

# Notre Dame High School, Norwich

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	121189
<b>Local Authority</b>	Norfolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	380184
<b>Inspection dates</b>	21–22 September 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Stephen Abbott 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>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<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>	1388
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	368
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Linda Bennett
<b>Headteacher</b>	Brian Conway
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 May 2007
<b>School address</b>	Surrey Street Norwich NR1 3PB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01603 611431
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<b>Email address</b>	office@notredamehigh.norfolk.sch.uk

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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 five additional inspectors. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school improvement plans, records of lesson observation, students' work, incident logs, the single central record of safeguarding checks and various policy documents, including the child protection policy and the staff handbook. The inspection took into account the views of 572 parents and carers who returned questionnaires. Questionnaires were also received from 84 members of staff and 208 students, including 54 sixth formers. Between them, the inspectors observed 46 lessons, involving 46 different teachers and also made short visits to several other lessons. Six lessons were observed jointly with senior staff. Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, teachers, students and members of the governing body.

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

- Is the improvement seen in the GCSE results in 2011 a result of the year group's higher prior attainment, or to better progress?
- To what extent has the school eliminated the minority of low level disruption referred to in the previous report?
- How effectively do teachers use questioning and informal assessment in lessons to promote students' learning, and how well informed are students about how to improve their work?
- How effective is monitoring, evaluation and planning by subject leaders?
- How well have leaders and managers dealt with the initial problems with the International Baccalaureate course?

## Information about the school

Notre Dame High School is a large school with a sixth form that attracts a considerable number of new students each year from other schools. As it is the only Catholic high school in Norfolk, some students travel long distances to attend. The proportion of students known to be entitled to free school meals is below average. Around one in six students is from a minority ethnic background. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, but the proportion with statements of special educational needs is above average.

The school is a training school and a specialist school for both languages and science. In Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, it collaborates with other local schools and colleges to provide additional courses. The school has many awards including Healthy Schools, Investors in Families, Eco-School, Artsmark Silver, Sportsmark, Work-Related Learning Silver, International Schools and the Princess Diana Memorial Award.

The school is currently consulting on a proposal to apply for academy status. As with all faith schools, the school's religious character is subject to a separate 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?**

**1**

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

**1**

## Main findings

Notre Dame High School provides an outstanding education, both in the main school and in the sixth form. It provides outstanding value for money. A key strength is its broad interpretation of what education means. Students are not just taught how to pass examinations, but also to become reflective thinkers, with high moral standards and compassion for others. The school's ethos is one of high expectations in which every student matters. It works hard to realise the full potential of every student, both academically and in preparation for their future lives. This is reflected in the exemplary quality of its care, guidance and support and in the outstanding curriculum, which is highly flexible to cater for students' different interests and aptitudes. Consequently, students' attainment is high and their behaviour and personal development are outstanding. As a result of the good and sometimes outstanding teaching, all groups of students make good progress. The well organised learning support for pupils with statements of special educational needs includes effective classroom support and well focused withdrawal sessions. This provision helps them to learn effectively.

Since he took over in September 2010, the headteacher has maintained the school's relentless pursuit of excellence, by setting very ambitious targets for academic achievement while maintaining the school's caring and inclusive outlook. His restructuring of the leadership team has been a major factor in the drive for improvement. Since their responsibilities have been more tightly defined, senior leaders have led a number of initiatives. These include bolstering the behaviour management system, improving the school's engagement with parents and carers, enhancing the curriculum and improving the tracking of students' progress. Leaders at all levels are now closely involved in the school's self-evaluation. The school has largely eliminated the minority of disruptive behaviour noted in the last inspection. In the sixth form, a successful International Baccalaureate course has now been established. Concerns about the performance of boys with low prior attainment have been addressed. These changes have led to still higher attainment, demonstrating the school's outstanding capacity to improve.

Students' behaviour is excellent and makes a strong contribution to their outstanding achievement. Students make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community, locally, nationally and globally. They are keen to express their ideas and views through discussion, surveys and through the well established school council. Students are prepared exceptionally well for their future lives. They apply their basic skills highly effectively in a variety of contexts. Their leadership and team-working

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skills are particularly well developed. They develop into articulate, confident and thoughtful young people who can present well reasoned arguments and who are ready to take on further challenges and responsibilities.

