

Heanor Gate Science College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112993
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	357247
Inspection dates	16–17 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Gwen Coates HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1372
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Collington
Headteacher	Robert Howard
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed parts of 44 lessons and saw a similar number of teachers. They held meetings with groups of students, members of the governing body and staff. They observed the school's work, and scrutinised a range of documentation including the school improvement plan, self-evaluation documents and external evaluation reports. The team analysed 292 parents' and carers' questionnaires.

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

- How effective teaching is in motivating and challenging boys of middle ability to improve the rate of progress they make.
- The extent to which there is variability in the quality of teaching and in the accuracy of assessment across subjects in the sixth form.
- How effectively academic and pastoral support mechanisms together contribute to improving the rate of progress all students make.
- How effectively middle leaders contribute to improving the quality of teaching and learning in their areas and how consistent this is across subjects.
- How effectively partnerships contribute to the quality of the curriculum at Key Stage 4 and post-16, and to improving outcomes for students.

Information about the school

Heanor Gate Science College is a larger-than-average secondary school that is consistently oversubscribed. The proportion of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. Most students are White British. While the proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average, the proportion of those with statements of special educational needs is below average. The school gained specialist science college status in 2002 and applied learning college status in 2006. It has achieved a number of awards including Career Mark, Health Promoting School, International School and Cultural Diversity Quality Standard (bronze award).

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?**1****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****1**

Main findings

Heanor Gate Science College provides an outstanding all-round education for its students. Leaders and managers of the school are exceptional in the way they have introduced a 'can do' culture of improvement and a strong sense of purpose that is raising the aspirations of students and their parents and carers. The impact of such high quality leadership and management can be seen in the outstanding curriculum and care, guidance and support that is offered, both of which are enhanced by exceptionally strong partnerships.

Rigorous monitoring of students' progress, not only in relation to academic achievement, but also their personal and social development, and the timely interventions that result, are having a significant impact on improving the rate of progress students are making in their learning and the quality of other outcomes. Thus, for example, students' behaviour, the extent to which they feel safe and how well they are prepared for their future lives beyond school are all outstanding.

The school's own monitoring processes indicate that teaching is good and improving, but that it has not yet had sufficient impact on students' progress to raise overall attainment to above average. Inspection activity revealed that, although there were many examples of outstanding classroom practice, there were some remaining areas of inconsistency in teaching and assessment, particularly in relation to pace and challenge in lessons and the quality of teachers' questioning. Both of these are areas that the school has identified for improvement in its own self-evaluation.

Most students are of White British heritage and the school considers it vital to develop their awareness of diversity and their tolerance of difference. The school's motto, 'excellence in a caring community', is promoted by very successfully modelling what a caring community is and extending the school's influence by working in partnership with all its stakeholders. Its outstanding work to promote community cohesion within the school, within its local community and beyond contributes to this. The impact can be seen in the outstanding way in which students contribute to the school and wider community and the extent of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The school has excellent capacity for sustained improvement. The critical and penetrating self-evaluation process is very well-informed by the views of parents, carers and students. Leaders know precisely the strengths of the school and any existing areas of weakness and are proactive and prompt in introducing improvement strategies. The impact of these can be seen in the significant improvements that have been made since the last inspection - in the quality of leadership and management, in provision and in outcomes for students. The school is not complacent and is keenly aware of the need to keep on raising the quality of teaching and assessment in order to improve the quality of students' learning and their attainment.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment by accelerating the rate of progress all students make in their learning. Do this by removing existing inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and assessment. In particular:
 - ensure that pace and challenge in all lessons matches closely the individual needs and abilities of each student and thus accelerates the rate at which they make progress
 - embed the use of high quality questioning by teachers so that it not only confirms students' knowledge and understanding but also extends and deepens their knowledge and understanding and thus promotes their higher level thinking skills.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Attainment at the end of Year 11 is broadly in line with national averages. Following a dip in 2010, current school data, including modules and units already completed, indicate the trend of improvement evident in previous years is set to continue in 2011. Students are making good progress in their learning and their rising attainment indicates that this is also improving year on year. The school's specialist status is making a very positive contribution to students' achievement, for example attainment in vocational subjects at the end of Key Stage 4 is significantly above the national average at both the A*/A grades and the A*/C grades. The progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. All gained at least an entry level qualification in English and mathematics and most gained accreditation at level 2. Following successful interventions, the progress of middle ability boys has improved so that most are now achieving at least in line with expectations.

Lesson observations indicate that students are making at least good progress in most of their lessons and in some they are making outstanding progress. Attitudes to learning are often outstanding, students are eager to contribute, take pride in their work and work well both individually and in small groups. This is the case for all individual groups of students and across the full range of subjects.

