

# New Mills School Business & Enterprise College

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112936
<b>Local Authority</b>	Derbyshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	378611
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 September 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Martin HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	595
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	108
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Barbara Tier
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jesse Elms
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	18 March 2009
<b>School address</b>	Church Lane High Peak SK22 4NR
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<b>Age group</b>	11–18
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors, one for only half a day. In total, 35 parts of lessons were visited during the inspection. Of these, 18 were longer (half lesson) observations of 18 different teachers. Seventeen observations were shorter visits to tutorial sessions or to pursue specific inspection trails. Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders and managers, students from different year groups and the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at whole school and departmental planning and other records as well as 126 parental returns.

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

- Has attainment and progress of students in the school, particularly in mathematics, improved?
- How have strengths in the personal development and well-being of students been built upon since the previous inspection?
- How good is teaching, including the use of assessment in classrooms?
- What impact have leaders and managers made in improving relatively weaker areas of performance?

## Information about the school

New Mills is a smaller than average secondary school. It serves a mixed and diverse catchment area in the High Peak area of Derbyshire. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The school has relatively few students from minority ethnic groups and very few who do not have English as a first language. The school has seen the number of students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable and requiring additional support in their learning or emotional needs rise appreciably over recent years, although the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average compared with most secondary schools.

The school faces a significant and continuing fall in student numbers that is placing a strain on its budget and forward financial planning. The school has, consequently, had to make a significant number of staff, including teaching staff, redundant and will need to make further reductions over the next two years.

Since the previous inspection, the school voluntarily joined the Gaining Ground initiative and this year is involved in the local authority's Accelerated Achievement for All programme. The school was re-designated as a Business and Enterprise College in 2009 and jointly leads the Derbyshire Enterprise Learning Partnership with Bennerley School in the south of the county. It is part of a Peak 11 partnership of schools.

**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?**

**2**

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

**2**

## Main findings

New Mills is a good school. It has successfully built on existing strengths seen at the previous inspection. At the same time, there has been a clear focus and priority on accelerating the progress students make through improved teaching and learning, which has had a positive impact on raising standards of attainment across the school.

Leaders and managers, including members of the governing body, have maintained a clear focus on the key priorities for improving the school against a background of financial constraints and falling numbers. Middle leaders and managers have been encouraged and supported in successfully taking greater responsibility for driving improvement in their own areas. The governing body is more closely involved in visiting the school to gain first-hand knowledge of departmental work. As a result, leaders and managers have a very accurate view of strengths and areas requiring development, building a good capacity to improve the school further. Weaker areas of performance, particularly in mathematics, have been successfully addressed. Attendance has also improved and is satisfactory, although a minority of students could attend more regularly.

The school provides a curriculum choice that is impressive and is enhanced through specialist subject provision. Students speak warmly of the school's determination to provide a personalised range of subjects that is very well matched to their needs, interests and aspirations. This is well supported by stronger classroom practice. Much of the teaching enjoyed by students is good, with a considerable number of outstanding lessons seen during the inspection. This means that students apply themselves well in class and are productive and well engaged in their own learning. As a result, they are making good gains in skills, knowledge and understanding. The school recognises that it can do more to match teaching even more closely to students' prior learning, for those in need of additional help and to extend the more able; and to more effectively direct additional support by classroom assistants. This improved practice is supported well by the good care, guidance and support that all students receive. This includes a thorough knowledge of individual students by the adults working with them and effective systems to support their attendance, welfare and progress.

As a result of improved provision, students are now attaining standards above the national average by the time that they leave the school. Previous relatively weak performance in mathematics has been successfully addressed and students in all

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year groups are now making good progress in both mathematics and in English, as well as in a range of other subjects. Gaps between different groups are closing and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well. Students also benefit greatly from an impressive range of additional activities and opportunities. Of particular note is the extensive opportunity to contribute to the community through a range of activities that takes students out into the wider area and that brings local people into the school.

Although students report that they feel safe, inspectors found that the school could do more to raise awareness of safe practice in the use of computers and that the governing body need to consider alternatives to the practice of leaving the gates open at the front of the school during the day.

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Refine lesson planning and teaching and match work more carefully to the different needs of students by:
  - creating opportunities for the more able to extend their learning
  - enabling students who find learning more difficult to be able to consistently access resources and activities at an appropriate level
  - directing additional classroom support to where it is most required, and planning the work of teaching assistants to carefully match students' needs.
- Ensure that all students and their parents and carers understand the importance of good attendance and the relationship between attendance, achievement and access to the varied opportunities that the school offers.
- Managers should give further attention to some aspects of safeguarding by:
  - revising and implementing e-learning safety arrangements, ensuring that students are made explicitly aware of potential risks and dangers
  - giving consideration to the open gate arrangements at the front of the school during the school day.

