

Great Yarmouth (VA) High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121219
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	358966
Inspection dates	19–20 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Gulshanbir Kayembe

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	942
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Linda Fisher
Headteacher	Andrew Toone
Date of previous school inspection	8 May 2008
School address	Salisbury Road Great Yarmouth, Norfolk NR30 4LS
Telephone number	01493 842061
Fax number	01493 332848
Email address	office@gyhsadmin.co.uk

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M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. They made visits to 37 lessons taught by 37 teachers. Inspectors met with groups of pupils, members of the governing body, staff and representatives from the local authority. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including the school development plan, assessment records and safeguarding policies. They analysed completed questionnaires from staff and pupils, as well as 79 from parents and carers.

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

- The extent to which pupils in Key Stage 3 make enough progress in developing their literacy and numeracy skills and in learning to work independently.
- How effectively the school promotes the progress of pupils with special educational needs.
- The impact the school is having on improving attendance.
- How well the leadership team is driving forward initiatives to raise attainment especially in mathematics.

Information about the school

Great Yarmouth High School is an average sized secondary school which draws its pupils from the local area. The very large majority of pupils are White British. A very small minority are from a range of other ethnic backgrounds, and most of these pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above the national average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is also well above average. More than the usual numbers of pupils join the school partway through their secondary education. The school, which had been a technology specialist college at the time of the last inspection, has since been re-designated as a specialist humanities college.

The school has experienced some significant upheavals in staffing since the last inspection. The current headteacher, who joined the school in September 2009, and another member of the leadership team were absent on the grounds of ill health during the inspection.

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

Great Yarmouth High School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. The school has undergone a period of change due largely to the upheavals in staffing. Standards of attainment started to slip in 2009. In particular, GCSE results in 2010 were significantly lower compared to those of previous years and this was especially noticeable in mathematics. In addition, the positive ethos reported at the time of the previous inspection declined because poor behaviour by a minority of pupils was not dealt with effectively enough. However, since then, the school has made a concerted and successful effort to turn itself around. Attainment is now broadly in line with national averages. Behaviour is now satisfactory and the atmosphere in the school is calm and orderly. Pupils are polite and friendly and eagerly engage in social conversation during breaks and lunch times. They hold open doors for others and provide assistance to visitors. However, a minority of parents and carers, in their responses to the questionnaire, express concern about how well behaviour is managed. In discussions with them, staff and pupils welcome the improvements in behaviour and show confidence in the systems and procedures put in place by senior staff to maintain it. Nonetheless, some remain concerned. The school is beginning to address these and the concerns of parents and carers. For example, it has organised a meeting for parents and carers. However, two-way communication about their views and perceptions is not as extensive as it needs to be to put to rest the anxieties of all parents, carers, pupils and staff.

Pupils join the school with attainment that is below average, and significantly so amongst those in current Years 7 and 8. Pupils' skills in literacy are particularly weak when they join. Progress in English is often good across the school because of good teaching in English lessons. The overall progress pupils make is satisfactory. Their progress is generally good in Key Stage 4 but tends to be mostly satisfactory across Key Stage 3. This is, at least in part, because more is expected of older pupils and they are under greater pressure to do well. A very small minority of pupils find the transition from Key Stage 3 to 4 difficult as a result, and this has a detrimental impact on their attendance. In particular, many pupils are not sufficiently prepared in Key Stage 3 for the additional demands at Key Stage 4, particularly of literacy across the curriculum and working more independently. Many require intensive support or additional help to prepare for GCSEs. A few pupils have difficulties in adjusting from a primary to a secondary learning environment. Their attendance is also affected negatively as a consequence. The school plans to provide a more primary orientated curriculum in Key Stage 3 for this group of pupils but this is not in place yet. Nonetheless, though attendance is low overall, most pupils come to school regularly and make creditable gains in their learning given their low starting points. Nearly all go onto further education, training or employment when they leave. They are, hence, satisfactorily prepared for their next step in life.

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The quality of teaching is satisfactory, enabling pupils to make satisfactory progress. Lessons provide pupils with a clear outline of what they are learning. Relationships are good and pupils well managed in most lessons. However, in many lessons, work is either too easy or too hard for some of the pupils within that group. There are examples of very good marking of work, especially in English, where written feedback provides clear guidance on how to improve. However, this is not consistent across the school. As a result, pupils are not always sure of the level they are working at or what they need to do to make their work better.