Students feel very safe in school and are very well prepared for the range of risks they may encounter outside school. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school contributes significantly to their successful learning and to the very positive school ethos. Students are very well-prepared for transition to the next stage of education or employment. They develop very valuable work-related skills, financial and enterprise capabilities and social skills. Almost all students remain in education or go on to further training or employment at the end of Year 11.

Students feel a strong allegiance to the school and there is a genuine feeling of community amongst students and staff. Many students assume positions of responsibility and many are involved in a wide range of charitable fund-raising activities, indicating their strong social and moral development. Students think deeply about their own and others' experiences and many have a very good appreciation of cultural and artistic matters.

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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	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

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?

Particular strengths noted in the lessons observed included:

- the very good subject knowledge of teachers
- the effective use of prior attainment and on-going assessment data to plan tasks, support and questions for different abilities
- well-designed and appropriately paced sequences of learning activities, which ensured students remained fully engaged and interested
- the effective use of paired and small group learning as part of a strategy to develop answers and encourage reflection
- independent learning that was evident during individual tasks in lessons and in some longer projects, investigations and coursework
- problem solving that required students to demonstrate intellectual effort to solve and to justify answers
- the fact that, without exception, all students knew their personal targets, the levels at which they are currently working and what they need to do to improve
- marking that identified strengths and next steps to be taken in order to improve written work

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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- imaginative and well designed resources including information and communication technology.

In the best lessons, pace was excellent and challenging learning activities were closely matched to the needs and abilities of each student. However, even where teaching was good in other respects or where planning for different abilities was a strong feature of lesson planning, sufficient challenge for all students was not always evident and as a result the rate at which students made progress was not as good as it should be.

Inspectors saw examples of excellent higher-order questioning, but some teachers only use questioning to confirm basic knowledge and understanding rather than to extend and deepen students' thinking and to encourage the development of higher-level skills such as the ability to apply their knowledge to unfamiliar contexts, to analyse and to evaluate.

The school offers a broad, balanced and highly innovative curriculum that enables access and inclusion for all students regardless of ability or individual need. Over 40 different out-of-school activities are offered that involve over 1,000 students. Gifted and talented students are provided with a very good range of activities. The use of teaching assistants and other forms of support and interventions enable all students with special educational needs and/or disabilities to fully access the curriculum and take advantage of the wide range of opportunities that are offered. The curriculum is enhanced significantly by the school's specialist status and its highly successful partnership links, both with other schools and colleges, and with local employers. This is evident in the excellent vocational options, the wide range of science options and the school's lead status in the area for the Information Technology (IT) Diploma.

The exceptionally well-coordinated nature of academic and pastoral support ensures it has a very positive impact on students' outcomes. The school provides highly effective and well-targeted support for students who face challenging circumstances. Together with very good inter-agency cooperation, this support enables these students to feel positive, trusting and confident. The transition arrangements from primary school to Year 7 and the range of additional support in place are excellent. Parents' and carers' questionnaires were very positive about this. Equally strong transition arrangements are in place from Key Stage 3 to 4 and then on to the sixth form. Information, advice and guidance are significant strengths of the school and all students praised this. A number of successful strategies to improve attendance, including the systematic targeting of those individuals at the greatest risk, have resulted in improving attendance, which is now above average.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher is an exceptional leader who inspires staff and students to raise their expectations about what they can all achieve. Supported by a very strong senior leadership team and an energetic and enthusiastic middle leadership group, he has introduced a culture of continuous improvement that is infectious. Morale is very high and staff, students, parents and carers believe absolutely in the school's success and are totally committed to it. This was confirmed in questionnaire responses. Almost all staff said that the school is well led and all said they were proud to be a member of the school staff. Comments included, 'staff know, from the top down, that mediocre is not acceptable' and 'great ideas are followed through thoroughly in this school'. Students and their parents and carers said the school is well-led. One parent, whose comment echoed that of many others, said, 'The head and his team are passionate about the school and children's achievement, not just academic, but also sporting, musical and pastoral.'

There is rigorous monitoring, evaluation and self-challenge, resulting in ambitious improvement plans. As well as being an excellent tool for monitoring and quality assuring the work of subject departments, the dialogue resulting from the curriculum area review process has brought curriculum teams together to share good practice and to plan collaboratively for improvement. Excellent professional development, that involves the use of learning coaches, buddy systems, training on specific issues such as questioning, paired and peer observation and action research, has been used to bring about significant improvement in the quality of teaching. The student voice is an important element of the review process. For example, as a result of students identifying a wish that mathematics might be made more relevant to their everyday lives, there is now more focus on functional maths. The school has been very effective in narrowing the achievement gap between different groups of students and takes very seriously its commitment to promoting equality of opportunity for all.

