

City of Norwich School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121172
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	358951
Inspection dates	18–19 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Alan Alder HMI

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	1688
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	512
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Lucinda Poliakoff
Headteacher	Jim Nixon
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2008
School address	Eaton Road Norwich NR4 6PP
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 46 lessons and 45 teachers. They held meetings with groups of students, members of staff and three members of the governing body. They observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation including that relating to the safeguarding of students, the school's self-evaluation, student performance data, as well as 249 parental questionnaires and questionnaires completed by the school's students and staff.

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

How well assessment information is used to help different groups of students learn during lessons, and how effectively this process is monitored.

- The effectiveness of school leaders, at all levels, in bringing about improvements to the school.

Information about the school

The school, and its sixth form, are much larger than average. The proportions of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, who are from minority ethnic groups, whose speak English as an additional language or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are all lower than average. Some of the students have hearing or sight problems. The proportion of students who have a statement of special educational needs is above average. The sixth form recruits approximately 60% of its students from about 20 other schools.

The headteacher joined the school in September 2009. Before then the school had no substantive headteacher for one year.

The school has specialist technology status.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**3****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****3**

Main findings

This is a satisfactory and improving school. Students join in Year 7 with attainment that is in line with the national average and by the end of Year 11, attainment is also average. They therefore make satisfactory progress. The evidence from lesson observations and students' performance data throughout the school, including the current Year 11 GCSE modular tests and their assessed coursework, shows clearly that a decline in recent years has now been halted. Strategies for improvement are bearing fruit, and the capacity for sustained further improvement is satisfactory.

Students' progress in their learning is satisfactory, although some aspects of what the school provides are good: the curriculum, for example. There is a good breadth of GCSE subjects available to students in Years 10 and 11. Students also have the opportunity of studying from a wide range of diplomas, some in collaboration with other providers. Care, guidance and support are good. The support for students whose learning has fallen below expectations has improved. It has recently been reorganised, with a new house system, and while it is too early for this to be fully evaluated, early indications are that it is effective. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. This includes the students who have hearing or visual problems, though they make good progress when they are taught separately. The impact of the good provision in the school is limited by the quality of teaching, which is satisfactory overall but ranges from outstanding to inadequate. This is why students' progress in their learning is satisfactory. In the weaker lessons, students sometimes lose interest and their behaviour can deteriorate with too much quiet chatting and inattention. Teaching does not make sufficient good use of assessment data to set suitable work for students of differing abilities, or to monitor students' progress during lessons to allow the teaching to be amended if necessary. In short, not enough attention is paid to learning during lessons, although periodic testing of students' learning is used effectively to arrange additional teaching to compensate for any underachievement.

The school's senior leaders have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Both senior and middle leaders evaluate lessons and while evaluations are in the main very perceptive, there are some generous evaluations of teaching quality. Senior leaders' judgements were moderated during the inspection, in paired observation with inspectors. In two lessons, the judgements were the same and in two the senior leaders judged one grade lower than the inspectors. Where there are generous judgements it is because there is a tendency to place insufficient emphasis on students' learning when judging the effectiveness of a lesson. Leaders' accurate identification of areas that require improvement has led to some effective actions that have resulted, for example, in a rapid reduction in the proportion of students who are persistently absent; an increase in the rate of attendance, so that it is now above average; and an improvement in the attainment and progress of students in the current Year 11. A new system for tracking the progress

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made by students provides clarity about where there is underachievement. Leaders are clearer about their roles and there is greater accountability for them too. Nevertheless, some changes are slow, for example those relating to improving teaching quality. Subject leaders generally monitor and evaluate the work of their departments at least satisfactorily. However, there is still too much variability in teaching quality, both within and between departments. There is also insufficient use of marking to help students to understand what the strengths and weaknesses are in their work, including in their homework. Some students' books are scrappy and do not show good attitudes to work. This reflects the varying impact of middle leaders as a whole.

The sixth form provision and outcomes are good. Students receive good teaching and they make good progress, both in their work and in their personal development. Their standards of work are above average.

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?

- Increase students' learning in lessons by ensuring that:
 - the planning of lessons always takes into account students' abilities and their specific strengths and weaknesses
 - students' understanding is regularly checked during lessons so that the teaching can be modified if necessary
 - teaching is consistently of good or better quality so that students are fully engaged and their attitudes to learning are at least good
 - evaluations of teaching quality are based on the impact on students' learning, and good practice is shared widely.
- Improve the impact of the work of middle leaders by:
 - assisting them in the development of improvement plans that have measurable targets related to learning, to allow for frequent evaluation of progress
 - ensuring that they receive the support they require to bring about rapid change.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students' current progress in their work is satisfactory. It is showing sustained improvement since last year, and so a three-year period of decline has been reversed. Their attainment is in line with national averages. In lessons progress is now satisfactory for both boys and girls, which is a marked improvement since the 2010 GCSE results. Students who have hearing or visual problems, as well as others who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make satisfactory progress in their work. While the performance of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals is improving, it has not yet caught up with that of other students. Students from minority ethnic groups made satisfactory progress in the 2010 GCSE examinations. Students make good progress when they are offered work that challenges them. Their numeracy skills are above average. They have a sensible approach to group work, and generally make good

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progress in it and enjoy it. They are confident when speaking with adults and are articulate. The school meets its targets for attainment in the specialist subjects.

Students' behaviour around the school is calm and sensible. At social times students behave with maturity. However, in some lessons in which teaching is not challenging or interesting, their attention wavers and they can become off-task. They, and their parents and carers, say they are safe in school and inspection evidence endorsed their views.