The school is satisfactorily led and managed. The deputy headteacher, who is in charge during the headteacher's absence, is providing an effective lead for staff. The school's key priorities are clearly defined and communicated within the school and, as a result, staff are pulling together to ensure these priorities are addressed. There has been a good focus on reversing the down turn in GCSE results in mathematics. As a result, pupils currently in Year 11 are on track to attain broadly average results. The governing body provides active support and challenge to the school. It has played a key role in turning the school around following a drop in standards of attainment and behaviour and in enabling the leadership team, in the absence of a headteacher, to assume command and press ahead with key school improvement initiatives. This coupled with the school's accurate evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses means it has satisfactory capacity for continued improvement.

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the curriculum at Key Stage 3 so that it better prepares pupils for Key Stage 4 and, in so doing, encourages better attendance by:
 - developing the use of literacy in all subjects to improve pupils' subject specific vocabulary and ability to explain ideas and write on their own
 - providing pupils with greater opportunities to develop their skills of independent learning
 - establishing a primary orientated curriculum to support the transition from primary for the small group of pupils who are not yet ready for a mainstream secondary curriculum.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that work in lessons is well matched to the needs of all pupils
 - making sure that teachers provide all pupils with clear guidance for improvement when their work is marked so that they know what to do to make their work better and the levels they are working at.
- Promote effective two-way communication with parents and carers, staff and pupils to instil confidence, amongst all, in the school's effectiveness in dealing with behaviour.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

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Pupils achieve satisfactorily and most achieve well in Key Stage 4. They improve their basic skills of literacy and numeracy to attain standards that are broadly in line with national averages. However, in Key Stage 3, pupils do not make enough use of, or develop in sufficient depth, their skills in literacy. In particular, a small minority struggle with subject specific vocabulary and providing extended explanations about their work, especially ideas that are more abstract. Pupils shine in subjects such as art and drama. For example, they put on a very successful annual production. Pupils also tend to achieve well in design and technology. When given the opportunity to work in groups or pairs, most pupils do so effectively. For example, in a Year 7 science lesson, they worked in pairs and small groups to help one another build a lighthouse. Because they were encouraged to trouble shoot if the circuit in their lighthouse did not work, most managed to correct any problems by themselves. However, opportunities such as these for independent learning are limited. A minority of pupils in both key stages are not able to work very well on their own and need guidance and support from adults to help them complete their work; especially their written work. In most lessons, pupils listen well and readily cooperate with their teachers. Many are keen to answer questions, and sometimes call out.

There are some differences between different groups but no entrenched patterns of underachievement. Most of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make at least satisfactory progress and many pupils progress well. Their progress when given specialist support or when taught in small groups is usually good and better than when they are in mainstream lessons. This is because work is not always tailored closely to their needs in these cases. Pupils learning English as an additional language make satisfactory progress. There are small differences between different ethnic groups but on the whole those from minority ethnic backgrounds are often among the high attainers within the school.

Most pupils enjoy school and participate well in the range of activities provided. Pupils are particularly keen to take part in sporting activities. They know what constitutes healthy living but are not as good at adopting healthy eating habits. Pupils usually feel safe at school and say they know who to go to if they have concerns and are confident that the school will take action. Their knowledge of internet safety is good. Pupils make a sound contribution to the school and wider community raising funds, for example, for good causes. Pupils develop good social skills and learn the difference between right and wrong. They develop a reasonable range of knowledge about their own culture especially through art, drama and music. Pupils get on well with those from different ethnic backgrounds but their knowledge of other cultures is limited.

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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	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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?

Teaching is satisfactory, but good and outstanding teaching was also seen. In most lessons, teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and make effective use of new technologies such as interactive whiteboards to support learning. Resources are often well prepared and planned. Teaching assistants support pupils in class effectively. Teachers monitor and support pupils well as they work. Where teaching is good or better, questioning of pupils to find out what they know and extend their thinking is thorough. These lessons also move learning on at a good pace. Where teaching is satisfactory, lessons are often teacher directed with limited opportunities for pupils to engage actively in their learning. Pupils' work is assessed frequently but written feedback across the school is not consistent enough to provide clear guidance on improvement.

