

Attleborough High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121167
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	358949
Inspection dates	23–24 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Keith Brown

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	959
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	153
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Frances Harrod
Headteacher	Neil McShane
Date of previous school inspection	25 April 2008
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed different aspects of the school's work, including approximately 18 hours of teaching, and observed 26 teachers. Meetings were held with students, the headteacher, teachers, and the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors looked at safeguarding arrangements, as well as other information including development planning, schemes of work, policies, procedures and a range of students' books. A total of 297 questionnaires from parents and carers were scrutinised, together with 77 from staff and 160 from students.

Information about the school

This average-sized secondary school serves the local community and surrounding villages. The school is a Specialist Mathematics and Computing College. The current headteacher was appointed in December 2009, having previously been the Acting Headteacher. The school has met the government's floor targets for academic performance in each of the last three years.

Almost all students are from White British backgrounds. Other minority ethnic heritages are represented, although the numbers in each group are small and few students are learning English as an additional language. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average.

A below-average percentage of students has special educational needs and/or disabilities. A well-above average proportion of students has a statement of special educational needs and/or disabilities. This includes a small number of students with severe and moderate learning difficulties that attend a local authority specially resourced provision for special educational needs on site. The provision is known in the school as the Specialist Resource Base. Amongst its awards, the school has Investors in People status, the National Challenge Award for its work with gifted and talented pupils and the National Healthy Schools 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	3
Achievement	3
Teaching	3
Leadership and management	3
Behaviour and safety	3
Does the school adequately promote the pupils' well-being?	Yes
Does the school adequately promote community cohesion?	Yes
Does the school provide value for money?	Yes

Key findings

- The school provides a satisfactory education. It provides a caring and supportive environment for students and their families and is an important part of its local community. The headteacher and his team have a concerted approach to improving the school and lead developments satisfactorily.
- Most students, including those in the sixth form, make satisfactory progress. The progress of many students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. The school's examination results are in line with national averages. Teachers' expertise enables most students to work hard and achieve satisfactorily.
- Teaching is satisfactory. Inspectors observed lessons where students were fully engaged and enthusiastically learning. There are, however, lessons where teaching does not ensure that all students are totally involved in what they are doing in all parts of the lesson. Sometimes the work is too hard or too easy for individuals and sometimes students are not sure how to improve their work.
- The curriculum adequately helps develop students into confident, thoughtful and independent young people. Students do not always use their literacy and mathematical skills as well as they could in the subjects they study. Some students have a limited knowledge of the different cultures in Britain today.
- Most students feel that they are safe in school. Students with whom the inspectors held discussions noted that instances of bullying are addressed promptly by the school. However, a few parents and carers and a small minority of students in their questionnaire responses indicate that the school

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does not deal with all cases of bullying well.

- Students' behaviour contributes to their satisfactory learning and the orderly school environment. A minority of parent and student questionnaires express concern about the disruption to learning in some classes. This is generally where teaching does not sufficiently capture students' interests or the school systems for managing behaviour are not applied consistently.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, and where leadership and management is no better than 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 the progress made by students and raise attainment by ensuring that teachers consistently:
 - have high expectations of what students can achieve and communicate this to them by regular oral and written feedback
 - use assessment information to set work that is closely matched to students' abilities and needs
 - make sure all parts of a lesson engage and challenge students
 - use the systems in place to promote good behaviour.
- Develop the curriculum to meet the needs of all the students by:
 - expanding the opportunities to apply their literacy and mathematical skills across all subjects
 - raising students' awareness of the cultural diversity in modern Britain.

Main report

Taken overall, students' attainment on entry to the school is in line with that expected for their age. The school's overall performance in GCSEs has been around the national average in recent years. Boys have performed less well than girls but the school has put in place strategies which have narrowed the gender gap in GCSE module examination results this academic year. GCSE or equivalent performance in the school's specialist subjects of mathematics and computing has been strong in the last few years, although there was a dip in mathematics results in 2010. The gaps between the GCSE English and mathematics results of students known to be eligible for free school meals and those of their peers are narrower than the national gaps. The achievement of most students is satisfactory.

