

The Elizabethan High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122885
Local Authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	359326
Inspection dates	2–3 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Dilip Kadodwala 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	1178
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	154
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ron Parry
Headteacher	Lynn Kenworthy
Date of previous school inspection	16 April 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. In total, 45 observations were made of 45 different teachers, some of which were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors held meetings with groups of students, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of school documentation, including development plans, school and national data, and the school's evaluation of its effectiveness. Responses to questionnaires from 122 parents and carers, 22 members of staff and 137 students also provided additional evidence.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key questions.

How well is the rise in students' attainment embedded, particularly in English and mathematics?

- How good is the progress made by previously underachieving groups such as lower-attaining boys, girls and students identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities?
- How effective are leadership and management at all levels in tackling underperformance and improving students' achievement?
- How effective is the sixth form?

Information about the school

This is a larger than average-sized secondary school. The vast majority of students are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average, and the proportion who have a statement of special educational needs is below average. The school acquired specialist science status in September 2005 and is part of the Blue Skies Extended Services, working with seven other schools to provide a range of extended services. The school has a Diana Memorial Award.

Since September 2007, the sixth form has been part of the Retford Post-16 Centre, which is half a mile from the main school. The centre is jointly managed with another secondary school, a special school and a further education college.

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

2

Main findings

This is a good school, including the post-16 centre. Students' achievement has improved well, particularly over the last academic year, and is now good. Results in the school's science specialism are consistently significantly above average. A legacy of underachievement in the core subjects of English and mathematics is being tackled vigorously, and the proportion of students who gain five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C including English and mathematics is rising. The most recent GCSE results were average overall, and senior leaders are determined to raise attainment in these subjects to a higher level. Challenging targets have been set for 2011 and senior leaders are confident that they will be met.

Much of the teaching is good and some is outstanding. This accounts largely for the students' good achievement and progress in lessons. Typically, a good level of challenge contributes to students' enjoyment of learning through a range of activities that are carefully planned and closely matched to their needs. Teachers use targeted questions skilfully to probe students' understanding and use reviews part way through lessons to refocus learning where needed. Marking provides helpful feedback but advice for improvement is not consistently followed up. Progress in lessons is sometimes limited when students are not actively engaged in learning, and students are happy to assume a more passive role. Although inspectors saw teachers giving opportunities for students to show independent learning, such strategies are not extensive across a wide range of subjects.

The good curriculum is effective in meeting students' needs and aspirations and is underpinned by a good use of partnerships giving access to a wide range of courses. The curriculum maximises students' opportunities to gain relevant qualifications and increase their motivation and enjoyment. Students' participation in enrichment activities is good, successfully promoting their well-being. Other aspects of students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Students have a well-developed understanding of right and wrong and show respect for social, religious and cultural diversity. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. A few parents and carers raised a concern about the school's effectiveness in dealing with unacceptable behaviour. This reflects the desire of senior leaders and the governing body to strike a balance between being inclusive and ensuring that all students learn in a safe environment. The few students, whose behaviour can be challenging, are steadily improving in response to the school's good support systems. Students say they feel safe and valued in school. One student summing up the views of others, said: 'The school supports us as being different; we all have a place where we can feel comfortable.' A concerted effort to improve attendance has been successful in raising the rate to above average and significantly reducing persistent absenteeism to well below average. Support

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structures are effective at all levels and, because of their keen awareness of students' personal needs, staff are able to provide good care, guidance and support.

Leadership at all levels is good. The headteacher, ably supported by senior leaders, is effective in driving improvement and is ambitious for continuing it. Effective school self-evaluation helps to identify the right priorities for further improvements, with a relentless determination to attain them. Provision and outcomes are very much better than those found at the last inspection, including for the sixth form. The school's capacity for sustaining improvement is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the percentage of students achieving 5+ A* - C GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, by ensuring that teaching is consistently good or outstanding through:
 - providing more opportunities for students to be actively engaged in their learning
 - supporting all students to become independent learners
 - ensuring that advice to students about improving their work is consistently followed up.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