The school provides sound care, guidance and support for pupils. Those who are vulnerable, and their families, are particularly well supported and extensive use is made of external agencies and professionals to provide such support. The school works very hard to improve attendance and there is much direct action taken, including home visits and prosecutions. Though attendance has improved, the overall impact of this work is limited. The school's own evaluation indicates that it needs to do more to develop a curriculum at Key Stage 3 that better meets the needs of all pupils and helps to prepare them adequately for the demands of Key Stage 4 as a more effective means of raising attendance. A broad range of subjects, academic and vocational, are offered at Key Stage

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4. There is sound provision for enrichment and extra curricular activities which pupils enjoy. An increasingly well developed approach to teaching personal, social and health education supports pupils' personal growth. The humanities specialism is having a satisfactory impact across the school, for example, through humanities week. There is reasonably good take-up of humanities subjects at Key Stage 4.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The school has undergone a difficult time with changes in staffing and some instability within the leadership team. However, senior leaders have established themselves as an effective team and made a positive impact on the work of the school and in driving key improvements. Members of the team are monitoring the school's work effectively and using the information from this to drive up standards of work, behaviour and achievement. The roles of middle managers are satisfactorily developed and solid plans are in place to develop these further. Pupils' progress is tracked carefully and is especially effective in Key Stage 4 in identifying and addressing any underachievement. Sound attention is paid to equality of opportunity and the school monitors carefully the progress of different groups. As a result, it is identifying and addressing increasingly rapidly any differences in attainment and progress.

Governors are both supportive of the school and challenging when they need to be, and provide a good strategic steer. They have been instrumental in securing key support from the local authority to work in partnership with them and senior leaders to successfully address the issues of decline. Governors monitor the school's work very effectively including safeguarding and ensure that procedures and policies are fully in place.

The school actively promotes community cohesion within the school and this ensures that pupils from different ethnic and social backgrounds respect one another. Good links with the local community and useful links with a school in Kenya have a positive impact. The school is aware it needs to do more to develop pupils' appreciation of the diversity of British society.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

The response to the questionnaire is low. Most parents and carers, who did respond, agree that their children enjoy school and feel both well informed and pleased about the progress they are making. They are positive about the overall experience of their children. The areas of greatest concern include how well: behaviour is managed; the school promotes healthy lifestyles and the school is led and managed. Inspection evidence indicates that behaviour is now managed satisfactorily and healthy lifestyles are promoted by the school but not necessarily taken up by all pupils, especially healthy eating. Leadership and management have undergone a difficult time and the leadership team is two members short, including the headteacher. However, the interim leadership team is rising well to the challenge under the leadership of the deputy headteacher and the direction and support of the governing body.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Great Yarmouth (VA) 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 79 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 942 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	24	50	63	6	8	3	4
The school keeps my child safe	11	14	55	70	8	10	2	3
My school informs me about my child's progress	16	20	54	68	4	5	5	6
My child is making enough progress at this school	20	25	49	62	7	9	3	4
The teaching is good at this school	15	19	45	57	13	16	4	5
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	25	41	52	14	18	3	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	7	9	47	59	16	20	6	8
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)	18	23	49	62	9	11	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	10	13	56	71	6	8	4	5
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	11	34	43	27	34	8	10
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	8	10	46	58	14	18	6	8
The school is led and managed effectively	9	11	46	58	9	11	13	16
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	16	20	49	62	6	8	6	8

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.



23 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Great Yarmouth (VA) High School, Norfolk, NR30 4LS

Thank you for giving us such a warm and friendly welcome when we visited your school recently and for sharing your views with us. Your teachers provide you with a satisfactory education that helps you to make sound progress in your learning as you move through the school. You make good progress in English because the teaching here is good. You also enjoy art and drama and this was obvious in the variety of art work we saw around the school and the drama productions which everyone in the school community is keen to see. When you have the chance to do so, you work well in groups and pairs in lessons. You enjoy sporting and physical activities and know all about healthy eating although you do not always put this into practice.

Your deputy headteacher is doing a good job in leading the school while your headteacher is off. Staff are keen to keep improving the school and making it better so that you can learn more. To help them do this, we have asked your deputy headteacher, governors and staff to:

- to organise Key Stage 3 in such a way that it helps to better prepare you for Key Stage 4
- improve the teaching so that teachers provide you with work that is just the right level of difficulty for you and always give you clear advice on how to improve your work
- reassure all of you, your parents, carers and staff about the success of actions that have been taken to improve behaviour.

We know that you will continue to help your school improve by attending school every day and doing your best work at all times. We wish you all every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Gulshanbir Kayembe

Lead inspector

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