

Ousedale School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110487
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	310329
Inspection dates	15–16 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Roger Whittaker

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	2005
Sixth form	353
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr P Collins
Headteacher	Mr K M Leaver
Date of previous school inspection	15 November 2004
School address	The Grove Newport Pagnell MK16 0BJ
Telephone number	01908 210203
Fax number	01908 216574

Age group	11–18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Ousedale School is a larger than average comprehensive school. It has been a technology college since 2005. It is based on two campuses eight miles apart, Newport Pagnell (11–18 year old students) and Olney (11–16 year old students). The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with behavioural and moderate learning difficulties, is below national levels. The number of students from minority ethnic groups is below the national average. The number of students for whom English is not the first language is also below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It not only enables students to reach good academic standards but also to develop into mature, well-rounded young people prepared for the next stage of their education and life. One parent said of the school, 'My three children, who have attended the school, have all been encouraged to achieve high academic standards and to take part in the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities available to them'. The Personal development is outstanding. Central to this are the strong sense of community and the very good relationships amongst staff and students that contribute to their achievement and enjoyment. Students involve themselves enthusiastically in the life of the school and, consequently, they take a pride in their school and are keen to do well.

Standards are above average in all year groups. Throughout their time at Ousedale School, students make good progress and their results in public examinations at the end of Years 9, 11 and 13 are above average. Good teaching and the students' positive attitudes are significant factors in explaining the high academic standards. Lessons contain interesting and challenging activities to which students respond well. However, in a few lessons students are not sufficiently involved. This happens when activities do not enable them to work independently, to know what level they are working at or how to improve. Systems for tracking and monitoring students' academic progress are strong but subsequent support is inconsistent and, therefore, there are inconsistencies in progress, although all students achieve well.

The curriculum is good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form. The school continues to strive to ensure that the courses offered meet the needs of all students. Although technology college status is having a significant impact across the school, the school is rightly aware of the need to make more use of the specialist status to drive improvements in teaching and learning. Students in Years 10 and 11 are provided with a curriculum, which meets a wide range of their needs and interests through, for example, horticulture and construction courses. There is a full range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities for the students and many of them get involved.

Care, guidance and support for students are good. Students feel well cared for and are treated as individuals. Teachers know the students' needs well and there is a wide range of support systems in place. Students particularly appreciate their opinions being sought, and are enthusiastic to be involved in the wide range of opportunities to put forward their suggestions.

The school is well led and managed. Staff are committed to getting the best from the students and teamwork is a key strength amongst all managers, teachers and support staff. The headteacher and school leaders have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have made many improvements since the last inspection. The school is well placed to make further improvement. Links with partner schools and support agencies are outstanding. The school has very good systems for using assessment data to inform curriculum and lesson planning. However, the staff do not consistently use data to set challenging targets, in order to enable all students to reach the high standards of which they are capable. Ousedale School enjoys a good reputation in the local community, especially through outstanding partnerships with primary schools and other agencies. Parents are supportive of the school.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Students achieve well and make good progress in their academic courses. Standards are above average. Teaching is good with many teachers providing a challenging learning environment where students are motivated to do their best. Improved systems for setting students' targets and monitoring their progress are leading to more consistency in them knowing what they have to do to improve.

Sixth formers contribute well to the life of the school and the community. Students give their time to support younger students and play an active role in serving the needs of the local community. Sixth formers enjoy their learning and appreciate the very positive relationships they have with staff and the good advice they receive when considering subject and career options. Attendance and punctuality are good. Students meet regularly with their tutors to discuss the progress made against individual subject targets. Students' personal development is good, supported by their many chances to take part in a very broad range of enrichment activities that enhance a good and developing curriculum. Leadership and management of the sixth form are effective and self-evaluation is good. Plans for strengthening provision are coherent and the sixth form has good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Enable students to be more consistently involved in their learning by increasing the opportunities for them to work on their own or in groups and for them to know what level they are working at and how to improve.
- Set targets that are more challenging so that all students achieve as well as they can.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students join the school with standards that are slightly above the national average. They get off to a good start and make good progress throughout Key Stage 3, achieving above average results in national tests at the end of Year 9. They do particularly well in English. Students consolidate their learning in Key Stage 4. They make good progress and usually reach above average standards, although there was a dip in 2007. Unvalidated results improved in 2008, and the evidence suggests that above average standards are being maintained.

The school has placed a high priority on improving students' progress. In particular, careful monitoring of any underachieving students leads to effective targeted support.

Focused support for the very small number of students with statements of special needs, or who have behavioural or moderate learning difficulties, means that these students achieve as well as others in the school. Students from ethnic minorities and those who speak English as an additional language also achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students' enjoyment is outstanding. Attendance has improved, because very good strategies are in place to encourage students to attend, and is now above average. Students behave well and are polite and friendly. An outstanding level of enjoyment by students is reflected in the way they cooperate when working in small groups. Their enthusiasm and participation in lessons

and a wide range of other activities on offer is exemplary. Students said that bullying and racist incidents are rare and dealt with swiftly and effectively. Students respond well when asked for their opinions and views through the effective school council.

