

Adeyfield School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117512
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	367411
Inspection dates	11–12 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Ian Middleton HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	715
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	95
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pamela Sanvoisin
Headteacher	Peter Hepburn
Date of previous school inspection	5 March 2008
School address	Longlands Hemel Hempstead HP2 4DE
Telephone number	01442 406020
Fax number	01442 406025
Email address	admin@adeyfield.herts.sch.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 37 lessons, observing 34 different teachers for periods lasting around 30 minutes. Support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and school assembly were also visited. In addition, inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, other school leaders and managers, the Chair of the Governing Body, and staff. Discussions with groups of students with their work included: students with leadership roles; those taking different curriculum opportunities; a sample of students who find learning difficult; and a group of more able students. Inspectors observed the school's work, and inspected planning and evaluation documents. The school's analysis of students' progress and attainment was scrutinised, as were a total of 148 questionnaires received from parents and carers, and 44 from teaching and support staff. A sample of 100 questionnaires received from students was also analysed.

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

- The progress that students make and the range and quality of their achievements, in particular the more able students.
- The extent to which teaching and support staff use assessment information to ensure that lessons are interesting and challenging for all students.
- The quality of the curriculum, care, guidance and support, in promoting students' participation, progress and performance at appropriate levels.
- The extent and pace of continued improvement evidenced by leaders and managers at all levels.
- The effectiveness of the sixth form in relation to students' starting points, retention and attainment.

Information about the school

Adeyfield School is smaller than the average secondary school. The proportion of students identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average and the proportion with a statement of special educational need is well above average. The majority of students are White British and a typical proportion is from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. Stability is lower than the national average; in 2010 22% of the students joined the school as mid-term admissions.

In 2005 Adeyfield became a specialist business and enterprise college, and in 2009 added a second specialism in applied learning. The school's awards include the International Schools, Healthy Schools, Artsmark, Sportsmark, and in 2010 added the NACE Challenge Award in recognition of work with more able students.

The school is part of the Dacorum sixth form consortium principally with two neighbouring schools. Adeyfield is the hub school for extended schools provision.

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

3

Main findings

A strong sense of community and care, and wide ranging opportunities and achievements are the hallmarks of this good school. Parents value the hard work of senior leaders, and teaching and support staff in ensuring that boys and girls enjoy their education and experience success. However, improvements in the proportion of students attaining the higher grades, and including both English and mathematics, remain slow, constrained by targets that for some students are too modest.

There is good or better teaching in all areas of the curriculum. Professional development opportunities are wide and monitoring and evaluation of teaching is regular. However, teaching is satisfactory overall because the quality and impact on attainment is variable. Lessons that actively involve students are often effective, but the impact of sharing best practice is lessened where approaches which are new to some staff are not adapted well, or focused sharply enough on raising standards in the subject. The good curriculum contains many features designed to meet students' diverse needs and interests through work in school and with other partners. The business and enterprise specialism is integrated well and the very best lessons promote such specific skills explicitly. Exemplary care and support contribute to students' strong sense of safety and inclusion, including the high proportion that transfers from other schools during their secondary education. Guidance is more variable, ranging from that pitched too low, to that skilfully relating the purpose of learning to real-life applications in the wider world. Teachers' marking includes helpful advice, but the impact is lessened where assessments of students' work have not helped to focus on particular strengths to exploit or weaknesses to tackle.

Taking into account the breadth of students' academic and vocational qualifications and awards, and the current progress of different groups, achievement is good. Students' prior attainment is wider than many schools, well below average overall but including very able students too. The proportion leaving with five or more A*-G or A*-C GCSE grades is consistently above the national average. Students' low levels of literacy and numeracy on entry contribute to below average attainment in English and mathematics despite the good progress made in these subjects. Together with average, but improving attendance, their development of key skills contributes to satisfactory preparation for future economic well-being. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, enriched by thought-provoking assemblies and extra-curricular opportunities that an increasing proportion of students participate in. Students' contribution to the community and healthy lifestyles are also good.