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	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
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 know their subjects well and their relationships with students are good. Most lessons proceed at a suitable pace. However, the demands placed upon students of different abilities are not always based sufficiently upon evidence about their ability. In addition, the questions asked in lessons, while used well for summarising information and involving students, are not used well to assess their understanding. The marking of students' work does not always provide them with information about how they can improve. Although the students with hearing or visual problems make satisfactory progress, some of the students who have hearing problems find that inconsistencies in the support staff who act as signers for them can cause difficulties, as can the absence of notes or subtitles to accompany videos.

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The curriculum provides a good range of subjects and courses. There are extensive opportunities for further study after the end of the school day, and a wide range of extra-curricular activities that attract good numbers. The school has met its targets for the uptake of its specialist subjects. There is a class in Year 7 to help accelerate the learning of some students whose attainment in literacy at the end of Year 6 was below average. This has been evaluated and as a result the provision is to be disbanded, as it already has been in Year 8. Inspectors agree that the class is not achieving its aims sufficiently well.

The school is successful at helping students to settle down quickly in Year 7 and provides very good support for students who are making decisions about their education after Year 11. Those students with hearing problems who have some delay in their language development make good progress when they are provided with specific support. The school has robust procedures for improving attendance and these are effective. A small number of students whose circumstances make them particularly vulnerable have low attendance, but the school does much for them to bring about improvement. There is extensive multi-agency work between educational professionals and health and social services.

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?

The headteacher provides strong and purposeful leadership which is successful in bringing about a strong commitment to improving the school. Evaluations are carried out thoroughly and generally accurately. Much has been done to bring about improvement. It is too early to see the full effects of some changes, but it is clear from others that the school is improving. The governing body is well informed. It plays a full part in the strategic decisions that affect the school. Members of the governing body showed admirable tenacity when it came to appointing the new headteacher. There is some variability in the effectiveness of middle leaders in bringing about change.

The school has extensive partnerships with a wide range of health and social care professionals and with other education providers. These are playing an important part in the improvements that are evident, both in terms of students' progress and their well-being. Partnerships with parents and carers are developing; a number of strategies have recently been adopted to improve them, but it is too soon to judge their effectiveness.

Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. While no group is disadvantaged academically, the school's leaders do not analyse in detail, for example, who benefits from extra-curricular activities. The school's commitment to community cohesion is good.

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Safeguarding is carried out conscientiously. All statutory requirements are met and some aspects reflect good practice.

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

Sixth form

Students' attainment on entry is broadly average. They make good progress and their attainment on exit is above average. Although performance in the GCE examinations at the end of Year 12 dipped last year, the current group of students is on track to raise this. There are no significant differences in progress and achievement between groups of students, or any areas of significant underachievement. Pass rates are good overall and particularly good at grades A and B. Students learn and attain well in lessons. They develop good skills for life. The proportion who stay in the sixth form for the full two years is above the national average. Attendance is good and the vast majority of students progress to higher education.

Teaching and learning are good. Almost three quarters of the lessons observed were good or better and no inadequate lessons were observed. Students enjoy their learning and engage well in a very cooperative learning environment. Teachers plan a good range of activities and use questioning well to help students develop their understanding. The extensive curriculum is well managed. The school is a major partner in a local consortium which ensures that an extensive range of academic and non-academic options are open for the students.

Leaders and managers have focused well on improving the provision. A range of new initiatives has been successfully introduced to help staff and students improve their performance. A new electronic system is used well to monitor students' progress. The initial selection and guidance procedures have been significantly improved. The current

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school data show that these improvements are effective. The sixth form environment is good and the large provision is managed well.

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	2

Views of parents and carers

A higher than average proportion of parents and carers are critical of behaviour at the school, and a lower than average proportion say that the school helps them to support their child's learning. Inspectors investigated behaviour carefully and found it to be satisfactory, but did find some lessons in which there was too much off-task behaviour. The school is developing the way it communicates with parents and carers about students' progress, in order to help them support their learning. Overall its communication with parents and carers is satisfactory. However, some made comments about not being able to see how their child's work, including homework, has been marked and so cannot tell how well they have completed it. Inspectors have noted elsewhere in the report that there is an issue with marking.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at City of Norwich 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 249 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1688 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	79	32	143	57	22	9	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	95	38	138	55	9	4	1	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	98	39	127	51	18	7	3	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	99	40	127	51	15	6	4	2
The teaching is good at this school	52	21	170	68	17	7	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	52	21	140	56	40	16	3	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	46	18	146	59	46	18	3	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)	65	26	143	57	12	5	3	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	63	25	140	56	28	11	4	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	45	18	128	51	43	17	13	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	43	17	144	58	34	14	8	3
The school is led and managed effectively	88	35	132	53	14	6	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	91	37	138	55	9	4	7	3

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	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.



20 May 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of City of Norwich School, Norwich NR4 6PP

Thank you for your contributions to our inspection. We spoke to a good many of you, either in meetings, lessons, or around the school. We found you to be confident, articulate and at ease in speaking with adults.

Your school is giving you a satisfactory quality of education, The progress you are making is also satisfactory. The school is well led and is improving. Your attendance has improved well in the last two years.

Most lessons are satisfactory or better. Your teachers know their subjects well and they have good relationships with you. However, inspectors judge that there should be a greater focus on your learning in lessons, for example through sharper planning to meet individual needs and careful questioning to assess your understanding so teaching can be amended if necessary. In addition, marking should, more frequently and more clearly, show you what you need to do to improve your work.

We also judged that there should be clearer targets to help leaders to improve the school, again so that you learn better. For example, some of the members of staff with responsibilities should have more frequent support and advice so that they can bring about more rapid improvement.

You can help by making sure that you pay good attention in all lessons and by asking questions when work is difficult.

With best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely

Alan Alder

Her Majesty's Inspector

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