

Sir John Nelthorpe School - A Specialist Technology College for Science, Mathematics and Computing

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118112
Local authority	North Lincolnshire
Inspection number	379545
Inspection dates	12–13 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Robert Jones

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	645
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	64
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Gray
Headteacher	L Hewlett Parker
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2009
School address	Grammar School Road Brigg DN20 8AA
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 34 lessons, taught by 34 teachers, and held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and students. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including policies, the school improvement plan, records of students' progress and child protection records. The inspection team received and analysed 329 questionnaires from parents and carers, as well as a number of questionnaires completed by students and from staff.

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

- The progress made by lower-ability students.
- How well the curriculum is customised to meet the diverse needs of students in Key Stage 4 and for those in the sixth form.
- How effective are the school's middle leaders in monitoring and evaluating provision in the school?

Information about the school

This is a smaller-than-average secondary school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The majority of students are of White British heritage and very few speak English as an additional language. There are fewer students than average with special educational needs and/or disabilities but the number of students who have a statement of special educational needs is above average. The school has a sixth form that is federated with The Vale of Ancholme Technology and Music College, and together they form the Brigg Sixth Form.

The school gained specialist status for science, mathematics and computing in September 2005 and holds various awards, including Healthy Schools status and the Gold standard in information, advice and guidance.

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 school. It is improving steadily and there are good aspects of its work, notably in the care, guidance and support afforded to students. Students agree, making comments such as, 'The school takes really good care of us'. A feature of the school is students' positive behaviour, exemplified by students' good manners. Consequently, the school is a calm, ordered environment where trust and mutual respect are very much the order of the day. Students are well motivated as demonstrated by their high attendance.

Attainment over the past three years has been rising, as has the rate of progress students make. Progress is satisfactory overall. However, the rate of progress is accelerating more consistently for the higher- and middle-ability students than that of lower-ability students.

The quality of teaching varies across the school and therefore lacks the consistency needed to improve its overall quality to good. While there are examples of teaching that fully engages, motivates and challenges all abilities, too much teaching falls short of these essential qualities needed to get the best from students.

The school benefits greatly from its good sixth form provision. The articulate, well-mannered students provide very positive role models for younger students. Although small numbers of students join the sixth-form federation, students make good progress, with many securing university places on completion of A level studies.

The school has concentrated its efforts on developing the role of middle leaders. This has had success in improving the way leaders at all levels use data, resulting in increased numbers of students leaving in Year 11 with grades A* to C in five or more GCSEs, including both English and mathematics. Leaders and managers have been less successful in systematically improving the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Middle leaders increasingly undertake self-evaluation activities, although this varies in sharpness between departments. The curriculum has recently been overhauled at Key Stage 4 to more adequately accommodate different abilities of students and there are clear early signs of this initiative being successful. The school's specialism has contributed to developing the school's curriculum; it has also had an impact in the wider community. These factors illustrate well the school's satisfactory capacity to sustain its improvement.

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?

- Improve the consistency and quality of teaching so it becomes at least good by:
 - using data more effectively in the classroom so that work that is planned matches the range of students' abilities increasing the challenge for students through more effective questioning
 - giving students increased opportunities to work in groups, solving problems and being actively involved in their own learning
 - ensuring students are fully involved in assessing their own and each other's work so they know what they should do to improve.

- Raise the achievement of lower-ability students by:
 - ensuring no opportunities are missed to develop their literacy skills across the curriculum
 - increasing the rigour with which the progress of lower-ability students is tracked and monitored by school leaders and classroom teachers to ensure that additional support is targeted effectively.