Governors are rigorous in ensuring that pupils and staff are safe and discharge their statutory duties effectively. All statutory requirements regarding safeguarding are fully met and the school adopts recommended good practice across all areas of its work in this area. Partnership activity, and the excellence of the school's collaborative work, adds value to the education provided for students and contributes exceptionally well to enhancing their well-being, development and progress. Leaders' excellent understanding of the religious, ethnic and socio-economic characteristics of the school community is translated into a highly effective strategic approach to the promotion of community cohesion. This is evident in, for example, the local links with an inner city multi-racial school with which collaborative project work has been undertaken by students, and the international links with a school in China with which annual student exchange visits take place.

The school manages and deploys its resources in a highly effective and efficient way so that, despite ageing and rather dilapidated accommodation and site, it provides an outstanding education for its students.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

Overall attainment is average but improving and the progress students make, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is good. Retention from Year 12 to Year 13 is good and all students are successful in gaining places in higher education, further training, apprenticeships or employment. Students' attitudes to learning, their contribution to the wider community and the extent to which they develop work-related skills are strong.

Much of the variability in the quality of teaching and assessment in the sixth form has been removed. Strengths and areas for development in relation to teaching and assessment are the same as those given in the relevant section on main school provision. The sixth form curriculum offers a very wide choice of subjects and courses to appeal to students of all abilities and interests. The school is actively involved in the local learning community and has shared provision for both vocational and academic courses with three other schools and colleges and is the lead institution for the 14-19 IT Diploma. Cross curricular provision, in relation to health education, citizenship, financial management and business understanding is strong and is supplemented by a wide range of enrichment activities including sports, Young Enterprise and overseas trips. The care, guidance and support students receive are outstanding and information, advice and guidance about their futures are of the highest quality.

Monitoring and tracking of students' progress are excellent and high quality intervention is provided for those who are underachieving or have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The regular review process ensures close monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning. Self-evaluation in the sixth form is excellent and, like that in the main school, is informed very well by contributions from student focus groups.

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

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

An above average proportion of responses to the questionnaire for parents and carers was received. Virtually all responses were highly positive, in particular on how safe children are, on information about children's progress, on supporting learning and on meeting needs. Inspectors' judgements endorse parents' and carers' responses and the many positive comments they submitted about their children's experience at the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Heanor Gate Science College 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 292 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1372 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	102	35	175	60	9	3	5	2
The school keeps my child safe	108	37	179	61	4	1	1	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	118	40	161	55	11	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	106	36	163	56	14	5	5	2
The teaching is good at this school	84	29	187	64	16	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	77	26	170	58	39	13	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	47	16	216	74	21	7	2	1
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)	104	36	160	55	16	5	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	97	33	176	60	11	4	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	93	32	161	55	22	8	5	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	65	22	188	64	21	7	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	98	34	170	58	14	5	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	117	40	160	55	6	2	6	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.



18 February 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Heanor Gate Science College, Heanor, DE75 7RA

The inspection team really enjoyed its visit to your school. Thank you to those who completed questionnaires or spoke to us - our judgements endorsed your views. Despite the aging and rather dilapidated buildings that you put up with everyday, you should be proud that you attend a school that provides you with an outstanding education. Teachers really care about you and are keen that you aim high and achieve well, both academically and socially.

Your school is outstanding on many levels including its leadership and management, the quality of care, guidance and support you receive and the curriculum you are provided with. As a result, your non-academic development is impressive, including the extent to which you feel safe, your behaviour, how well you are prepared for your future lives and the quality of your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Attainment at the end of Year 11 and in the sixth form is broadly average and improving. It was clear that you enjoy your education and, as a result, most of you make at least good progress. The quality of teaching and assessment is good and improving. The leaders in your school recognise if it was even better, it would enable you to make even more progress in your learning and raise your attainment further. Inspectors agree and have asked the headteacher to ensure that in all lessons:

- the pace and challenge matches closely your individual needs and abilities and thus accelerates the rate at which you make progress
- the quality of teachers' questioning is improved so that you are constantly challenged to think hard before you respond and to give more detailed answers.

You can all help the school to make these improvements by continuing to attend regularly and work hard, and by listening clearly to your teachers, thinking hard about the questions they pose and trying your best to respond with detailed answers.

Yours sincerely

Gwen Coates

Her Majesty's Inspector

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