

Newent Community School and Sixth Form Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115762
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	357816
Inspection dates	20–21 October 2010
Reporting inspector	James Sage

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
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	1343
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	234
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Bain
Headteacher	Jane Steele
Date of previous school inspection	13 December 2007
School address	Watery Lane Newent GL18 1QF
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. During the inspection, the team observed 43 teachers and 48 parts of lessons; during these observations, inspectors looked at samples of students' work and discussed these with them. Five meetings were held with different groups of students and discussions took place with a wide range of senior and middle leaders and with the Chair of the Governing Body. A large number of teachers took the opportunity to discuss aspects of the school with the inspection team. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school's systems for tracking and monitoring students' progress and at the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan. Questionnaires from 282 parents and carers were also analysed, in addition to 204 student and 29 staff questionnaires.

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

- Whether there have been sufficient improvements in the quality of students' learning and progress, particularly in English and science for lower attaining students and for boys, to judge these to be good.
- Whether there have been improvements in the use of assessment and in the quality of feedback to students to raise their achievement.
- The effectiveness of the monitoring of students' progress and of the quality of teaching to plan and use effective interventions.
- Whether there is sufficient evidence of outstanding outcomes in relation to the school's care, guidance and support to confirm the school's view that these are outstanding.
- Whether the outcomes are good enough to support the school's evaluation that the overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good.

Information about the school

Newent Community School is a larger than average school that serves the town of Newent and the surrounding area. Most students are from a White British background, with small numbers from other ethnic heritages and few who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is much lower than average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. The school gained specialist visual arts college status in 2002. In addition, the school has been awarded Sportsmark Silver, Artsmark Gold and Healthy Schools status. There have been recent and significant changes in senior and middle leadership, including a new deputy headteacher, two new assistant headteachers and five new heads of department this year; this includes the recent appointment of the assistant headteacher now responsible for the curriculum and students' achievement.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Newent Community School is a caring school; students enjoy coming to school and feel very safe. They behave very well in lessons and around the school. Attendance is above average and improving. Students willingly take part in the wide range of artistic, sporting and other activities the school provides, including those that help them to adopt healthy lifestyles. While the school loses around 10-15% of potential students to selective schools, students still enter the school with above average attainment. While students continue to attain well, their progress is satisfactory. Too much teaching is no better than satisfactory and too little is outstanding. The school now collects extensive data to track students' progress and to set them challenging targets but the use of assessment to support learning is not embedded well into practice. Marking of students' work often does not give them a clear indication of what they need to do to improve. The range of teaching strategies used in many lessons is limited and does not develop students' independence and ability to work in groups.

Students make significant contributions to the life of the school and to the local community. Excellent links with a school and community in Kenya are used well to bring a wider dimension to students' understanding of lives in other parts of the world. Their understanding of the ethnic, religious and cultural diversity of Britain is less well developed. The promotion of community cohesion in the national context is underdeveloped in the school.

The curriculum is now being extended to provide a wider range of options to meet students' needs and aspirations; partnerships with other schools and further education colleges are playing a key role in this. There has been good work in the early stages of Key Stage 3 to develop key learning skills and this is already having an impact for these students. In a range of subjects, including English, mathematics and science, schemes of work are being revised well to support teachers in planning steps in learning and progression. The foundation pathways curriculum, for a group of students in Key Stage 3 who find the full curriculum too challenging, is proving effective in raising their motivation and achievement. This group of students is extremely well supported. The quality of care for students, including those who are vulnerable, is outstanding. Students receive good guidance and support, but, up to now, this has not been sufficiently focused on raising their achievement.

Senior leaders' current self-evaluation is accurate and the school's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory. There have been significant recent changes to improve senior and middle leadership in the school and in governance. This has resulted in a wide range of actions that have not yet had an effect on improving overall achievement. There is a clear focus on improving the quality of teaching to improve learning and progress in lessons. In particular, there are good systems in place to ensure that students are set

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challenging targets, their progress is monitored carefully and that a range of interventions can be used to address underachievement. This also contributes to a sharper evaluation of the effectiveness of teachers and curriculum areas so that the necessary actions can be taken.