As befits a training school, the school has effective systems for addressing teachers' professional development needs once they are identified. Notre Dame has some outstanding teachers who bring their subjects alive. Teaching is good or better in a large majority of lessons, but students' progress falls short of being outstanding because teaching is not yet consistently good. In the satisfactory lessons observed, teachers did not use assessment well enough to enhance students' learning. The reasons varied. Some teachers created few opportunities for assessment because they did not allocate enough time to independent work by students; others did not exploit the assessment opportunities that arose. In a few lessons, teachers did not use the information available to them about students' literacy and mathematical skills to set appropriately challenging tasks. The school's own records show that lesson observations do not always pinpoint the specific improvements needed to improve satisfactory teaching. The evaluation of teaching and learning by senior leaders is usually accurate and perceptive, but some subject leaders focus too much on the teacher, with not enough emphasis on the impact of teaching on students' learning.

In taking the school from good to outstanding, senior leaders have naturally had to prioritise their time. There are two areas in particular, where the school has not sufficiently documented and formalised its practice. Although they develop into very good citizens, students were not able to identify how they were taught citizenship, because the school had not mapped out formally how it meets the citizenship requirements of the National Curriculum. Similarly, although the school's work in the community is well established, the school has not formally analysed all aspects of its context, or created a specific plan for its promotion of community cohesion. As a result, it is not well set up to evaluate the impact of its work, and for this reason, the promotion of community cohesion can only be judged satisfactory.

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

- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching by
  - monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning more rigorously to identify the specific improvements needed in each case to transform satisfactory practice into good practice
  - providing sharply focused training for teachers who need to improve their use of assessment in lessons to support students' learning.
- Ensure that all formal requirements are met in respect of planning, particularly in respect of the promotion of community cohesion and the delivery of the citizenship elements of the national curriculum.

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## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**1**

On average students are about a term ahead of the expected level for their age when they join in Year 7. Their subsequent achievement is outstanding: they make good progress and by the end of Year 11, attainment is well above the national average. The provisional results for 2011 indicate a considerable increase, to 80%, in the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grade C and above, including English and mathematics. The impact of the school's specialisms is evident in the very strong results in modern foreign languages and science.

Students make good or better progress in a large majority of lessons. There are no groups of students that systematically underachieve because the school monitors the progress of groups and acts accordingly at the first sign of concern. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities speak highly of the support they receive, which is effective in helping them make equally good progress. The progress of students entitled to free school meals is particularly strong.

Students show high levels of enjoyment. They are attentive in lessons, making pertinent contributions to class discussion and engaging fully with a variety of activities. They have high levels of oracy, enabling them to voice their opinions with confidence. They are very well motivated and respond well when challenged to extend themselves. For example, students gave answers in Spanish, speaking confidently during a quiz game; in a mathematics lesson, students completed a string of mental calculations with speed and accuracy; students took on roles such as leaders and scorers in an outstanding physical education lesson. In general, students' very positive attitudes and behaviour contributed strongly to their learning. However, students' learning and progress were slower in a small minority of satisfactory lessons, often because the lesson provided them with fewer opportunities for independent work.

An ethos of learning and respect for others is very evident in the school. Students' behaviour around the rather cramped school site is exemplary and the great majority of students say they feel safe in school. Many older students involve themselves in supporting their younger peers, both academically and pastorally. Students know how to seek help from staff because this is explained in notices in every classroom. Inspectors saw no examples of disruptive behaviour in lessons, reflecting the low and declining rates of exclusion and referral of students to senior staff.

