

Noel-Baker Community School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	112992
Local authority	Derby
Inspection number	378627
Inspection dates	22–23 February 2012
Lead inspector	David Anstead 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
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1148
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	150
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Freda Daniel
Headteacher	Mal Kerr
Date of previous school inspection	19 November 2008
School address	Bracknell Drive Alvaston Derby DE24 0BR
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Ann Behan

Additional inspector

Peter McKenzie

Additional inspector

Christopher Spencer

Additional inspector

Jean Whalley

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspection team observed 39 lessons taught by 39 teachers. Meetings were held with staff, students and the Vice-chair of the Governing Body. In planning the inspection, inspectors noted that there were no responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including plans, reviews, policies, students' work and reports about the school from the local authority. The views of 247 parents and carers, a sample of 150 students and 84 staff, expressed in questionnaires, were taken into consideration.

Information about the school

The school is larger than the average secondary school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The vast majority of students are from White British backgrounds and around 12 per cent of students are from several minority ethnic groups. There is a lower-than-average proportion of students whose first language is believed not to be English and the proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is above average.

The school's performance in 2011 fell just below the national minimum floor standard set by the government for that year. The school held specialist status in languages for seven years but relinquished this in 2012 and currently has no specialism. The school has been awarded Investor in People status.

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	4
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	4
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to behaviour and safety. The sixth form is satisfactory because sixth formers are well motivated to learn.
- Behaviour and safety are inadequate because a minority of students interrupt and reduce the learning of other students in some lessons. This is partly because teachers apply the school’s behaviour management policy inconsistently and partly because, in some lessons, the work students are given to do is mundane or of inappropriate challenge. Attendance is low.
- Although there is some good teaching, the quality of teaching in general is only satisfactory because too many teachers fail to take account of assessment information in planning a range of activities to cover all needs in the class. Some teachers do not meet the school’s requirements for marking students’ work as set out in the assessment, recording and reporting policy. A small number of books seen had been rarely marked or pages had just been ticked with mistakes in subject content, spelling and grammar left uncorrected. This leaves students unsure of how well they are doing and unaware of what they need to do to improve.
- Examination results are improving but are still below average. As students join the school with below average attainment, this represents satisfactory achievement.
- Governors, senior leaders and middle leaders are committed and able to ensure the school continues to improve. Arrangements for the performance management of teachers meet requirements and inform the staff training

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programme. The leadership of teaching is improving the quality of provision although some weaknesses in practice remain.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Minimise disruption to learning in lessons by:
 - ensuring there is clarity about the school’s behaviour management policy and consistency from all staff in its implementation
 - helping all teachers to plan engaging learning activities of appropriate challenge for the range of needs in the class.

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - showing teachers how to use assessment information to plan a series of increasingly challenging tasks
 - making sure students’ written work is frequently marked, that mistakes are corrected and students provided with guidance on how to improve
 - ensuring teachers use marking to help students improve their literacy and numeracy skills
 - using the good practice that exists to improve the quality of teaching where it is weaker.

- Improve attendance so that it reaches the national average for the 2011-2012 academic year and reduce the frequency of persistent absenteeism.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The progress students make has been inconsistent over the last three years, varying between being similar to that made by all students nationally to below the national rate. Despite these ups and downs in the performance data, there is a discernible upwards trend over the three year period with a marked improvement for students currently in the school. Many Year 11 students sat modules from their GCSE English and mathematics examinations while they were in Year 10. From the examination results that have already been accredited from these early entries, it is clear that attainment is sharply up from where it was in 2011. Year 11 students are now making the expected three levels of progress in English and mathematics during their time in the school. The school is predicting that attainment in 2012 will remain below average but, as students join the school with below average attainment, this represents satisfactory achievement. Parents and carers responding to an Ofsted questionnaire mostly agreed.

The quality of learning seen in English during the inspection was consistently good

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and was having a direct impact on rising standards. Lessons were well planned, there was variety in the kinds of activities provided, students had the opportunity to work independently or in small groups and learning proceeded at a fast pace. In mathematics though, learning in lessons was generally no better than satisfactory and the improving achievement in that subject is more attributable to a range of additional measures the school has introduced including reduced class sizes, extra lessons during tutor time and individual support for those students identified as falling behind.

There were large differences in 2011 between the achievement of boys compared to girls and of students known to be eligible for free school meals; and of disabled students and those who have special educational needs in comparison to similar groups of students nationally. An analysis of examinations already passed by Year 11 students shows the gaps have been considerably narrowed and the school is predicting they will close to within just a few percentage points by the time these students complete the year. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make satisfactory progress but are prevented from making better progress by some teachers' general disregard of the need to provide work of differing challenge appropriate to the needs of all students in the class. Sometimes this is compensated for by individual help in class from a teaching assistant but this support is not available in all lessons. Information from feeder primary schools is used well to target specific help for Year 7 students who are behind with their reading. Inspectors listened to some students reading aloud who were able to use phonics to sound out unfamiliar words; the school is effective in helping these students acquire the necessary strategies to enable them to continue improving their reading and regular checks on their progress show they are catching up.

Attainment on entry into the sixth form is below average, resulting in the proportion of top grades attained at A level being lower than usually expected. However, the proportion of sixth formers who see the courses they begin through to a successful conclusion is average, indicating that achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory.

Quality of teaching

Although teaching is typically satisfactory, a small proportion is inadequate. Almost nine out of ten parents and carers agree that their children are taught well enough but this is not reflected in the views of students who are more critical of the teaching they receive.