The visual arts specialism and related partnerships have contributed well to outcomes in art and allied subjects, with some good cross-curricular work being undertaken. More recently, work on the use of assessment to support learning in art is being disseminated to improve practice elsewhere in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To raise achievement, increase the proportion of lessons where learning, progress and teaching are good or better to at least 80 per cent by the end of this academic year (July 2011), through:
 - ensuring that lesson planning identifies clearly the steps in learning that students are expected to progress through
 - better use of assessment information to ensure teaching provides higher levels of challenge for all students
 - improving marking and feedback to students to ensure that they are clear about what they need to do to make progress
 - the use of a wider range of teaching strategies, including those to develop students' independence and the use of group work
 - whole-class teaching that fully engages all students.
- Ensure that improvements in the use of the analysis of student tracking data are embedded fully across all areas of the school to raise achievement.
- Develop the national dimension of community cohesion to ensure that students have a deeper understanding of the ethnic, religious and cultural diversity of Britain.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Attainment by the end of Key Stage 4 is above average and the school is close to its targets in recent years; most students achieve success at GCSE. Attainment in the visual arts subjects and mathematics is particularly strong. The attainment of the small group of students with special educational needs is below the national average for this group, although their achievement overall is satisfactory. The overall achievement of students is satisfactory because learning and progress are satisfactory; students' progress is good or better in just less than two thirds of lessons. The exception is mathematics, where achievement has been high for some years. Achievement in English for boys and for lower ability students has been low for several years. Changes to the provision in Key Stage 3 are having a positive impact on improving achievement for a lower attaining group of students. The progress of vulnerable students is monitored carefully and this is in line with other students. However, there are clear signs of improvements in English and in other subjects as a result of sharper use of assessment and improvements in planning. These improvements are not yet consistent across the school.

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All other outcomes for students are good. Students feel particularly safe in the school and their behaviour is good. Students have a good understanding of how to be safe and of safety procedures in and out of lessons. Students' attendance is above average; they move purposefully between lessons and are ready to learn when they arrive. They respond well in lessons even when the teaching is not stimulating. Many students make full use of the opportunities the school provides to be involved in discussions about the school through the school and house councils, taking part in artistic, cultural and sporting activities, and in work with the local community. They are prepared well for future life through acquiring good skills in literacy and numeracy and thorough preparation for work. They have less well developed skills in information and communication technology as a result of lack of opportunities to develop these skills in all subject areas, although they are enthusiastic about developments in the use of the school's virtual learning environment. While students' understanding of moral and social issues is strong, they are less confident in talking about spiritual and cultural matters.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Most teaching is at least satisfactory, but good or better in just less than two thirds of lessons. Good lessons have pace and use detailed knowledge of students in the class to ensure that all are working at high levels of challenge while being supported well. Lessons that are satisfactory rather than good lack this pace and challenge and are not matched

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well to the individual needs of students. Most students know their main target grades or levels, but many are unsure about their current levels of achievement and what they need to do to improve. The quality of marking and feedback to students is widely variable, with examples of excellent practice and some that is poor. Students' prior attainment is not taken fully into account in many lessons. Peer assessment is used very well in some subjects, such as design and technology and physical education; it is underused in others. In satisfactory lessons, while extensive use is made of questioning, this often only involves a small number of students. In many subjects, there have been good developments in schemes of work that clearly identify progression through concepts and skills. Good lessons use this to take students carefully through well-planned steps in learning; this is noticeably absent in lessons that are less than good. Many lessons are too teacher-directed, with limited opportunities for group work or for students to develop skills in independent learning. However, some subjects do this very well and this, and other good practice, is not yet disseminated well across the school.

The curriculum meets the needs and aspirations of the very large majority of students well. There is a good range of provision in Key Stage 4. The specialism in the visual arts has provided an extremely rich range of options. Good developments in Key Stage 3, such as the 'learning to learn' work in Years 7 and 8 and the foundation pathways, are already having a positive impact on achievement. Careful consideration is being given to the links between the curriculum and achievement to ensure that all students have opportunities to succeed.

The quality of care for students, including those who are vulnerable, is outstanding. Staff are not only very supportive when necessary, but also very effective in planning ahead to ensure the welfare of all students. The inclusion base provides a valuable resource and closely targeted support for those students who need it for a variety of reasons. Very effective use is made of partnerships to ensure these high levels of care. Careers advice, including the use of outside agencies, is also very strong and well regarded by students. Other aspects of guidance and support, although they are good and lead to good outcomes, do not focus sufficiently on supporting students' achievement.

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?

There have been recent changes to senior and middle leadership. There is now a shared understanding across senior leaders, and many middle leaders and other staff, of what the school needs to do to improve. Senior leaders' analysis of the school's current position is accurate and the identification of the steps required is clear. Key changes have been put

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in place, not least in the rigorous use of the analysis of data to monitor students' progress and the quality of teaching, to secure these improvements. However, these have not yet had an impact on improving achievement and there is still too much variation in the quality of teaching and provision across the school. There have also been changes in governance and the governing body is now able to act as a 'critical friend' for the school as well as holding the senior leaders to account. Because these changes have yet to have the impact required and because achievement has not yet improved, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

The school takes its safeguarding responsibilities very seriously and students overwhelmingly say they feel safe in the school. Child protection procedures are robust and well understood by staff. Good account is taken of the views of all concerned when regularly reviewing policies and procedures. The school conducts its own surveys of the views of parents and carers; these are analysed to identify concerns and take appropriate actions, for example in the use of homework. However, parents do raise some concerns about how well their views are taken into account. The partnerships the school has developed make a positive contribution to the curriculum and to progression routes into the sixth form and beyond. Strong partnerships have also been established with many primary schools to support progression as well as smoother transition. The partnerships arising from the visual arts specialism are used well across the curriculum as well as in promoting an excellent range of provision for the large numbers of students selecting arts-based courses. The involvement of partnerships linked to supporting vulnerable students is particularly strong.

