

Darton College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106651
Local Authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	362737
Inspection dates	12–13 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Jan Bennett HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	980
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Graham Lund
Headteacher	Mrs Sharon Rossides
Date of previous school inspection	20 January 2010
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an additional inspector. They observed 17 lessons taught by 17 different teachers and visited the seclusion and learning support units. They held meetings with senior and middle leaders, groups of students, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and a representative from the local authority. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation. The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas, particularly the progress made by the school in addressing the following areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

Raise attainment and accelerate progress by:

- developing teachers' skills in the application of strategies to support learning
- planning and delivering lessons which offer appropriate levels of challenge to all students
- making better use of the effective practice that exists within the school
- improving the quality and usefulness of marking and the standard of work in the students' books
- managing more effectively the time allocated to additional subject support so that it has greater impact on students' achievement.

Ensure that leadership and management at all levels has greater impact on the school's effectiveness by:

- prioritising actions for school improvement and agreeing measurable success criteria
- increasing the rigour of systems that monitor and evaluate the impact of actions on provision and outcomes
- making expectations clear and accountability rigorous
- nurturing the potential of senior and middle leaders through well-targeted professional development
- increasing the rigour with which the governing body hold the school to account for its performance.

Information about the school

Darton College is an average-sized secondary school. The vast majority of students are of White British heritage and very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs or with other special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The school has specialist status in humanities. A pupil referral unit shares the school site, but was not part of this inspection.

The school was inspected in January 2010 and was judged to require special measures. The headteacher left the school shortly afterwards and an executive headteacher took up post in April 2010. In the intervening time, the deputy headteacher led the school. The new permanent headteacher took up post at the start of this academic year. Plans to stand down the governing body and establish an interim executive board from April 2010 were delayed by the general election. In the meantime, the Ofsted Review Committee was established consisting of six governors. The Interim Executive Board met for the first time

in September 2010. The school moved into its new building at the beginning of March 2011.

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

2

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. Significant progress has been made in resolving the issues raised in the previous inspection and the school now provides its students with a satisfactory education.

Leaders, staff and students have worked extremely hard and effectively to improve many aspects of the school in a short space of time. The Interim Executive Board has driven progress with steely determination and meticulous monitoring of the improvement plan. The interim executive headteacher laid the foundations of good leadership and management by working with school leaders to develop and introduce much-needed structures and systems. The new headteacher accelerated the improvement by galvanising staff and students, building their self-belief and inspiring them with an ambitious vision. By the time the school moved to the new building, everyone had the confidence and motivation to capitalise on the many opportunities that the building offers.

Attainment and achievement are improving across the school as a result of more effective target setting and monitoring of students' progress; much-improved teaching and good care, guidance and support. Examination results improved in 2010. The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at grade C went up by 12 percentage points, but the increase in the proportion attaining five GCSE passes at grade C, including English and mathematics, was more modest. However, early entry examination results for GCSE English and mathematics indicate a greater increase this year. Students' learning and progress are improving quickly but fluctuations in the rate of progress made in English and mathematics need to be addressed if the school is to achieve its very challenging targets.

Attendance, a cause for concern at the previous inspection, has improved tremendously and is now high. Punctuality is good and the number of persistent absentees has reduced considerably. The importance of good attendance is promoted very effectively to current and prospective students and to parents and carers. Behaviour has improved significantly and is good. Positive behaviour in lessons promotes good learning and students behave extremely well out of lessons, especially in communal areas. The number of detentions has more than halved since September.

Observations by inspectors show that the school's lesson observation system is accurate and that the quality of teaching is good. The use of assessment to support learning is satisfactory overall with pockets of good practice. Teachers give extra work to those who finish quickly and support those finding concepts difficult. However, they are not making full use of assessment data to plan tasks that meet differing needs, and students in many classes work on the same tasks regardless of ability. The work of learning support assistants has been reviewed and improved, leading to more-focused and effective additional subject support, both in and out of class. The curriculum is satisfactory and

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improvements are planned for September. High quality care, guidance and support contribute well to improved outcomes for students.

Senior leaders have developed quickly into a very skilled and cohesive team. They are playing a key role in driving the school forward. Leadership is increasingly dispersed and middle leaders are rising to the challenge of being more accountable and proactive. The layout of the new building encourages collaboration and both the middle leaders themselves and their teams are already working more closely and effectively together. The move to the new building was planned with scrupulous care and staff worked long hours to ensure that learning was uninterrupted. Self-evaluation is accurate. Leaders are fully aware of areas that need further development, such as the use of assessment to support learning, and are taking appropriate action. Leaders have become highly skilled at evaluating the impact of actions taken. The speed and effectiveness with which weaknesses identified in the previous inspection have been tackled demonstrate a good capacity to improve.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate and secure the progress made by students in English and mathematics by:
 - increasing the proportion of Year 9 students making the expected progress in English to match that of the other core subjects by the end of this academic year
 - taking action to ensure that students in Key Stage 3 make better progress in mathematics in the early part of next year.
- Ensure that good practice in the use of assessment to enhance learning is spread across all areas.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students join the school with average prior attainment. Standards have improved across the school and are broadly average. The legacy of weak provision is affecting Year 11 students particularly, but well-targeted interventions are compensating. Early-entry GCSE examination results and tracking data indicate that a considerably higher proportion of students than last year will achieve five GCSE passes at grade C, including English and mathematics. Other year groups have also been affected by weak teaching in the past but careful monitoring is identifying specific areas of concern, particularly in the core subjects of English and mathematics where progress is uneven, and strategies are being implemented to address the issues. Internal data show that students are making better progress overall especially in Years 7, 8 and 10. There are no consistent differences between the performance of boys and girls. In the past, the most-able students have not always achieved their potential but this is being addressed. The progress seen in lessons was generally good with students taking great pride in their work and keen to do well. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are making the expected progress. More-effective monitoring of individuals and improved learning support are having an increasingly positive impact on their learning.