### **Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

**2**

Students settle quickly, are attentive and make good progress in the great majority of lessons. They are willing and cooperative learners who are keen to develop new skills and knowledge. They respond particularly well and enthusiastically on the many occasions when learning is active and engaging. As a result, progress is good in all current year groups from students' different, but overall broadly average, starting points. Year 11 in 2010 attained significantly better than average results at five A\* to C, including results with English and mathematics, the best results that the school has attained. Results have generally been sustained in 2011 despite the cohort having lower attainment on entry. Gaps are narrowing between boys and girls as well as between students on free school meals and their peers. Students with special

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educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress as information from data and lesson observation is used well to inform planning for individual support.

Students report that they feel very safe in school and are confident that staff will deal with any problems that arise. Many feel that vertical tutoring enables younger students to feel supported by older 'buddies'. Behaviour is good in lessons and the site is a friendly, orderly environment. Most students are enthusiastic about the food available in the canteen, particularly the vegetables grown in the school gardens. There is good uptake of sporting activity and students are aware of the need to stay fit and healthy, even if some do not recognise the part that the school plays in this. Attendance is much improved, but a minority of parents and carers could do more to ensure that students are at school more regularly. There are a wide range of arts opportunities in the school which contribute strongly to the good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students.

Of particular note is the wide range of opportunities to contribute to the community. These are greatly valued by students and by those in the wider community. These include arts events in the locality, often led by local artists, such as the weaving project, many musical events and concerts, such as that regularly held for senior citizens as part of a tea party. There is a wide range of opportunities for taking responsibility, not least within the house and vertical tutor group system. Students take responsibility for such roles as mentoring very seriously and show maturity beyond their years. The specialist subjects and work-related learning prepare students well for their future lives, and transitions such as induction and options choices are well regarded by the student body and parents and carers alike.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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**The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

**2**

### **How effective is the provision?**

Teaching is improving due to the more rigorous systems in place across the school to monitor and support the staff. The school engages in a partnership with other Peak 11 schools to share training opportunities and good practice. Subject leaders are taking greater responsibility for promoting and modelling effective teaching and learning approaches. As a result, classrooms are orderly and businesslike. Teachers are clear about what students are to learn and they plan well for varied, well-structured learning. In most classrooms, routines and expectations are well established, so little time is wasted and students are productive. Students are receptive and keen to be involved through questioning and group work. There is a mutual respect between students, and teachers and students readily cooperate with and support each other. Teachers use assessment well in lessons and in marking to help students to understand how they can improve their work, but students are not always provided with the skills needed to improve their own work. Planning is not sufficiently clear in identifying how teaching and tasks will be matched to the abilities of different groups.

In the best lessons seen, interactive whiteboards and other resources were used very effectively to inspire and challenge students to think. Highly engaging questioning and a brisk pace ensured that students stayed on task and completed activities in good time and to a high standard. An example was seen where a video of the ‘waggle dance’ of bees was used as an engaging and memorable introduction to teaching bearings in mathematics.

An already impressive curriculum has been further strengthened by an improved balance being offered between vocational and academic courses. There is an even more varied choice of pathways available and a bespoke fit to individuals’ needs that is highly valued by the students. Partnership work contributes strongly to the breadth of opportunity offered but its impact on achievement is not always carefully tracked by the school. The uptake of extra-curricular opportunities is impressive for such a small school.

Students are well known to key staff and the level of day-to-day care is excellent. Students know that they can readily get help with work or personal issues and feel that adults are approachable and responsive to their needs. The recently introduced vertical tutoring has further enhanced the support that older students provide to younger members of the group.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

**The quality of teaching**

**2**

Taking into account:

The use of assessment to support learning

2

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<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

Priorities are clearly communicated in development planning. Leaders and managers set challenging targets and are increasingly meeting or exceeding them. An assistant headteacher is effective in leading on teaching and learning development. Middle leaders are increasingly held accountable for improving provision in subject areas, and for monitoring provision and setting challenging targets for students. As a result, school self-evaluation is accurate and staff are clear about priorities and the direction of the school. The headteacher plays an active and prominent role in leading local partnership working and evaluates the many benefits to a school serving an isolated community. The school plans for and evaluates its important role in promoting community cohesion, although it recognises that the impact of its actions in terms of the school and global dimensions are stronger than those concerning the wider national perspective.

The governing body is very supportive. The Chair of the Governing Body spends a great deal of time in school and other governors bring a good range of appropriate skill and expertise to the role. Members of the governing body are increasingly linked to departments and able to obtain first-hand knowledge about the school. They are, therefore, in a good position to hold leaders and managers to account. They have had to make difficult financial and staffing decisions in the face of falling rolls. The school gives a good education from a limited budget, providing good value for money. The school’s many opportunities are open to all students, regardless of ability, gender or background.