From their broadly average starting points on entry to the school, students' achievement is good. Observations of teaching and learning across a range of subjects indicate that the trend of improvement is secure, ensuring that students now make good progress. For example, in a Year 9 mathematics lesson about predictions, the teacher's demonstration on an interactive whiteboard enabled students to pour and measure different volumes of water and captivated students' interest. This gave them the confidence to move forward in their learning with something they did not initially think they could do and resulted in good progress for students of all abilities. Leaders' action has been effective in reversing trends for particular groups of students who have been found to be underachieving in the past, for instance less-able boys, girls and students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The latter group are well supported by staff and are given carefully selected teaching which is targeted to meet their specific needs. As a result, these students also make good progress. The achievement of students known to be eligible for free school meals is similar to that of other students. Typically, students arrive at lessons prepared to work hard. In the large majority of lessons seen across the school, students' progress in learning was good. They consolidated their skills and knowledge and developed greater understanding of new ideas and concepts.

Students' attitudes to learning are positive and the overwhelming majority behave well in lessons and around the school. Inspectors noted students' enthusiasm and enjoyment in very many lessons and their active participation when given opportunities. They have a proper regard for safety and a secure awareness of risks to their personal health and well-being. Students learn in a supportive and inclusive environment where they feel safe and valued as individuals. This is also evident in the views expressed in students' and parents' and carers' surveys. Students say that bullying is uncommon and are confident that any instances are dealt with effectively. Students' involvement in drawing up an anti-bullying policy helps in this regard. Students of all ages and backgrounds mix well together and

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racial harmony is very evident. A good proportion of students choose to eat healthy food options and most engage in at least the two hours of physical activity expected each week. Students contribute well to the school and the wider community. Large numbers are involved in community projects, such as the Forest Schools initiative, and many willingly participate in a wide range of drama, dance and music productions which are performed in local theatres and schools. Improvements in basic skills in English and mathematics, along with considerable strengths in the students' use of information and communication technology, mean that students' development of skills needed for further education and the workplace is good.

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	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?

Teachers' expert subject knowledge and enthusiasm, coupled with the setting of a sharp pace, contribute well to students' enjoyment of learning and their good progress. Investment in training teachers to promote effective assessment is showing positive benefits. For example, in a Year 8 French lesson, students were given an assessment task and then challenged to have a go at a higher level. Students relished this challenge and rose to it, demonstrating good progress by the end of the lesson. Students are adept at using peer- and self-assessment and are aware of their current performance and target grades. Support staff are used purposefully to ensure that students who have special learning needs keep pace and access learning successfully. Students learn at a faster rate

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when they are actively involved in the lessons and have tasks that enable them to show initiative and demonstrate independent learning. For example, in a Year 11 science lesson on alkali metals, students were challenged to develop increasingly sophisticated hypotheses in order to explain the reactions they had seen, leading to a high level of discussion. These effective strategies are evident in many lessons but are not extensive across the whole school. Routine marking of students' work with detailed comments for improvement is evident, but there is some inconsistency in following up the advice.

The curriculum is suitably adjusted for younger students who need to catch up with their literacy skills. The school's science specialism makes a good impact on provision, including for local primary schools. At Key Stage 4 the provision is flexible, offering a range of pathways to meet students' needs. The impact is seen in students' good achievement, including in vocational courses and in improved attendance. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities and participation rates are good.

Staff demonstrate strong, caring attitudes and students receive good personal support and guidance, both at times of transition and when facing challenges. Systems to monitor students' progress and well-being are effective, including for those students whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. The individual attention given to them is particularly commented on by parents and carers, who appreciate the support given by staff.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
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?

The headteacher, ably supported by members of the senior leadership team, provides good leadership. The drive for improvement is characterised by a strong sense of purpose which puts students' achievement and well-being at the core of the school's work. Strong accountability between senior and middle leaders concentrates on students' performance, using robust data to target interventions. The systematic monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is good because it ensures that improvement is embedded and not led by quick-fix solutions. The members of the governing body involve themselves fully in the life of the school and have systematic approaches to evaluation. Consequently, they provide good direction and challenge, based on an informed view about students' outcomes. Evaluation of equal opportunities ensures that outcomes are checked rigorously for students of all backgrounds so that none is discriminated against. Gaps in attainment are narrowing, particularly for students whose circumstances have made them vulnerable. Good action is taken to engage parents and carers through a wide range of communications and mechanisms, including electronically through secure routes. Strong

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partnerships, including with a local family of schools, make a good impact on extending opportunities for students to succeed. A clear audit of community needs has resulted in a suitable action plan which is being implemented well. The extended school provision also helps to promote good community cohesion. Links with a school in Brazil and support for a village school in Gambia widen students' horizons and their understanding of a global community. Safeguarding procedures are robust. All staff and the governing body have regular training, and the impact of policies is regularly reviewed to ensure that students' safety is prioritised and maintained.

