

Nailsea School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109310
Local Authority	North Somerset
Inspection number	377906
Inspection dates	26–27 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Ken Bush

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

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	1,118
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	269
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sally-Ann Hancock
Headteacher	David New
Date of previous school inspection	29–30 April 2009
School address	Mizzymead Road Nailsea Bristol BS48 2HN
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. They observed 39 lessons or learning sessions taught by 36 teachers. Meetings were held with senior leaders, including the headteacher, academic and pastoral middle leaders and members of the governing body, including the chair. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at planning documentation, assessment information, examples of students' work and a number of policy documents. The team received and considered 141 questionnaires from parents and carers, together with 307 from students and 46 from school staff.

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

- Whether the school can demonstrate its contention convincingly that, over time, students make at least good progress.
- The extent to which better teaching and more effective monitoring are contributing to a reduction in the variation in students' achievement in different subjects.
- Whether the quality of senior and middle leadership is equally strong in all areas of the school's work, leading to consistently good or better outcomes for students.

Information about the school

Nailsea is larger than most secondary schools. Most pupils are of White British heritage, with only very small proportions from a range of other ethnic backgrounds. Only a very small number of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is close to the national average; these pupils' needs are related mainly to moderate learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well-below the national average, but rising gradually.

The school has had specialist status in technology and media arts since 2004. The school has also received national recognition for aspects of its work, including the Leading Aspect Award for Active Citizenship and awards for Investors in Families and for International Schools. The school moved into purpose-built new premises in September 2009. The accommodation includes facilities which are available for community use also during the school day, managed by the school's community-business arm, 'The Link'. There is a privately run after-school club on the site which, as it is not managed by the governing body, was not within the remit of this 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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Nailsea is a good school, which has made steady and notable improvement since the previous inspection. Under the leadership of a strong and committed headteacher, staff and students have risen to the challenge and increased rates of progress and improved achievement. Consistently good and improving provision has resulted in outcomes which are at least good for all groups of learners, including those in the sixth form. The key to its success is the well-managed investment which the school has made in ensuring that the quality of leadership at all levels is consistently good. Allied to that, comprehensive systems to enable close tracking of students' academic performance have been implemented successfully, ensuring that interventions are timely and based on secure evidence. Self-evaluation is sophisticated and accurate, which has enabled a supportive governing body to become increasingly active and effective in its work. As a consequence of the clear gains in leadership, provision and outcomes, the school has good capacity for sustained improvement. While a large majority of parents and carers are fully supportive of the school, senior leaders and the governing body acknowledge the need to secure stronger engagement with a small minority of parents and carers with whom communication in the past has not always been as effective as the school would like.

Despite a dip in the 2011 GCSE results, attainment is securely above average over a three-year period, including in English and mathematics. Rates of progress, which had historically been at least satisfactory, but slow to increase, have now accelerated and, as a result, students in all key stages are now progressing at a similarly good pace. Progress in English, in particular, has been on a rapidly rising trend for several years, having previously been a relatively weaker area at the school. More consistently good leadership and improved teaching has also ensured that the significant variation in students' achievement across different subjects reported in the previous inspection has been reduced considerably.

Typically, teaching is good in all areas of the well-coordinated curriculum, leading to high levels of engagement and enjoyment of learning, as well as good progress. In the small minority of lessons where teaching is less successful, tasks are not always matched well to students' different abilities and there is, on occasion, insufficient challenge, especially for the most-able students; this prevents some from progressing as rapidly as they could. Similarly, while students' work is assessed well in the great majority of cases, there is some variability in the quality of assessment across the school. Good care, guidance and support underpin much of the good work seen in classrooms and the school has wisely made academic guidance sessions a

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regular feature of the timetable for all tutor groups. However, 'tutor time' is not always spent as productively or monitored as closely it should be. That apart, support from tutors and pastoral leaders is strong and contributes to high levels of students' personal development. For example, students' contribution to the school and wider community is outstanding because they are given numerous opportunities to show leadership and take initiative, and have also developed the requisite confidence and personal skills and qualities to do so effectively. Students' global awareness is strong, as reflected in Nailsea's involvement in a Comenius project with schools in four European countries and in its receipt of the International Schools Award. Students' understanding and appreciation of communities beyond their own in the United Kingdom is less well developed, notably regarding people who have different social, religious and cultural backgrounds to those of the majority of Nailsea's students.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate students' progress so that they can attain even higher standards by July 2013 by:
 - ensuring that all lessons are sufficiently challenging and matched well to the needs and abilities of the full range of students, including the more able
 - providing more teaching which is exceptional and inspirational
 - ensuring that the high-quality assessment practice seen in the best lessons is applied consistently across the curriculum
 - making better use of 'tutor time' to support academic advice and guidance further.
- Engage the full range of parents and carers more effectively so that a greater proportion of them are more supportive of and feel more involved in the life of the school.
- Provide more opportunities for students in all year groups to develop their understanding of social, religious and cultural diversity in other parts of the United Kingdom.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Most students enjoy their learning and show considerable enthusiasm in developing and practising a range of skills, including in literacy and numeracy, where they demonstrate above-average levels of proficiency. The impact of the school's specialist subjects can be seen in how well students use a range of new technologies, including information and communication technology (ICT), and how proficient they are in 'visual literacy', which is well promoted through a focus on media education across the curriculum. Students, characteristically, are well disposed towards learning, are keen to work both independently and collaboratively, and