- Improve the leadership and management of teaching and learning by:
 - increasing the opportunities for staff to share the good practice that currently exists in the school
 - ensuring that the results from classroom monitoring of teaching are used to systematically improve the quality of teaching across the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

The quality of learning is satisfactory overall but inconsistent across the school. In the best lessons, students' good behaviour and well-developed social skills are put to good use in activities that require them to work closely in groups and learn independently. This results in rapid rates of progress. In one English lesson, for example, students made good progress by working in pairs to analyse various websites to understand how persuasive language was used. In other lessons, however, students are not well challenged due to over-long teacher explanations and insufficient opportunities for students to work in groups, solve problems and be actively involved in their own learning. Furthermore, there are often missed opportunities for students to develop their literacy skills across all areas of the curriculum. This shortcoming particularly slows the progress made by lower-ability students. While their progress is broadly satisfactory, there is a smaller proportion of students who make good progress than for other ability groupings. This includes students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and others of low ability who do not receive timely support.

Students enter the school with attainment that is average. By the time they reach the end of Year 11, their achievement is satisfactory. Students enjoy school, which is reflected in their high attendance. They comment on how safe they feel from any threats of bullying, with a caring ear always available should the need arise. Many students grasp the plentiful opportunities to make valuable contributions to the school and community, notably through participation in the 'Lifestyle' scheme in helping senior members of the community. A good range of activities help students learn about the world of business and enterprise with careers guidance being of a high quality. This, coupled with students' high attendance and rising attainment in the school, results in them being well prepared for the next stage in their education. Students' well-developed social skills, alongside good opportunities to engage with students of other cultures, for example, through foreign exchanges, ensures their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching ranges from good to inadequate, although the school is working hard to eliminate the rare instances of inadequate teaching. Some departments have been more successful in establishing consistently high quality teaching than others and it is this inconsistency across the school that is preventing the overall quality of teaching from rising to good. Where teaching is most successful, planning takes account of the full range of abilities and teachers use a variety of questioning techniques to challenge students fully. This enables teachers to target specific students who need additional support while also stretching others. Too often though, planning does not take into account the data on students' abilities to ensure high quality learning takes place. In these less effective lessons, questioning provides limited challenge through only asking the motivated students who have their hands up, or only requiring very brief answers, and the additional support is not as effective or is not deployed to greatest effect. Similarly, assessment to support learning varies in quality. Where it is most effective, students are acutely

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

aware of their abilities through assessing their own and each other's work. Consequently, they can comment, using subject specific vocabulary, on what they should do to improve. This was particularly evident in an art lesson where students gave each other advice on how to improve their work. In some lessons, however, students were unsure of what they needed to do to improve due to insufficient opportunities to assess their own and each other's work.

The satisfactory curriculum is broad and balanced, meeting statutory requirements. A new 'pathways' curriculum in Key Stage 4 now more adequately meets the needs of students. This has resulted in improved outcomes for all students. However, the limited development of literacy across the curriculum is a relative weakness of the curriculum. A good range of sporting and other extra-curricular enhancements add to students' enjoyment of school.

Care, guidance and pastoral support are strengths in the school. Non-attendance is pursued rigorously, resulting in very few persistent absences and high attendance overall. Pastoral support is first class. This has ensured students receive high quality guidance on the next stage of their education and that Year 7 students settle quickly into their new surroundings. Students whose circumstances make them vulnerable receive good support for their needs, which results in their high attendance and them feeling safe and secure. The school works well with a range of outside agencies to support those students who need the most care.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers embed ambition and drive improvement to a satisfactory level. The tracking of students' progress has ensured that more students are now attaining five GCSEs at grade C or above including English and mathematics. However, the progress of lower-ability students has not been tracked with the same rigour, which has been a contributory factor in these students not making as much progress as their peers. Leaders are aware that the next stage in development for the school is to increase the pace with which the quality of teaching and learning improves in consistency and quality. There are, at present, too few opportunities for the good practice that currently exists in the school to be shared, so that teachers learn from the best. The quality of teaching and learning is monitored. However, the middle and senior leaders have not always systematically used the results of this monitoring to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The governing body provides adequate challenge and support to the school, discharging its statutory duties effectively. The school's specialist status has had a positive impact in projects such as an over 60s computer club, provision of computer courses for the local Traveller community and in hosting a science week involving local primary schools.