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Students' sense of success and security reflects the sensitive leadership and management, including active involvement of the governing body. The headteacher and senior team are well respected, highly visible, and exemplify the school motto 'ever onwards' in their outward-looking and inclusive approach to developing and leading the school. The leadership roles of students contribute to cohesion of the school community, their involvement in the local community, and their engagement with and empathy for the wider community. There are also middle leaders who are strong teachers. However, the leadership and management of teaching and learning is not better than satisfactory. This is because monitoring and evaluation at all levels does not always result in precise targets, linked to improved attainment that are reviewed rigorously. Action is evident in response to the issues raised at the last inspection which were to: widen the range of strategies for students with different abilities and to use assessment data more effectively, in particular to promote higher grades. However, the consistency, pace and impact on performance indicate that capacity to improve is no better than satisfactory, despite staff determined to do their best for all students.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise students' attainment, including in both English and mathematics by:
 - assessing students' starting points consistently well across the curriculum
 - establishing high expectations and challenging targets for all students
 - monitoring students' progress in relation to essential subject and basic skills, knowledge and understanding
 - preparing and delivering lessons that build on students' strengths and address specific weaknesses both in and across subjects
 - evaluating the impact of professional development for staff and intervention and guidance provided for students, on attainment
 - developing and delivering clear action plans that identify milestones and measures of success in all key stages, including the sixth form.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Achievement is good overall. Students' current work indicates that different groups of students, including boys and girls with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress, which is reflected in available data. Overall, students start at the school having attained below average standards in national tests. The school works collaboratively with primary schools to support students' transition into the school and to moderate teacher assessments. However, the targets set for students are sometimes too low, evident where students exceed targets for later work, early. Nevertheless, the growing number of students succeeding in GCSEs early is an indication that the school is starting to raise expectations successfully. The proportion of students attaining the highest grades has also improved since the last inspection, but remains low when compared to schools nationally. An above average proportion of boys and girls leave with five or more GCSE grades. In 2010, 85%

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achieved five or more GCSE A*-C grades compared with 75% nationally. The proportion of results including both English and mathematics is below average and declined in 2010, reflecting their lower literacy and numeracy skills on entry to the school. The school's tracking data indicates that students currently taking their examinations are expected to restore the school's rising trend.

Students respond well to how teachers manage behaviour; behaviour is good. The students interviewed were proud of their school, appreciated the cooperative relationships between students and with their teachers, and valued the community ethos that contributes to their sense of safety, support and self-esteem. They take responsibility seriously, and participate actively in lessons; moral and social development are strengths. An increasing proportion of students support extra-curricular activities, including additional opportunities to study, although numbers are still low. While boys and girls have a good grasp of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and why it matters, not all actively apply it. There are good examples of students' contribution to the local community and interest in the wider world, such as their 'Young Earth Citizenship' on-line magazine. Feedback through partnerships with business and industry, including work experience reports, indicate that the specialist ethos is embedded well. Attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average. However, students' performance in English and mathematics limits their preparation for future economic well-being.

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	3
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	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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

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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Teaching is satisfactory. The good or better teaching stimulates students' enjoyment and achievement by: involving students actively; using computer technology creatively; making the relevance of the lesson obvious; relating students' previous learning clearly; questioning students persistently; improvising in response to students' reactions; and using time limited challenges to stimulate pace. At the last inspection too much work remained the same for students with different abilities and not enough staff used assessment data well. A wider range of work now exists in many lessons and the use of data is common, but the impact is lessened because the two improvements are not combined enough. For example, several lessons observed gave the students a choice of activities which had different levels of difficulty rather than matching activities to students' individual strengths and weaknesses, based on teacher's assessment. In some subjects, data is too general and not specific enough about progress in essential subject skills, knowledge and understanding to focus guidance. Similarly, staff now plan for the development of students' personal, learning and thinking skills generally, but even the best teachers rarely concentrate on specific aspects enough to measure students' individual progress.

Students' personal development and workplace skills are promoted well through the curriculum. The business and applied learning specialist status is used effectively to increase students' knowledge of the business world and develop transferable skills such as team work and problem solving. In some areas teachers who are passionate about their subject make the curriculum in the classroom fascinating, but not all middle managers promote the importance of this aspect well. Good collaboration with local schools and colleges contribute to a breadth of opportunities designed to meet students' individual needs, interests and aspirations. The range of awards, vocational qualifications, GCSEs and extra-curricular activities is wide. The school is working to promote progression more effectively. Opportunities for students to take different examinations early and progress onto higher qualifications have increased. While there is more to do, for example increasing the numbers taking GCSEs, the majority of students do transfer successfully from Year 11 into further education. Around half progress into the sixth form.

The quality of care and support is a strength of the school, but some modest targets are too limiting on the impact of guidance to agree with the school's self-evaluation that care, guidance and support is outstanding. However, successful relationships between staff and students, and effective partnerships, including those between staff and parents and carers, add significantly to the quality and coherence of provision. Good communication, including through information and communication technology, draws together school and home well. Teaching and support staff, curriculum and pastoral leaders and managers, staff based in school and the wider educational community, collaborate well to help students settle and succeed, including those transferring to the school during their secondary education. The impact of care, guidance and support on different groups of students is good. This includes their integration and inclusion; their behaviour and well-being; their progress and overall performance; and their improved attendance. Nevertheless, the impact of wide ranging strategies and interventions is not always measured well to adjust targets and accelerate progress. It is better for students who are supported by the inclusion

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unit, particularly where support staff use incremental steps to review milestones and reward success. The increased curriculum-based positioning of support staff provides a good opportunity to develop their roles with the guidance of middle leaders.

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?

