

# Houghton Community School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114320
<b>Local authority</b>	Darlington
<b>Inspection number</b>	378842
<b>Inspection dates</b>	28–29 September 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Brown

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>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	831
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jim O'Neill
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sue Richardson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	03 December 2008
<b>School address</b>	Salters Lane South Darlington DL1 2AN
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 34 lessons taught by 33 teachers. Meetings were held with groups of students, a member of the governing body, the School Improvement Partner and nominated staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including its self-evaluation, school improvement plans, lesson observation records, safeguarding procedures and other performance information. In addition, 282 questionnaires from parents and carers were scrutinised along with questionnaires returned by school staff and by a representative sample of students.

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

- The rates of progress of all groups of students.
- The quality and consistency of teaching in the school and the extent to which this has an impact on the progress students make in different subjects.
- How well teachers use assessment information to ensure that lessons meet the needs of all learners.
- The effectiveness of work to improve students' attendance, particularly those that are persistently absent.

## Information about the school

Houghton Community School is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. The school is part of the Education Village, within which the school is federated with a primary school and an all-age special school on the same site. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is much higher than that seen nationally. There are very few students who speak English as an additional language and almost all students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is much higher than the national average; the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is higher than that seen nationally. The school has specialist Arts college status and holds Artsmark Gold and Healthy Schools status. The headteacher took up post in January 2011.

**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**

**2**

### Main findings

Haughton Community School is an increasingly successful school which is providing its students with a satisfactory standard of education. Attainment at GCSE over the last three years has been low, but there was a significant improvement in results in 2011. This indicates that the progress made by students is accelerating, although this is not even across all subjects. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, improved in 2011 and is now close to the national average. However, overall achievement remains satisfactory because there is a significant variation in progress between subjects. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive excellent support and make good progress.

The school community is notable for its highly positive relationships throughout. A typical comment made by parents, 'fantastic support given to my child when changing schools; the school has really turned around well and has brilliant facilities', sums up their views well. A very large majority of parents and carers are happy with their children's education and speak positively about the quality of care, guidance and support provided by the school. Occasional incidents of inappropriate behaviour are dealt with quickly and students know where they can go for advice and guidance or to talk over any issues they experience. As a result, behaviour around school and in lessons is good.

The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory, and there is a significant and increasing proportion of good and outstanding lessons. A common feature of the best lessons is the effective use of assessment to support students' learning but there are times when work is not planned well enough to match the needs and prior attainment of all students. The quality of written and oral feedback to students is variable and as a result, students are not always aware of their targets or how to achieve them. Students respond positively in lessons and are courteous and welcoming to visitors.

The curriculum is broad and balanced, and flexibility at Key Stage 4 meets the different needs of students. A varied programme of enrichment and extra-curricular activities also makes a valuable contribution to students' enjoyment of school. The schools' specialisms in visual arts and applied learning have a positive impact on the students' learning and widen the range of activities available to them. The school has made progress in improving attendance to average, although the proportion of persistent absentees remains high. Students make good progress in developing their personal skills and qualities with the vast majority progressing into education,

employment or training. The school's recently improved system for tracking students' progress is enabling a sharper focus on students at risk of failure at Key Stage 4.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and senior team share a clear vision to sustain and improve students' achievement and are highly ambitious for the school and its students. Senior and middle leaders are committed to improving the provision across the school and are ably supported and held to account by the federation principal and by an effective governing body. Self-evaluation is largely accurate and improvement planning is well focused, which together with the rise in students' attainment, demonstrates a good capacity to improve further. School leadership ensures that the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures is good and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

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 quality of students' learning and their progress throughout the school by:
  - sharing best practice within the school to increase further the proportion of good or better teaching, in particular in the core subjects
  - ensuring that teachers use assessment information more effectively to plan and deliver lessons that are closely matched to the needs and prior attainment of all students
  - ensuring that marking is consistently effective and helps students to know what they must do next to improve their work.
- Continue to improve attendance by working closely with persistent absentees and their families.

