teachers are enthusiastic and passionate about students' success. For example in a Year 13 photography lesson and a mathematics lesson for the same year group, infectious enthusiasm and close attention to provide for needs of every individual enabled them to make outstanding progress and take delight in learning. In a Year 10 lower ability mathematics lesson, effective use of a classic French song skilfully engaged students to consolidate learning of key mathematical terms.
- As yet, not enough of the teaching is leading to exceptional achievement for students. This is because occasionally teachers talk for too long. In some lessons students are not actively involved in learning and building their skills to carry out work independently. In very many sixth form lessons and some other lessons too, active learning is embedded well. However, such effective practice is not shared systematically.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The expectation for the whole school is that it should be 'calm and purposeful'. Inspectors certainly saw this during their two days in school. Students' behaviour in lessons and around the school was good. Several examples were seen of students' kindness and consideration for others. Students of all ages are well mannered and polite, exercising self-discipline.
- Students say that good, and often exemplary, behaviour is typical. Most staff and parents support this view. Students are adamant that they feel safe because expectations about behaviour are consistently applied. There is deep-seated concern shown by staff at all levels for students' welfare and well-being. There are hardly any permanent exclusions and fixed-term exclusions are below national figures and declining.
- Students are mature in their awareness of different types of bullying, explaining, for instance, the dangers of cyber-bullying. They are alert to the importance of equal treatment for all, whatever their ethnic, sexual or gender background. This reflects the good teaching and curriculum opportunities students receive, for example in citizenship and ethics lessons, which promote students' social and moral development effectively.
- Students respond very well to taking on responsibilities. The work of the school council has brought about positive changes to facilities for students' use. Prefects and senior prefects act as good role models.
- Attendance is above average and students' punctuality to school and to lessons is good.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and other leaders show an unrelenting appetite for improvement, which is shared by other staff.
- There is a very clear sense of direction, supported by accurate evaluation of the strengths

and weaknesses of the school. The right priorities are identified in the school development plan, based on robust monitoring and evaluation, involving leaders at all levels. For example, monitoring of teaching asks questions such as, 'how well are students being challenged to improve?'

- The management of teaching leads to improvement because teachers' performance is linked to students' achievement targets. Arrangements for line management and performance management are suitably demanding and are organised well.
 - Continuing professional development is identified carefully and staff confirm that their needs are met well, using internal expertise and that found in the partnerships with other local schools.
 - School leaders have ensured that standards are rising, indicating good capacity for further improvement.
 - Good use of the pupil premium and other resources is ensuring that gaps between the attainment of students known to be eligible for this and other students in the school have closed. Gaps compared with all students nationally are narrowing well.
 - Good relationships are fostered with parents through personal meetings to discuss students' progress and deal with any concerns raised by parents. Good communication using the school's website and planners help to keep parents informed and support their children's education.
 - Subjects and courses provide well for the students' needs and aspirations. In the sixth form, vocational courses enable students to achieve well, alongside more academic courses. The library enhances students' learning experiences, providing opportunities for students to participate in local and national accreditation and awards to encourage the enjoyment of reading.
 - Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through lessons, for example in ethics, drama and art. Stimulating displays around the school, including students' own work also contribute to students' good personal development.
 - There are very many extra-curricular activities that supplement learning in lessons, and some are linked to raising questions about self-worth, meaning and purpose. In discussions with students, they showed great appreciation for trips to the holocaust centre and listening to holocaust survivors.
 - Some sixth formers who reflected on their recent trip to Indonesia led a powerful assembly for Years 10 and 11 during the inspection. It gave much food for thought to the audience about life on earth and sustainability.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - is effective in supporting the school and holding senior leaders and staff to account
 - knows how different groups of students are achieving and takes effective action to address any areas of underachievement
 - carefully monitors expenditure to ensure value for money, including the use of the pupil premium
 - is rigorous in the performance management of the headteacher and in the recommendation of pay awards
 - ensures that all safeguarding procedures comply with statutory requirements.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	137770
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This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Academy convertor
School category	Non-maintained
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	805
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	137
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Lyttle
Headteacher	Steven Hall
Date of previous school inspection	N/A
Telephone number	01926 747100
Fax number	01926 494194
Email address	office@aylesford-elearning.net

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