Where teaching is good, lessons are well planned to meet the needs of all students. Assessment information is used to ensure work is matched to students' abilities through a variety of challenging tasks. Students with disabilities and special educational needs make good progress in such lessons. Teachers use their subject knowledge and expertise well to enthuse and capture students' interest and make the most of opportunities to promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In a French lesson for example, lower attaining Year 9 students were well engaged by a fast-paced and energetically delivered set of activities which, as

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well as promoting students' social and cultural development, motivated them well for the subsequent tasks which required them to speak and write in French. Where assessment is used effectively, and most notably in English, history and science, students know their targets and are very clear about what they need to do next to improve. More teaching was like this in the sixth form than in the main school.

Where teaching is not good enough, some students find the work either too easy or too difficult. This is because teachers' planning is not sufficiently detailed and insufficient thought is given to how students of varying abilities can make adequate progress. Consequently, there are occasions when this less effective teaching leads to a minority of students becoming disruptive, which in turn impedes the progress of all in the class.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Strong concerns were expressed in questionnaires about the extent and frequency of disruption to lessons. Comments referred to a minority of students persistently interrupting some lessons which limits the progress other students can make to satisfactory. A few interruptions to learning were observed by inspectors and it is clear that behaviour over time has not been good enough in some lessons. Students told inspectors that this happens because some teachers do not implement the 'three warnings' system properly, because teachers in some subjects tolerate too much bad behaviour and because some students simply lack respect for the rights of others. It was clear from the questionnaires, though, that incidents of serious misconduct are much less common. A minority of students were seen between lessons pushing others, shouting, engaging in play fighting and a group was seen smoking. Such behaviour is, however, untypical. The majority of students are friendly and courteous. The school site is litter-free and most students move about it sensibly and arrive punctually for lessons. The use of exclusion from school as a sanction is falling.

Some parents and carers raised concerns about bullying but the overall responses in questionnaires were of a similar level to those seen in most schools. All but one student spoken to said that intimidatory behaviour was uncommon and well dealt with by the school when it did occur. This was illustrated in one discussion where an older girl from a minority ethnic group complained about racist taunts from younger students. Other students in the group asked her whether she had reported it, to which she responded that she hadn't. The others told that she should do because they were confident that the school would 'sort it out'. Students have a good understanding of what is meant by homophobic behaviour and were similarly certain that it was not a concern.

Attendance has been exceptionally low for the last two years and persistent absence too high. The school has implemented robust new strategies to reverse this pattern and with considerable success. Over 20 prosecutions for poor attendance have been brought and parents of absentees are contacted earlier and more persistently by the school. At the time of the inspection, attendance had improved on the previous year

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but was still below the national average.

Leadership and management

Governors and senior leaders have a mostly accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. There is a shared vision and ambition which are expressed in the school's strategic planning and based on mostly secure monitoring of provision. Not all staff are fully committed to playing their part in taking the school forward however, because the application of policies governing marking and managing classroom behaviour is inconsistent. Staff are positive about the quality and scope of training they have access to, with 12 teachers undertaking a Master's qualification with the local university. However, the greater focus on professional development to improve leadership and management capability does not give sufficient priority to school improvement, particularly in moving satisfactory teaching to good or to managing disruptive behaviour. Nevertheless, actions being taken by senior and middle leaders are taking the school in the right direction and bringing about sustained improvement. The capacity to improve is demonstrated by the trend in rising examination results and by the improvements already secured in attendance this year. Reductions in the numbers of students being excluded from school indicate behaviour and attitudes to learning in lessons are beginning to improve. A determination to promote equality is demonstrated by the school's success in closing gaps in the performance between different student groups.

The school's specialist status in languages required all students to take a language at Key Stage 4, which some resented and which resulted in their poor achievement in French and Spanish. The curriculum has been amended so that it is broad and balanced, studying a language is no longer mandatory and the options available better meet the needs and aspirations of students. A review of sixth form provision has rightly concluded that whilst provision at A level meets the needs of most students, there is not enough choice for those wishing to pursue level 2 courses. The promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory although sometimes opportunities are missed because provision is happenstance rather than systematically planned. The arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements.

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	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



24 February 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Noel-Baker Community School, Derby, DE24 0BR

Thank you for your friendly welcome when we inspected your school. Some of those of you we spoke to, and over half of you who responded to our questionnaire, complained that learning in too many lessons is regularly disrupted by misbehaviour. This is limiting the progress you could make and so we have found your school to be inadequate in its overall effectiveness. We have given the school a *notice to improve* focusing particularly on your behaviour, which means an inspector will visit in about a year's time to check that behaviour is getting better.

Although there is some good teaching, especially in English, French and science, generally the quality of teaching you receive is no better than satisfactory. Your attendance has improved this year but remains much lower than is usually seen. The headteacher and senior staff are ambitious for the school and doing a satisfactory job of making it better.

I have asked the headteacher to continue to improve the school by:

- making sure your lessons are not disrupted and that you have interesting work to do
- checking that your teachers mark your books frequently to show you how well you are doing and to explain how you might do even better
- helping teachers plan work that is not too easy or too difficult for some
- raising your overall attendance to match that seen in most secondary schools nationally.

You can help by coming to school every day, by always trying your best in lessons and by never letting your behaviour stop others learning.

With best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely

David Anstead
Her Majesty's Inspector

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