Students' understanding of how to lead healthy lives is outstanding. Very high numbers of students take part in sports activities, choose healthy food and explore their feelings through good personal social and health education lessons. They behave well and act safely in response to outstanding safety procedures as seen, for example, in all practical subjects.

Students are aware of living in a multi-cultural society. They demonstrate outstanding consideration for others in their community and build very good relationships with each other. Most students have the opportunity for community involvement through working in local primary schools and supporting the schools branch for Save the Children. Work experience, enterprise activities, and good academic standards prepare students well for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Students' enthusiasm makes a significant contribution to the good teaching and learning. Strong relationships between teachers and students create the right conditions for learning so that students achieve well. Students are confident to ask for help because they know that teachers will help them to refine their ideas and, hence, correct their thinking. Students benefit from the school's recently designated technology status through opportunities to use technological equipment, such as interactive whiteboards, which adds to their enjoyment and helps them to learn better.

In many lessons, good planning ensures work is well pitched to meet students' needs and often provides a high level of challenge. Learning objectives are clearly identified so students and teachers are clear about the purpose of the lesson. In the best lessons, students are very actively engaged through tasks that are exciting and enable them to be adventurous and creative in their thinking.

However, some lessons are too directed by teachers with limited opportunities for students to work on their own or in groups. Students do not always know what level they are working at and how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a wide range of learning opportunities that takes full account of the abilities and interests of different groups of students. Developments in the curriculum for Years 10 and 11 now provide a strong work-related dimension through courses in horticulture and construction. These developments are the result of the school systematically identifying how best to reverse the decline in GCSE results in 2007.

The school has made effective use of its specialist status funding to achieve this, leading to improvements in achievement. However, it is too early to judge the wider impact of this provision.

The school makes good provision for students to develop their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. The dedicated time given to students

who join the school with low attainment in literacy is based on early assessment of needs. An outstanding enrichment programme takes account of the requirements of different groups, for example through providing a range of activities to encourage the participation of girls in sport. The Sharper Minds Programme for high attaining pupils covers highly challenging subjects to which students respond very positively.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

'This is a friendly place to be' is how students view the school. This reflects the good care, guidance and support, which students receive. They speak warmly about the atmosphere of mutual respect between themselves and their teachers and are confident that there is always someone to whom they can turn with concerns. Students feel secure and well protected by the school's safety procedures and rightly believe that rare incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively. All procedures for safeguarding young people are in place and rigorously followed. At the beginning of Year 7, students follow a well-planned programme of events, which inspire confidence and foster their enthusiasm. Support for students who have learning difficulties and/or other disability is good and means that they make good progress.

The pastoral team delivers a strong programme of personal, social and health education, which enables students to explore and develop personal skills. Excellent links with a very wide range of external organisations also support students' welfare. 'Drop In' sessions, staffed by a nurse and a doctor, have been extended to meet all students' needs.

Students are aware of their long-term target grades. However, the procedures for on-going review of progress are inconsistent. This means that students are not always aware of exactly how they can improve in order to achieve their targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Ousedale School is led by the effective headteacher who is well supported by the leadership team. All staff have a shared commitment to high academic standards and the promotion of students' personal development. They particularly appreciate the opportunities to be consulted and involved in any changes that are put in place.

Rigorous and robust systems are in place to monitor the work of the school including the quality of teaching and learning. This leads to a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development by school leaders. Such knowledge has ensured some significant improvements since the last inspection. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 now includes a wider range of subjects and is better suiting the needs of all students. In addition, actions are in many cases accompanied by measurable success criteria that allow senior leaders and governors to evaluate the impact of any changes over time. However, some students are not set targets that are challenging enough to enable them to reach the standards of which they are capable.

This is an inclusive school and a variety of well-established systems exists to support all students. Links with the community are good and specialist school status is well led and is having a positive impact on the school. Links with the partner schools and agencies is outstanding. Professional development activities are increasingly effective in developing the capacity of all

staff. In particular, this has improved the quality of the work of middle leaders who now have a much better understanding of how to raise standards through improved teaching and learning.

The governing body knows the school well and provides the headteacher with good support whilst offering suitable challenge.

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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	16-19
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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?	2	2
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	2	2

Achievement and standards

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

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?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
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	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
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	2	

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

03 November 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Ousedale School, Newport Pagnell, MK16 0BJ

Following our visit to Ousedale School, we would like to share our findings with you. We thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us and for the helpful way you talked to us about your school and your work. We can now report to you that the Ousedale School is providing you with a good standard of education.

We are pleased that you really enjoy school and the many opportunities it provides, particularly the after-school activities. We are equally pleased that you are respectful to staff and other students. Standards in national tests and examinations are above the national average. Sixth form students also achieve well. Progress continues to improve and is good.

The school is a very happy and friendly community where everyone is valued equally. Your teachers are very committed to helping you and they look after you well. We are pleased that you have good awareness of how to be safe around the school. Your headteacher is working very hard, with the rest of the staff, to give you even more opportunities to learn as well as you can.

We have asked your headteacher and staff to focus on planning lessons, which provide more opportunities for you to be more actively involved in your learning. We have also asked that you are set targets, which are more challenging and so enable you all reach even higher standards.

Yours sincerely

Roger Whittaker

Lead Inspector