Safeguarding meets all statutory requirements and the school has many effective practices. Staff are suitably trained and have the skills and expertise needed to keep students safe. Students most at risk are given a high priority and their welfare is protected through effective multi-agency working. E-learning policy and practice and front of school site security arrangements are less secure, although there is no evidence that these shortcomings have caused any direct threat to students’ safety.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>



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<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Sixth form

New Mills describes itself as an 11 to 18 school, and this is how it operates. Consequently, many of the strengths described in the main school also apply to the sixth form, as do any areas of relative weakness. Senior managers naturally assume a leadership role across the school that includes the sixth form. As a result, management has a high profile in the sixth form area and the sixth form manager feels well supported in discharging his duties effectively.

Students finishing their courses attain standards that are broadly in line with national averages. However, most students currently in the school make good progress from their various starting points. This is particularly true of the 2011 AS level results, which showed very strong improvement. The students are very confident in the quality of teaching that they receive. Nearly all students go on to higher or further education and training.

Inspectors saw mainly good and some outstanding teaching in the sixth form. Particular strengths include teachers' very good subject knowledge and the clear sharing of examination assessment and grading with students to help them to understand what is required to achieve a high level in examination responses. There was also some inspirational teaching. An example of this was seen in art and design, where students worked with great concentration and independence to create their own installation art area, following excellent modelling and demonstration by the teacher.

Students feel that the school's willingness to personalise courses and learning to their needs and interests is a major factor in their success. They also feel very well supported, guided and cared for by the staff. As a result, they are highly self-motivated, confident and mature young people. They are very keen to participate fully in the life of the school. For example, they work with younger students in the classroom and some are trained mentors. They play a full part in extra-curricular and community activities, often willingly taking on leadership roles and initiating activities within the school.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>2</b>
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Taking into account:	2
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

Questionnaire responses showed that parents and carers believe that students enjoy school and feel safe and well cared for. This reflects what the students themselves reported to inspectors. Although parents and carers feel well informed about their children’s progress, they feel that the school could do more to help them to support their progress. A minority of parents and carers believe that unacceptable behaviour is not always dealt with effectively by the school. Inspectors were impressed by student behaviour in classrooms and around the site during the inspection, and students did not express any concerns about behaviour in the many discussions held with them. They overwhelmingly felt that adults deal promptly and fairly with any unacceptable conduct.

There were an unusually high number of blank responses from parents and carers new to the school, as the inspection was so early in the new school year. This negatively affects some of the percentages shown, particularly in how the school prepares students for the future and how the school responds to their concerns.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at New Mills School Business & Enterprise College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 126 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 595 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	42	33	77	61	4	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	54	43	66	52	2	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	60	48	56	44	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	39	31	71	56	4	3	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	28	22	80	63	6	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	26	21	72	57	19	15	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	22	17	84	67	10	8	0	0
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)	9	7	69	55	5	4	1	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	32	25	69	55	13	10	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	27	21	67	53	14	11	4	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	27	21	70	56	11	9	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	32	25	76	60	6	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	41	33	73	58	4	3	0	0

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



15 September 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of New Mills School Business & Enterprise College, High Peak, SK22 4NR**

I am writing to tell you what the team of inspectors found on our recent visit to your school. Before I do, I would like to thank you for the positive way that you contributed to the inspection. It was interesting to see you at work and to have many opportunities to talk to you about the school. You were all very positive about the opportunities available at New Mills and were keen to tell us about the many good things that happen in the school.

New Mills is indeed a good school. Inspectors were aware that the choices offered to you as you move through the school are very good and well tailored to your needs and interests. We were also aware that you are well looked after, kept safe and encouraged to be healthy. More recently, teaching has improved considerably, so that more of your lessons are interesting and active. This has also meant that you make better progress and examination results have risen steadily. You get good advice from staff, not only when you join, prepare to leave or make option choices, but also through marking and feedback in lessons. We were particularly impressed by the range of extra opportunities that are available to you all, sporting, artistic and in many other areas. You willingly take on responsibility in school and contribute a great deal to your local and wider community. This helps you to become the mature, confident young adults that we so much enjoyed engaging with on our visit.

Even good schools can improve. We found that that the school could refine lesson planning and teaching by matching work to your abilities and needs even more closely, particularly for those who find learning more difficult or who need to be really stretched! We also found that students were insufficiently aware of the risks and dangers associated with using computers, and have asked the headteacher to give this some attention. We have asked governors to consider whether the visible security at the front gates could be better in order to make the site look more secure to visitors. You can play your part by making sure that every one of you attends school as regularly as possible, in order to make the best of the many opportunities that the school offers and to achieve your full potential.

Yours sincerely

David Martin  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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