Students with special educational needs/and or disabilities often make good progress. In lessons seen in the main school and in the Specialist Resource Base, students with special educational needs and/or disabilities learned quickly and made

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good progress because tasks were closely matched to their prior attainment. Teaching assistants were deployed well and helped students by demonstrating skills precisely, teaching specialist vocabulary and providing appropriate challenge and encouragement.

The learning observed in lessons was satisfactory. Students concentrated well at the start of lessons. They worked together effectively, readily pooling their thoughts and developing ideas with the rest of their group. Students' interest waned however, and the pace of learning slowed, where parts of the lesson were too teacher directed. Once in their ability groups, their enthusiasm for learning was more evident. They worked quickly, and were keen to solve problems or get to the end of their task. In some lessons, progress slowed when opportunities to check and improve students' understanding were missed. Where learning was best, for example in an outstanding Year 9 mathematics lesson, the teacher's brisk and probing questioning ensured that a very close check was kept on students' understanding of decimals and fractions. Any misunderstanding was corrected quickly.

In the sixth form, students make satisfactory progress relative to their starting points through a curriculum that has become more diverse and inclusive over the last three years. As the sixth form has expanded, the school has extended its vocational provision. There are strong links with a neighbouring college sixth form which has allowed access to courses that the school cannot offer and also reduced the number of timetable clashes. After a dip in some AS and A level results in 2010, more stringent student mentoring has led to improved module examination results this year.

Teachers' expectations of what students of all abilities can achieve are generally satisfactory but sometimes are not high enough. They ensure that students understand what they are expected to learn and, some teachers, but not all of them, review students' learning at regular points during the lesson to keep challenge appropriate. Teachers and teaching assistants work soundly together to meet students' needs, particularly those who find learning difficult. Teachers' assessments and marking of students' work are satisfactory. The school recognises that inconsistencies remain, and is working appropriately to eliminate them. Students' reading abilities are now regularly tested and progress is tracked effectively. Leaders and managers know that some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching remain both between and within subjects. The school has correctly begun to refine its staff development to focus on supporting all teachers to consistently teach lessons that maximise the potential of all students.

In the sixth form inspectors observed some good or better teaching, where a knowledge of students' prior attainment provided activities which met their learning needs very precisely. Students' independent learning skills were fostered and they asked questions confidently of teachers to check their own understanding. However, the school is aware that some teaching does not accelerate students' progress because the level of challenge is not sufficiently matched to the potential of students.

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A satisfactory curriculum builds on students' previous learning and prepares them for the next stages of their education. New technologies are used effectively in some lessons to engage students' interest. Themed days and weeks are a feature of the curriculum and these enhance students' learning. For example, an environment day helped students in all year groups learn about how people's attitudes can affect the environment. Students do not always use the skills they have learned in English and mathematics lessons as well as they should in the other subjects they study. A range of sporting and musical activities, visits and visitors adequately extend the curriculum.

Most students enjoy school and feel safe. Students know who to turn to for help. Although students interviewed said that some bullying takes place, they were confident that it is dealt with promptly and effectively. However, a few parent and carers questionnaires and a small minority of student questionnaires expressed concern that the school did not deal with all cases of bullying well. Students are aware of the different types of bullying and the importance of preventing them.

The school environment is orderly and free from graffiti and litter. Students are punctual to lessons and their behaviour and engagement contributes to their satisfactory learning. Students respond suitably to the school's strategies for improving behaviour and inspectors saw only rare instances of disruption to learning in lessons. However, a minority of parent and student questionnaire responses noted that some classes were disrupted by poor behaviour. Discussions with students indicated that learning was disrupted when teaching did not enthuse, engage and motivate learners. Consequently, students became bored or distracted. Students interviewed also said that a few teachers did not follow the school's behaviour management systems consistently. The support centre on site provides sound support for many learners, in addition to helping to reduce the previously high exclusion rates. Student attendance is now average overall, but has been low in the past. The school has worked hard to improve rates of attendance.

Many students, in all years, take on leadership roles or support others by being, for example, Prefects, Form Leaders or Peer Counsellors. Students play an active part in decision making in the school. Students' views are actively sought and taken seriously through a variety of formal and informal means, including regular surveys and feedback.