The school and its community have limited ethnic, religious and cultural diversity. The school knows its students and local community well and takes positive steps to ensure that there is no discrimination and to promote equality. However, while these groups are small, the school is aware of the need to analyse data on achievement, attendance and behaviour for vulnerable students, those speaking English as an additional language, those from different ethnic and religious groups, and students with particular needs, in order to ensure that any issues are identified and dealt with effectively. The local and global aspects of community cohesion are covered well, but those aspects concerned with ethnic and religious issues in the national context are significantly underdeveloped.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

Students' attainment in the sixth form is in line with national averages. However, in around half of lessons in the sixth form, learning and progress are no better than satisfactory because teaching is satisfactory. These lessons lack pace and provide insufficient attention to the needs of individual students. There is also outstanding teaching and learning in the sixth form, but this practice is not sufficiently disseminated to improve the quality overall.

There is a broad, but mainly academic, curriculum in the sixth form, with clear progression from Key Stage 4, particularly in the visual arts. The school has partnerships with other schools and colleges to broaden the provision and also has good links with providers of vocational courses. The introduction of the creative and media diploma in the school has not yet reached the sixth form. Students are given good guidance on appropriate courses and on options beyond the sixth form. The quality of care in the sixth form is strong, reflecting that in the rest of the school. Many students in the sixth form play a full role in the life of the school and make highly positive contributions.

The leadership and management of the sixth form has many of the characteristics of that in the school overall. There is a clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve, but many actions have yet to have a positive impact on improving students' achievement.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
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

There was a good response from parents and carers and their views are largely supportive of the school. Their views support the key inspection findings. While the proportion who believe that their children enjoy school is high, those who feel that they make enough progress is lower than that expected. This is supported by the discussions that inspectors had with students and from the analysis of students' questionnaires. Students feel strongly that the school keeps them safe, and this is supported by the views of their parents and carers.

The proportion of parents and carers who feel that unacceptable behaviour is not dealt with effectively is higher than that expected, given the inspection findings. However, the response from students and discussions with them presents a much more positive picture that is in agreement with the inspection team's judgement.

A significant number of parents and carers added comments to their forms. Around one in five raised a concern, with about half of this number making a positive comment. Many of the concerns raised were about the progress their child is making

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Newent Community 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 282 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1343 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	102	36	166	59	13	5	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	96	34	170	60	12	4	1	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	80	28	173	61	17	6	4	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	73	26	169	60	20	7	4	1
The teaching is good at this school	68	24	192	68	12	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	67	24	180	64	26	9	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	56	20	188	67	30	11	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)	74	26	182	65	10	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	72	26	176	62	21	7	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	60	21	168	60	22	8	13	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	57	20	167	59	26	9	1	0
The school is led and managed effectively	90	32	164	58	16	6	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	105	37	156	55	18	6	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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

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.



22 October 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Newent Community School, Newent GL18 1QF

Following our visit to your school, I would like to let you know about our findings and to thank you for your very friendly welcome and for taking the time to talk to us. You told us that you enjoy being at school and that you feel safe. We were impressed by your behaviour in lessons and around the school, by your politeness and by how willingly you talked to us.

We judged the school, including the sixth form, to be satisfactory overall. These are the strengths in the school:

- The way the school cares for all of you.
- Your involvement in the life of the school.
- Your attendance is good and you are punctual to lessons.
- You are prepared well for work and for your future education.
- The school has a good curriculum that meets your needs and aspirations.

You achieve good examination results. However, too much teaching is no better than satisfactory and you do not make the progress you could in these lessons. This means that your overall achievement is satisfactory. We have asked the school to make improvements to the quality of teaching by making sure that all of you:

- have work that is challenging and fully involves you in the lesson
- are clear about what you need to do to improve your work.

We have also asked the school to make sure that you have a better understanding of the ethnic, religious and cultural diversity of Britain.

The current leaders in your school have a clear understanding of what the school needs to do to improve. They have your best interests at heart and will do all that they can to continue to make the school a better place for you to learn.

We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

James Sage

Her Majesty's Inspector

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