The school works hard to help students to live healthy lifestyles. The new 'cashless catering' system encourages healthy eating. All students engage in sporting activity in physical education lessons and the majority take advantage of the very good extra-curricular provision. Nevertheless, a quarter of the students surveyed felt the school could do more to help them be healthy.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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<b>Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment <sup>1</sup>	1
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>1</b>
<b>Pupils’ behaviour</b>	<b>1</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>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
<b>The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is good overall. During the inspection, nearly one lesson in three was judged outstanding, but an equal number were judged satisfactory. In the stronger lessons, teachers made good use of assessment to pitch work appropriately for different groups of students. They planned carefully how they would address the needs of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They asked questions that caused students to reflect on what they had learned and encouraged them to provide reasoned responses. The teachers made good use of time, including phases in which students worked independently, allowing the teacher time to move about the room to identify good work and any misconceptions that could be followed up later. Lessons proceeded at a good pace, with all students making good use of the time. In the small minority of satisfactory lessons, these features were less pronounced. Work was not so well adapted for the most able students or those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Questions did not probe understanding because they focused on factual recall. Critically, the teachers were less skilled in assessing students’ knowledge and understanding and therefore were less able to adapt their teaching to meet emerging needs.

The school offers a very broad curriculum which allows students to achieve outstanding academic and personal outcomes. The curriculum for most students has an academic emphasis that meets their needs and aptitudes, but it is sufficiently flexible to provide vocational courses and individually tailored programmes to meet the needs of all. A rich variety of curriculum pathways is offered through the excellent partnership arrangements with other education providers. The impressive range of extra-curricular opportunities provides a wealth of experiences for students

<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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in areas such as, sport, music, drama, science and languages, including cultural exchanges.

Pastoral support systems are extensive and involve close work with external partners. The excellent transition arrangements include well established links with the main feeder schools as well as more bespoke arrangements for the many students who join from primary schools farther afield. As a result, new students quickly settle in the school. The school liaises very well with other care agencies to support students facing challenging personal circumstances. One student sought out inspectors to tell them how the school had helped him to transform his behaviour and turn around his life. In matters of safeguarding, the school’s procedures are exemplary and innovative. There is a team of five child protection designates who are known to all students and staff. The team is also responsible for ensuring that safeguarding is as strong as possible.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The school’s ambition is demonstrated by its dual specialisms, its training school status and its recent consultation on academy status. Leaders and managers at all levels are involved in the constant drive for improvement that has helped make the school outstanding. The leadership of teaching and learning is improving as performance management is linked more clearly to professional standards. Staff morale is very high. The governing body plays an outstanding role in holding the school to account through its highly effective committee structure. Its members make frequent visits to the school and obtain intelligence from a variety of formal and informal contacts. They are very well informed on matters of safeguarding. Senior and middle leaders have clear responsibilities for monitoring and evaluating provision, setting targets, identifying areas that need improvement and devising appropriate development plans. They do so with outstanding effect.

The school promotes equality and tackles discrimination outstandingly well. The performance and well-being of different groups is monitored carefully and action is taken where needed. In recent years, progress has been improved for various groups, including those entitled to free school meals, students for whom English is an additional language and students receiving higher levels of support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds speak highly of the school ethos. Racist incidents are extremely rare. In

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many respects, community cohesion is strong, reflecting the school’s outward-looking approach. However, the school has not formalised its promotion of community cohesion through an audit, explicit plan and evaluation schedule.

The school has forged an impressive array of partnerships. For example, it plays a leading role in a consortium of six schools and a local college. Partnership working not only enhances the curriculum, but contributes to professional development in teaching and in leadership and, through sharing services, to better value for money. Partnership with parents and carers is improving. It is very strong in pastoral matters, and parents and carers are kept well informed about the school’s work. There are good arrangements to help parents and carers to support their children’s education. Parents and carers are involved in risk assessments, for example for the annual ski trip.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</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>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

## Sixth form

The sixth form provides an outstanding education that equips its students with much more than just high academic attainment. Sixth form students are taught to think for themselves, question everything and put across their views articulately. The quality of teaching is particularly strong. As one student commented, ‘The focus is not just on exams. We go beyond the syllabus.’ For example, a further mathematics lesson ended with several students taking away mathematics books to review and others signing up to support Year 7 classes. In an outstanding English lesson, the teacher used a fast-paced series of probing questions to get the students thinking deeply and analytically about their responses to and understanding of ‘The History Boys’.