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

<b>3</b>
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Students behave well in lessons and enjoy learning most when teachers have high expectations of what they can do, provide tasks that match their needs and abilities, and provide a good range of activities from which they can learn. For example, in a Year 7 art lesson students made outstanding progress in their self-portraits because they were guided precisely to make the necessary improvements by the teacher's excellent subject knowledge. Students' learning is less productive and enjoyable when they are expected to listen for too long and are not given enough guidance on how to improve.

The achievement of students, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, is satisfactory and improving securely from average starting points when they join the school. Lesson observations and the scrutiny of students' work, as well as current data, confirm the rising trend of improvement. Students made satisfactory progress in over half the lessons observed during the inspection, and

good and occasionally outstanding progress in others. However, there still remain weaknesses in certain areas and the progress of students in some subjects, including mathematics, is weaker than in others, though recent results for Year 10 students indicate an improvement in mathematics attainment and progress. The school has recognised these inconsistencies and is taking appropriate action to secure improvements in areas of underperformance. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive carefully-targeted additional support and make good progress.

Students say they feel safe in school and they have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet and lifestyle, with high levels of participation in sporting activities. Students' contribution to the school and wider community is satisfactory and improving. Behaviour in lessons and around school is good. Students show consideration for others and have clear respect for the values promoted by the school. Students of all ages form positive relationships with staff and are polite and considerate. Students understand the importance of regular attendance and through targeted support for groups of students, their attendance has improved to average and they are punctual to lessons. Students learn about the world of work through links established with local businesses; they are encouraged to develop aspirations for higher education and a very high proportion continues in education, training or employment, for which they are well prepared.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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	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>3</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
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Teaching is satisfactory overall, with an increasing proportion that is good or better. However, senior leaders and managers recognise that there is still too much variation, especially in the use of assessment to support students' learning. In the most effective lessons, teachers have high aspirations for students and set challenging tasks. When lessons are planned well teachers assess the needs of their students quickly and precisely, and adapt what they do to ensure all students understand and make good progress. The best lessons are characterised by real

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<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

enthusiasm for the subject, high expectations and an excellent range of targeted activities. However, too often learning is centred on a single planned task with little opportunity for activities that have differing levels of difficulty. Inspectors saw some outstanding practice in the use of assessment information, but this is variable in its use across different subjects. While there are some good examples of detailed marking, giving advice to students on how to improve their work, there are also some inconsistencies within and across subjects.

The extent to which the curriculum meets the needs of all students is good. The curriculum is well planned, is broad and balanced, and allows a range of individual pathways for students that are well matched to their identified learning needs. For example, the proportion gaining two good GCSE grades in science improved significantly in 2011, due to the provision of a variety of courses that match the abilities and interests of students. The school has extended its provision for vocational courses at Key Stage 4, where the students are now able to choose from a wider range of different qualifications. The school offers a good range of extra-curricular opportunities, especially those linked with the school specialism, including an extensive range of educational visits and work-related learning opportunities.

The school is a caring organisation and places great emphasis on the provision of good quality care, guidance and support. Students' progress is systematically and regularly monitored by senior staff. Staff know the students well and potentially vulnerable students are identified and provided with targeted support. There are effective transition arrangements for students when they enter the school and as a result of the support they receive, students can make confident and well-informed choices about their future.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<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?

The headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team provide a strong direction for the work of the school, and successfully communicate high expectations to staff and students. Leaders and managers at all levels, including the governing body, are fully aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Improvement plans are detailed and focused on key priorities. There are clear actions on what needs to be done to move the school further forward. In the last year attainment has risen and achievement has increased due to the good use of performance data to monitor the progress of students and to provide additional support where needed. The evaluation of student performance is detailed and rigorous and results in clearly defined intervention where appropriate. The system for tracking students' progress is accurate and effective and is providing data to support teachers in improving the rate of progress of all groups of students. Academic and pastoral staff at all levels take responsibility for the progress of students and work together well. The leadership

team is well supported by the good work of middle leaders, who are actively involved in checking both the progress of students and the work of subject departments. Progress has been made in improving teaching and learning, although some weaknesses remain, including in some aspects of mathematics and science.