The school meets statutory requirements for safeguarding. Discrimination is robustly tackled whenever and wherever it occurs. While students make different rates of progress, the gaps with similar groups nationally are narrowing, and therefore the school promotes equal opportunities to a satisfactory level. The school satisfactorily promotes community cohesion. The school has undertaken an audit in relation to community cohesion that has had some success in helping students to engage with communities other than their own, such as engaging in a project to develop a school in Malawi.

These are the grades for the 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	3
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

Students in the sixth form play an important part in the school, such as acting as ambassadors for the school in community events and organising fund-raising initiatives through 'TWAG', the world awareness group. They act as good role models for younger members of the school. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good, which ensures academic outcomes for students are good, with many securing places at their first choice university. However, group sizes are very small, often consisting of fewer than five students. Inevitably, this limits opportunities for collaboration and discussion. In other respects, the curriculum for the sixth form meets the needs of students well, with a range of A level and vocational courses on offer across the federated sixth form. Care, guidance and support are strong, with tutors being the first port of call for students. Students speak positively about the additional support teachers offer them. A range of external speakers and events organised by the federation prepares students well for their university applications. A range of enhancements are on offer to students, but these are not taken up by all students, since they are not always viewed with equal importance as formal academic studies.

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

The majority of positive comments made by parents and carers were in support of the school's pastoral system, which helps students feel safe and secure. The inspection findings endorse these positive comments.

A minority of parents expressed concerns about how the school informs them of their children's progress, how well the school helps parents and carers to support their children, how well students are helped to have a healthy lifestyle, how well the school deals with unacceptable behaviour and how the school takes account of parents' and carers' concerns.

The inspection team investigated all these issues. The school's engagement with parents and carers was judged to be satisfactory. Parents and carers receive regular updates on the progress of their children through, an open evening for parents and carers, an annual report and a termly report on attainment and effort made in lessons. The team found that students' planners were sometimes used to pass messages to parents and carers, but this was inconsistent across the school. The team found that behaviour was good across the school, particularly during break times and lunch times. However, where lessons did not fully engage students, they were passive observers rather than active participants. They found that students receive plentiful advice on how to lead active, healthy lifestyles, but not all students choose to act on this advice. For example, while smoking is not common, it is in evidence in corners of the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sir John Nelthorpe School - A Specialist Technology College for Science, Mathematics and Computing 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 329 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 645 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	104	32	208	63	5	2	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	99	30	203	62	10	3	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	81	25	194	59	22	7	3	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	79	24	209	64	11	3	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	94	29	202	61	9	3	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	54	16	197	60	43	13	3	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	50	15	218	66	29	9	1	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)	91	28	185	56	12	4	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	87	26	207	63	14	4	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	61	19	187	57	37	11	9	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	48	15	197	60	24	7	4	1
The school is led and managed effectively	71	22	198	60	18	5	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	108	33	194	59	11	3	1	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 is 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).

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.



14 September 2011

Dear Students,

Inspection of Sir John Nelthorpe School - A Specialist Technology College for Science, Mathematics and Computing, Brigg, DN20 8AA

Thank you for the welcome you gave us recently. I am pleased to report that you go to a satisfactory school that is improving. You told us how much you enjoyed school, how safe you felt from the threats of bullying and how well the school ensures you are well looked after.

We found that you make satisfactory progress. The school has recently improved the subject choices for Year 10 and 11 to make sure it suits all abilities of students and we found that this is improving results and how much you enjoy school, which is reflected in your high attendance. We found that the sixth form is good, and provides a good choice of courses. To improve further, we have asked your headteacher and staff to do the following.

- Improve teaching so it is all at least good, by making sure teachers plan work that is suitable for all abilities, question you more thoroughly in lessons, give you more opportunities to learn by being actively involved rather than listening to long explanations, and having more opportunities to assess your own and each others' work.
- Help lower-ability students to make good progress by making sure you develop literacy skills in all subjects, not only in English lessons
- Improve how school leaders monitor the quality of teaching by making sure all teachers learn from the best teachers in the school.

You can help by continuing to be the well-behaved, confident young people you are today. I wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Robert Jones
Lead inspector

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