Sixth form students can choose from a very wide range of AS- and A-level courses,

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including five different languages and four sciences. The outstanding curriculum has recently been enhanced by an International Baccalaureate (IB) course. The outstanding quality of leadership of the sixth form is demonstrated in the way the initial problems with the IB course were overcome. In 2011, IB results improved remarkably and are now well above the world average. Across all courses, while students’ prior attainment is above average, their subsequent attainment is high. For example, a large majority of A level and IB grades were obtained at A\* to B.

Students benefit from outstanding advice and guidance. The induction programme is very effective particularly in helping those new to the school. The comprehensive support for students applying for higher education includes additional advice for those aspiring to Oxbridge and Russell group universities. Students are highly complimentary about their sixth form experience, their main suggested improvement being better facilities for private study.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	1
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

**Views of parents and carers**

The great majority of parents and carers are positive about the school, particularly in relation to safeguarding, students’ enjoyment, the quality of teaching, and leadership and management. One wrote ‘The school is a credit to the education system in this country. It combines nurture with discipline and encourages students to reach their potential given their direction in life. I am more than pleased with the school’s ability to educate my children.’ While their comments were mainly supportive, parents and carers were willing to be critical too. One wrote ‘Some teaching is superb - most teaching is good, but this is not consistent throughout the school. We have found the pastoral care system to be excellent and when we have needed to speak to the year head she has responded quickly and efficiently.’ A few parents and carers felt that the school could improve its communication with them and do more to promote healthy lifestyles. The inspection endorsed these views, judging these aspects as good among much that was outstanding.

The comments on behaviour from parents and carers presented a range of views. One wrote ‘Student behaviour is too disruptive in classrooms, teaching time is wasted. There is also an unacceptable amount of antisocial behaviour and lack of empathy for other students.’ Another took the opposite view: ‘Children’s behaviour is very good overall and we like the school as older children take care of younger ones and show a good example.’ Others were not so sure, one writing ‘I have concerns

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regarding how poor behaviour is dealt with within the school and need to be reassured that where students genuinely want to achieve, they will have the opportunity to do so.' Inspectors found strong evidence that behaviour and behaviour management were improving in the school, and judged students' behaviour as outstanding.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Notre Dame High School, Norwich 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 572 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1388 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	299	52	259	45	7	1	2	0
The school keeps my child safe	291	51	267	47	3	%	2	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	222	39	290	51	25	4	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	252	44	275	48	14	2	2	0
The teaching is good at this school	253	44	292	51	6	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	171	30	318	56	43	8	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	160	28	332	58	49	9	3	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	211	37	283	49	26	5	1	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	221	39	305	53	24	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	198	35	294	51	38	7	7	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	149	26	319	56	32	6	5	1
The school is led and managed effectively	226	40	310	54	10	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	309	54	245	43	10	2	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 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.**



23 September 2011

Dear Students

### **Inspection of Notre Dame High School, Norwich, Norwich, NR1 3PB**

I am writing to tell you the outcome of your school's recent inspection. We agree with the senior leaders that your school is now outstanding. As a result, your academic achievement and personal development are outstanding. This means that you are very well prepared for the future. You enjoy school and respect its caring approach and the atmosphere of high expectations. You make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community.

The school provides you with excellent care, guidance and support and works very hard to keep you safe. The curriculum is very well thought out to meet the needs of every student. You benefit from language and science specialisms and the very good arrangements made with other schools to follow alternative courses. In lessons, you are attentive and show interest in your learning. You respond well to the good teaching you receive. Your behaviour around the school is superb.

Over 200 of you completed our questionnaire, and most of the responses were positive. Most students said that they feel safe at school, learn a lot in lessons, know how well they are doing and how to improve their work. You told us that the headteacher and senior staff do a good job and we agree. A quarter of you want the school to do more to help you live healthy lifestyles, but we think it does a good job.

We made a couple of suggestions about how the school could improve further. Although there is some outstanding teaching, we also saw some lessons where teaching was satisfactory. We therefore suggested that the school provide extra support to make teaching consistently good. We also asked the school to sharpen up its planning for teaching citizenship and promoting community cohesion.

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to thank you all for the welcome we received and to thank especially those of you who gave up your time to talk to us or to complete our questionnaires. I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Abbott  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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