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sustain concentration and application for increasing periods across the school. In a lesson seen in which learning and progress were typically good, students studying German applied the knowledge they had gained about vocabulary and grammar relating to hobbies in a creative way, producing their own extended writing and learning with and from their peers. From generally above-average starting points (although closer to the national average in cohorts which have joined the school more recently), progress over time for all groups of students, including those with special educational needs and/or difficulties and the relatively few from minority ethnic groups, is good. Notwithstanding minor variations in different subjects, boys and girls progress at similar rates.

Almost all students have well-developed personal skills and are well prepared for the next stage of their education and for adult life; attendance is above average and punctuality generally good. The vast majority report that they feel safe at school and express confidence in the school’s systems to deal with bullying on the relatively rare occasions on which it occurs. Older students, in particular, remarked that the ‘vertical’ system, in which students from different years are integrated into tutor groups, has helped to make the school a safer and even more civilised environment. Despite some infrequent low-level disruption when less successful teaching fails to engage them fully, most students behave well, both in and out of lessons, and have responded well to the impressive learning environment of the new buildings. Apart from a small amount of litter, students look after and express pride in their ‘new’ school. Students have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and the majority participates regularly in extra-curricular sporting activities. Examples of students’ outstanding contribution to the school and wider community include an exceptionally active school council, enthusiastic support of younger pupils as part of a strong primary liaison system, and extensive involvement in community organisations such as ‘Nailsea Musicals’ and with local businesses. The extent of the school’s excellent work in and commitment to citizenship is reflected in its Leading Aspect Award for Active Citizenship.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1

¹ 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 to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have extensive subject knowledge and use this successfully to provide students with a good range of activities, which are mostly matched well to their needs. The vast majority of planning is effective as it builds well on what students know, understand and can do already, although the degree of challenge for more-able students is less consistent. Most teachers use questioning effectively to probe and develop students' understanding, although few examples of high-level thinking and discussion skills were seen during the inspection, other than in sixth-form lessons. Similarly, while good overall, instances of inspirational teaching or exceptional learning were rare. Teachers provide useful feedback to students on how they can improve their work and are developing students' skills in self- and peer-assessment well. Generally, written feedback is good and, occasionally, exemplary, but, also occasionally, it is too superficial, with little evidence that students act upon the advice they receive routinely.

In both key stages, the curriculum is well organised and provides a broad range of experiences and challenges for students, including in all core subjects. In Key Stage 4, three distinct progression routes are provided, which are aligned well with students' different capabilities, interests and aspirations. They enable a rich mix of traditional academic GCSE subjects to be offered alongside vocational courses, including apprenticeships, which are offered in partnership with a local further education college. The influence of the specialist subjects is apparent, although attainment in these subjects is not notably higher than in others. The current Key Stage 3 curriculum is largely traditional and is under review. The relatively new 'critical skills' initiative is a strong feature in much curriculum planning across a range of subjects and is beginning to have an impact on sharpening students' awareness of the skills needed for effective learning and on their understanding of the links between different subjects; however, its impact on outcomes is embryonic. There is a good range of after-school enrichment activities, including GCSE Latin.

The school ensures that its provision for care, guidance and support enables all students to succeed in school, and, in particular, those who require additional nurturing and assistance in order to overcome obstacles to learning. The success of the work with students and their parents and carers has been recognised recently in the Investors in Families award. There are good links with outside agencies to ensure effective support for those whose circumstances may render them vulnerable and the school's own specialist staff, such as the school counsellor, are utilised and deployed well. Induction arrangements for new students in Year 7 are effective, as are those for students preparing to enter Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Strategies to

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promote regular attendance are well coordinated generally, although the monitoring of absence rates of different groups is not yet fully developed.

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher’s strong vision for Nailsea School as being at the heart of learning in the local community is well established across the school. It is evident, too, that staff feel they have been instrumental in shaping the implementation of the vision within the new school campus. Effective self-evaluation has enabled senior leaders to develop a clear set of priorities for improving the school. A systematic, robust and evidence-rich approach to school improvement, making increasingly effective use of ICT, has been developed, resulting in improved outcomes since the previous inspection. The capacity of middle leaders, and, in particular, heads of faculty, to monitor and evaluate provision and student outcomes and to promote best practice is an improving, though not yet fully embedded, feature of the school’s work.