Assessment information is shared regularly with parents and carers, who value the quality of communication with the school and the reports they receive about their child’s progress. The school’s work to ensure contact with hard to reach parents and parents of vulnerable children is a strength. The school promotes equal opportunities well and has appropriate policies in place. All students are treated fairly, irrespective of religion, race or other characteristics. However, although inspectors saw teachers and students working well together in lessons, a significant number of the students responding to the inspection questionnaire indicated that they felt their views were not considered seriously enough by the staff.

The governing body has a very good range of expertise and experience and governors are systematically involved in evaluating and supporting the school. Safeguarding is good and given a high priority; the safeguarding policy is clearly stated and rigorously followed. Child protection procedures are strong and well administered, and training for staff is thorough and of good quality.

Community cohesion is promoted within the school and wider community through a developing range of curricular and extra-curricular activities; students’ demonstrate empathy for those from a different culture but have limited experiences of the diversity of the multicultural country in which they live. The impact of these initiatives has not as yet been evaluated sufficiently. The school’s extensive partnership links, both within the Education Village and beyond, enhance provision and make a strong contribution to improving outcomes for students.

*These are the grades for the 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	<b>2</b>
<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>
<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>2</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>3</b>

**Views of parents and carers**

The proportion of parents and carers that responded to the parental questionnaire was higher than average and the overwhelming majority showed high levels of satisfaction with the school. In particular, almost all believe that their children enjoy



school and feel that their children are safe. A small number of parents and carers who responded added written comments. Many praised the school; however, concerns which were raised included poor behaviour between and in lessons. The inspection team investigated these concerns carefully and during the inspection found no evidence of poor behaviour. Positive written comments were focused on praising the school for its pastoral care and support of individual students. The strong set of positive responses from parents endorses the inspectors' findings that Haughton is a satisfactory and improving school.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Houghton Community 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 **282** completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 831 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	68	24	185	66	24	9	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	84	30	181	64	10	4	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	72	26	176	62	23	8	5	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	77	27	176	62	16	6	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	73	26	180	64	17	6	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	63	22	179	63	19	7	7	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	49	17	179	63	37	13	6	2
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)	82	29	173	61	7	2	4	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	72	26	188	67	9	3	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	84	30	140	50	34	12	7	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	55	20	172	61	29	10	5	2
The school is led and managed effectively	68	24	179	63	17	6	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	98	35	162	57	13	5	3	1

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.**



Friday 30 September 2011

Dear Students

### **Inspection of Haughton Community School, Darlington DL1 2AN**

Thank you for being so welcoming when we came to inspect your school. We enjoyed talking to you and were pleased to be able to take your views into account. It was also very helpful that many of your parents and carers completed the questionnaire as we could also take account of their views. I thought you might like to know what we thought about your school.

- Haughton is an increasingly successful school which is providing you with a satisfactory standard of education.
- Your examination results have improved and you are making better progress.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory and the proportion of good and outstanding teaching is rising.
- The care, guidance and support you receive and the curriculum you enjoy are good and you feel safe.
- The new headteacher and senior leadership team are making the right improvements to help you achieve even more.

To help the school improve further, we have said that senior leaders should further improve the quality of your learning and progress throughout the whole school by:

- sharing best practice within the school to improve teaching
- ensuring that all teachers use assessment information to plan and deliver lessons that are closely matched to your individual needs
- ensuring that marking is more effective to help you know what you must do next to improve your work
- working closely with those of you whose attendance is poor.

You can all help your teachers by continuing to behave well, working hard at all times and ensuring good attendance. I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

David Brown  
Lead inspector

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