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	2
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	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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

The post-16 centre has a positive ethos which students enjoy. Students begin with attainment that is broadly average. Progress by the end of Year 13 is good for the vast majority of students, reflecting consistently good quality teaching. In a significant number of subjects, students attain a 100% success rate. Students' personal development is good. A wide range of enrichment activities promote students' economic well-being and encourage them to adopt healthy lifestyles. Students also make a positive contribution to the community through their fundraising activities and work with younger pupils. Curriculum provision is good, reflecting effective partnership work. There is a wide range of AS and A2 subjects, as well as a number of Level 3 vocational courses. A further strength of the post-16 partnership working is the integration of post-16 students from a local special school. Students receive good guidance and support to ensure that they make informed choices which meet personal and academic needs suitably. Attendance is above average and the proportion of students who complete their courses is high. Almost all students who wish to enter higher education do so successfully, and the vast majority enter some form of employment or training. The quality of leadership and management is good. There is a clear management structure and well-defined lines of responsibility are

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implemented effectively. There has been a significant improvement in the performance of students over the last three years. The director has a clear vision for the centre and is continually looking to build upon the existing good practice.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	2
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

The percentage of parents and carers who returned a questionnaire was below average for a secondary school. Most who responded view the school as doing a good job overall. A very large majority say that their children are kept safe and that teaching is good. A few parental criticisms were offered constructively and these were discussed with the headteacher. Some parents and carers commented on the school's tackling of unacceptable behaviour as not being effective. Inspectors asked students, observed behaviour during break times and reviewed records. Instances of fixed-term exclusions have been high but are reducing significantly. There is a calm atmosphere and the school operates a firm but fair system to ensure that students' learning is not disrupted. Some parents and carers responded negatively to the statement that the school helps children to have a healthy lifestyle. On balance, the school provides a reasonable mix of healthy food options, and there are good opportunities for students to access sports activities and very many do so.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Elizabethan High 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 122 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1178 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	42	34	67	55	8	7	3	2
The school keeps my child safe	50	41	66	54	3	2	2	2
My school informs me about my child's progress	51	42	53	43	16	13	2	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	44	36	53	43	21	17	3	2
The teaching is good at this school	40	33	64	52	12	10	4	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	29	24	65	53	21	17	5	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	17	14	71	58	19	16	5	4
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)	34	28	66	54	9	7	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	34	28	65	53	18	15	4	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	25	66	54	16	13	9	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	20	72	59	15	12	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	35	29	63	52	11	9	4	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	47	39	57	47	15	12	3	2

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 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 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.

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.



4 March 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of The Elizabethan High School, Retford, DN22 7PY

Thank you all very much for welcoming the inspectors and being helpful when we visited recently. Your views are important, and we took them into account when reaching our conclusions.

Yours is a good school, including the sixth form. The headteacher, other senior leaders and the governing body are successful in ensuring that all staff share the common purpose of raising standards and improving your learning further. Their drive for improvement is seen in the most recent GCSE results, which reflect a continuing, rising trend. Your progress in learning is good and this represents good achievement.

You make good contributions to school life and the local community. Your support for the village school in Gambia is impressive. You clearly enjoy school, as seen in your above average attendance, good punctuality and participation in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. You told us that you feel safe and there is always someone you can turn to for help. We judged your behaviour to be good and the staff give good support to the minority of students who sometimes find it difficult to live up to behavioural expectations.

The quality of teaching is good. To improve further we have asked the senior leaders to ensure that even more of you gain higher grades in GCSE subjects including English and mathematics. To this end, we have asked that more of the teaching should engage you actively in learning; that more opportunities are provided for you to demonstrate independent learning; and that advice given to you in marking is consistently followed up. You can help by rising to the challenges set by your teachers.

Best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely

Dilip Kadodwala

Her Majesty's Inspector

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