The governing body discharges its statutory and other responsibilities well and ensures that school leaders are supported well and challenged robustly. It was instrumental in navigating the school through the new-build programme. The confidence and expertise gained has enabled it to develop a greater role in strategic planning and, under the leadership of a strong and experienced chair, it is building its own capacity and taking up training opportunities with enthusiasm. Equality of opportunity is promoted vigorously and the rare instances of discrimination tackled appropriately. Monitoring of the progress of different groups is secure. Safeguarding procedures are well established and understood clearly by students, staff and the governing body. Training is updated regularly and documented well; the school adopts most, but not yet all, elements of high-quality best practice. The school’s contribution to community cohesion is good and improving rapidly. It has ambitious plans to use the additional capacity afforded by the new campus, and, specifically, its business arm, ‘The Link’, to increase the quantity, quality and range of community activity further. At present, the school’s work within the immediate community is strong, but is less well developed with regard to communities further afield.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Sixth form

Despite a dip in both attainment and progress in 2011, students’ achievement over time is good and, as is the case for Year 11, there is evidence of a narrowing gap between the highest and lowest performing subjects at AS and A2 levels. Students possess positive attitudes to learning and are very well disposed to participate in a wide range of activities, both within the school community and beyond. For example, a majority is involved in acting as assistant form tutors or as ‘custodians’ for tutor groups in the main school. They act also as anti-bullying counsellors in the lower school. Students also make good use of their well-developed media and technological skills to support local performance arts groups, reflecting the strong influence of the school’s specialisms.

Typically, teaching in the sixth form is at least good and assessment procedures of consistently high quality; students affirm that they find the frequency of feedback and its detailed nature valuable and helpful. Although consisting mostly of traditional AS/A2 courses, the curriculum offers a good range of choice to students. Options at GCSE-equivalent level are more limited. The quality of advice and guidance is consistently good, enabling students to make well-informed choices at key moments of transition, including entry into further and higher education. The easy access to and students’ proficiency in ICT and other forms of technology enable students to exercise good levels of independence in their studies.

Leaders in the sixth form maintain a strong focus on improving the quality of teaching and ensuring that outcomes are good and improving. Monitoring and evaluation of student performance are strong and the information derived from this is increasingly helping subject leaders to be more accountable for the quality of provision and, where needed, raising the level of challenge in lessons and programmes of study. The sixth form is growing in size and retention rates between Year 12 and Year 13 are increasing.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
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

The proportion of questionnaires returned by parents and carers was lower than that found for most secondary schools. The large majority are supportive of and appreciate the efforts made by staff and the governing body to improve the school. One parent/carer commented ‘We have had three children at Nailsea; the school has managed to engage each one of them, providing them with numerous opportunities and challenges and helping them to become independent and confident individuals.’

However, a small minority indicates through its responses (including a greater proportion than is generally the case providing extended written comments) that it was not satisfied with all aspects of what the school provides. A few criticisms were expressed about a range of different topics, but the ones concerning the greatest number of parents and carers were that unacceptable behaviour is not dealt with effectively and that the views of parents and carers are not taken into account sufficiently by school leaders and staff. During this inspection, inspectors found that, in the very large majority of cases, behaviour is good and managed well by staff. Moreover, a number of students remarked that it had improved significantly since the move to the new school premises. Inspectors also concluded that, while adequate systems are in place to promote effective communication between home and school, the full range of parents and carers is not yet engaged. Consequently, that aspect of the school’s work is judged to be satisfactory.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Nailsea School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

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

The inspection team received 141 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1118 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	45	32	86	61	9	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	50	35	85	60	5	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	23	16	95	67	14	10	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	26	84	60	9	6	3	2
The teaching is good at this school	25	18	93	66	14	10	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	32	23	77	55	25	18	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	15	94	67	21	15	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)	37	26	83	59	6	4	2	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	38	27	80	57	11	8	5	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	17	79	56	21	15	7	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	16	75	53	14	10	10	7
The school is led and managed effectively	29	21	75	53	24	17	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	42	30	85	60	6	4	5	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	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).

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.

28 September 2011

Dear Students



Inspection of Nailsea School, Bristol BS48 2HN

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave to the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed being in your lessons and talking to a good number of you and we were impressed with the pride you have in your 'new' school. These are the main findings of the inspection.

- Nailsea is a good school which has improved since the previous inspection in 2009; the quality of education in the sixth form remains good.
- Levels of attainment are above-average and you make good progress.
- Teaching and assessment, the curriculum and the quality of care, guidance and support you receive are all good. Your personal development is at least good overall and the contribution to the school and wider community outstanding.
- The school is well led and managed, with good plans for how it can get even better. The school's specialist technology and media status makes a useful contribution to your education.

The headteacher agrees with the inspection team that there are areas which could be better still and we have asked that the following improvements be implemented.

- Accelerate students' progress so that they attain even higher standards by July 2013 by making sure that all lessons are challenging enough for all students, including the more able, and that more teaching is inspirational. We would like to see the best assessment practice consistently applied in all subjects and year groups. We feel also that better use could be made of 'tutor time' to support learning.
- Engage the full range of parents and carers more effectively so that a greater proportion of them are more supportive of and feel more involved in the life of the school.
- Provide more opportunities for students in all year groups to develop their understanding of social and cultural diversity in other parts of the United Kingdom.

Best wishes with your studies.
Yours sincerely

Ken Bush
Lead Inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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