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The humanities specialism is used effectively to develop spiritual, moral and cultural awareness. Students are well informed about leading a healthy lifestyle and the growing range of extra-curricular activities includes more opportunities to keep fit. Students feel very secure on the new site and say that instances of bullying are rare and dealt with quickly. Students play an active role in the school and local community through charity fundraising, mentoring younger students and participation in environmental projects. They make a highly-valued contribution to decision making through a very active student voice and prefect system. Senior prefects meet regularly with the senior leadership team and they contribute to lesson observations and appointing staff.

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	3
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	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
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?

A robust lesson observation system and very effective training have led to good or better teaching in the large majority of lessons. Students are highly engaged and classrooms have a purposeful and positive atmosphere. Teachers share objectives at the beginning of lessons and refer to them when recapping and checking learning throughout the lesson. Imaginative activities are used to engage and enthuse students.

Learning support assistants are deployed well and they liaise closely with teachers. The quality of marking in books is too variable but students say they receive plenty of oral feedback and know what to do to improve. Most teachers use questioning well to make frequent checks on learning and make good use of follow up questions to extend thinking

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and tease out any misunderstandings. However, few teachers make sufficient use of self- and peer-assessment to assist learning. Teachers in different subjects are taking opportunities to develop students' literacy skills. There is a wide choice of options in Key Stage 4, including vocational courses at the local further education college and Diplomas offered in partnership with other local schools.

The Key Stage 3 curriculum is broad and balanced with major improvements planned for September. The range of extra-curricular activities is expanding and includes an increasing number of residential visits and trips. Transition arrangements for Year 6 pupils are very strong and there is good careers advice for Key Stage 4 students. Support for students whose circumstances make them more vulnerable is very good. The learning support unit provides a safe and effective learning environment that helps students, often with serious attendance problems, return to mainstream classes. Mentors work successfully with students at risk of being excluded from lessons and the seclusion unit helps those with serious behavioural issues to manage their anger more effectively. Both units monitor students leaving their care very carefully and play a key role in improving attendance and behaviour.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The drive for improvement is unremitting and leaders, at all levels, work unstintingly to improve the quality of provision and outcomes for students. The headteacher provides very strong, dynamic leadership and is an excellent role model for senior and middle leaders. She is well liked and respected and has inspired staff and students to reach extremely challenging targets. Performance management is tight and decisive action has been taken, when necessary, to eradicate inadequate teaching. The Interim Executive Board has made an outstanding contribution to the improvements. Members have a very good blend of skills, their attendance at meetings is excellent and they play an active part in developing student voice and nurturing senior and middle leaders. They rigorously monitor progress against ambitious targets and milestones in the improvement plan and are not afraid to challenge leaders.

The school has established strong links with its partner primary schools. It also works closely with a range of local secondary schools and is increasingly asked to share its expertise. Links with parents and carers are much stronger as a result of regular newsletters and reports, parents' evenings and review days, tours of the new building and events to help parents and carers support their child more effectively.

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Safeguarding arrangements are good and students say that they feel very safe in school. The school is very harmonious. Students show respect for each other and accept and appreciate any differences. Careful monitoring and robust action has ensured that there are few gaps in achievement between specific groups of students and the school is working closely with individual families to close those that remain. Community cohesion is developing but strategies have not been systematically evaluated. Finances and resources are very carefully managed and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

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	1
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

Views of parents and carers

Questionnaires were not distributed to parents and carers during this inspection. Senior and middle leaders discussed how they liaise with parents and carers and how they keep them informed about their child's progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

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

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



16 May 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Darton College, Barnsley, S75 5EF

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed meeting you, seeing you at work in the new building and hearing your views. I am delighted to report that, as a result of all the improvements that have been made, Darton College no longer requires special measures as it provides a satisfactory and improving education.

Here is a summary of our findings which we hope will be of interest to you.

- Examination results are improving and students in all year groups are making increasingly better progress. There are one or two dips in English and mathematics but the school is aware of them and taking action.
- Attendance has improved tremendously and is high. Punctuality is good.
- Behaviour is good and we were impressed by the very mature way you behave on corridors, stairs and in the atrium.
- Teaching is good but we would like to see teachers making more use of assessment to help you learn
- The curriculum is satisfactory and plans are already in place to make it better in September.
- The care, guidance and support that you receive are good.
- Leaders have made dramatic improvements to many aspects of the school.

In order to improve further we have asked the school to:

- accelerate and secure the progress made by students, particularly in English and mathematics
- ensure that the good practice that we saw in the use of assessment to enhance learning is spread across all areas.

We would like to congratulate you on improving the school so quickly. The headteacher and her team know just what to do to make the school even better and we hope that you continue to play your part. We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Jan Bennett

Her Majesty's Inspector

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