Self-evaluation is broadly accurate. The school's senior leaders and governors have a satisfactory understanding of the most important areas for improvement, and have drawn up appropriate plans to address them. The school has rightly focused on improving teaching and, in particular, any inadequate teaching has been almost eliminated. The school is committed to equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination, and is tracking each student's progress towards adequately challenging targets. The headteacher is keen to make improvements and staff share his vision. He and other leaders monitor adequately the quality of lessons, scrutinise

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students' work, and review teachers' planning. These activities provide a broad overview of the teaching, but they are not always frequent enough or focused sharply on the impact on students' learning and progress. An evaluation of students' progress is conveyed regularly to the governing body through the headteacher's informative reports. Progress towards targets within the school development plan also forms part of the headteacher's report to the governing body. The governing body provides sound strategic direction and challenge. The capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

The school works satisfactorily with parents and carers and keeps them adequately informed, although a minority of parent questionnaires noted that the school could respond better to their concerns. Regular newsletters keep parents and carers abreast of activities in the school, and the school's web-site is friendly in tone and accessible. Links and partnerships with agencies ensure sound support for students who have specific needs. The school and students also benefit from partnerships with other schools in the area. The virtual learning environment provides high-quality facilities for students and the wider community.

The school gives students good opportunities to explore values and beliefs, and the way in which they affect peoples' lives. Students explore and develop moral concepts and values well. Assemblies, team activities, residential experiences and school productions help identify effectively the values and principles on which school and community life are based. Some students are not as aware as they should be of the attitudes, values and traditions of the diverse cultures in Britain today. Vertical tutor groups, containing students in Years 7 to 13, promote a good sense of community and belonging. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds are included effectively in all activities. Community cohesion is promoted adequately. A thorough audit of community cohesion has been completed.

Systems to safeguard students are rigorous, risk assessments are good, and careful checks are made of the suitability of adults to work with children.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Attleborough 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 297 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 959 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Q1 My child is happy at school	100	34	179	60	13	4	4	1
Q2 My child feels safe at school	102	34	181	61	9	3	4	1
Q3 The school helps my child to achieve as well as they can	79	27	175	59	35	12	4	1
Q4 The school meets my child’s particular needs	70	24	197	66	24	8	3	1
Q5 The school ensures my child is well looked after	94	32	186	63	13	4	3	1
Q6 Teaching at this school is good	62	21	197	67	20	7	4	1
Q7 There is a good standard of behaviour at this school	37	12	182	61	58	20	9	3
Q8 Lessons are not disrupted by bad behaviour	21	7	139	47	100	34	26	9
Q9 The school deals with any cases of bullying well	58	20	158	54	35	12	10	3
Q10 The school helps me to support my child’s learning	65	22	187	63	32	11	4	1
Q11 The school responds to my concerns and keeps me well informed	74	25	145	49	51	17	12	4
Q12 The school is well led and managed	75	26	173	59	20	7	11	4

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

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

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	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 achievement of all pupils. ■ Behaviour and safety. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The effectiveness of leadership and management. <p>and taking into consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ how well the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
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.



24 May 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Attleborough High School, Attleborough, NR17 2AJ

On behalf of the inspectors who visited your school recently, I thank you for making us feel welcome and for your helpfulness towards us. We enjoyed meeting you and finding out your views of your school, which have contributed to our judgements.

The school is providing a satisfactory education for you. Teaching is sound and leads to your making satisfactory progress and reaching average standards. You are happy and feel safe at school.

Your headteacher, staff and governors are determined to make the school better. You can help by coming to school every day and continuing to try hard and do your best. Do find out all you can about the way that people from different cultures live their lives in Britain today.

We have asked your teachers to

- use their knowledge of how well you are doing to give you work that you can do, makes you think and makes you work hard
- consistently follow the school's systems for making sure behaviour does not disrupt lessons
- give you the chance to use English and mathematics more in other lessons.

I hope the steps I have asked the school to take will result in everyone doing very well in every lesson. I wish you all well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Keith Brown
Lead inspector

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