Leadership and management are good overall, driven by a shared determination to do the best for all students. This view is shared by parents and carers, teaching and support staff, and younger and older students. A strong sense of loyalty and commitment to the school at all levels contributes to a positive ethos. Senior staff consider it a privilege to lead the school and work hard to exemplify the expectations made of others. The governing body is also industrious and effective in developing a good understanding of the schools' strengths and weaknesses, and contributing to the strong links that exist with parents and the community, including that linked to the business and enterprise specialism. Resources are managed judiciously to develop the quality of provision, promoting good progress by different groups of students, indicating good value for money. However, although satisfactory, the effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination is limited by documentation that is too imprecise to inform monitoring, for example by the governing body. Safeguarding arrangements fulfil or exceed government requirements, as shown for example in the involvement of the whole school community in developing, implementing and reviewing related policies and their implementation.

Capacity to improve further is satisfactory, because the significance or swiftness of improvements is not better, in particular in relation to the proportion of students leaving the school with a higher grade in English and mathematics amongst their qualifications. There is variation in the impact of middle leaders. Monitoring, evaluation and action planning is not refined enough to accelerate higher attainment. For example, while teaching and learning are regularly reviewed, and a range of professional development is provided, participation is optional and the impact on outcomes longer term is not always pursued. Also, while assessments of students are made and the quality of support is good, targets are not always precise enough to focus attention on essential skills that suppress students' attainment. However, the joint observations conducted by inspectors and senior staff, and the keenness of staff to receive and act on feedback, indicates that the school is well positioned to resolve these issues. The growing reputation of the school in the local community, reported

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by students and their parents and carers, and endorsed by the local authority, supports this judgement.

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	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

The sixth form is satisfactory and has some good features. Students make progress in line with their expectations. The proportion of boys and girls achieving high grades is low, particularly at AS level but is improving, notably at A2 level. Achievement is generally good on vocational programmes but varies between subjects. Students enjoy their studies and develop into good role models for younger students through their positive contribution to the school community. Their participation in the good range of extra-curricular activities is improving. Strategies to improve attendance, for example through the support of a dedicated learning mentor, are proving effective; attendance is high and improving. A high proportion of students progress into higher education.

Teaching, learning and assessment in the sixth form are satisfactory overall but include some good and better teaching on which to build. In the very best lessons students develop and apply their initiative and independence, often extending their knowledge and understanding through skilful questioning by the teacher, or by sharing their individual strengths for the benefit of all. Less effective lessons stem from expectations of students that are too modest or similar for different students. The curriculum provides a wide range of choices, including academic and vocational opportunities that appeal to students' interests and needs. Leadership and management of the sixth form are effective; the quality of guidance, transition, and the proportion of higher grades have improved, indicating good capacity to improve

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further. However, subject leadership remains variable and targets, success measures and timescales are not sharp enough to accelerate the progress of plans and priorities through precise and persistent monitoring.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	3
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers who returned a response was average in comparison to most secondary schools. The response of parents and carers was supportive across all aspects of the school's work, including the progress made by students.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Adeyfield 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 148 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 715 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	79	53%	64	43%	4	3%	0	0%
The school keeps my child safe	85	57%	61	41%	1	1%	0	0%
The school informs me about my child’s progress	86	58%	60	41%	2	1%	0	0%
My child is making enough progress at this school	81	55%	60	41%	4	3%	0	0%
The teaching is good at this school	74	50%	69	47%	1	1%	0	0%
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	68	46%	72	49%	6	4%	0	0%
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	50	34%	85	57%	11	7%	0	0%
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)	73	49%	65	44%	2	1%	0	0%
The school meets my child’s particular needs	76	51%	66	45%	5	3%	0	0%
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	71	48%	70	47%	5	3%	1	1%
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	72	49%	67	45%	3	2%	1	1%
The school is led and managed effectively	82	55%	60	41%	2	1%	0	0%
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	101	68%	44	30%	2	1%	0	0%

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 all 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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



13 May 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Adeyfield School, Hemel Hempstead HP2 4DE

On behalf of the inspectors who visited your school on 11 and 12 May, I would like to thank you for welcoming us into your school. We valued the opportunity to share your achievements and talk to you in discussion groups and lessons.

We think that Adeyfield is a good school and thought you might like to know why.

We particularly liked these features of your school:

- you receive good care and support, which you mirror by developing good relationships and taking responsibility that add to a strong sense of community
- you have wide opportunities to pursue through varied courses and activities, enabling students with different abilities and interests to progress well
- your school is well led and managed by staff and governors who make good use of available resources, including the business and enterprise specialism
- your best teachers make lessons fun, question skilfully to find out how much you understand, and focus accordingly on the things you each need to learn
- your achievements, including the number of higher grades, attendance and participation in optional activities are all improving.

We have asked the school to speed up improvements by prioritising these things:

- raise your standards further by developing more of the very best teaching
- help you by making small steps for learning clear and longer targets high
- check how well policies and approaches have helped you to succeed.

The inspection team wish you well for your continued enjoyment and success.

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton
Her Majesty's Inspector

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