

Highfields School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112950
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	378617
Inspection dates	21–22 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Michelle Parker HMI

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	1367
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Atholl Donaldson
Headteacher	Eddie Wilkes
Date of previous school inspection	25 February 2009
School address	Upper Lumsdale Matlock Derbyshire DE4 5NA
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 42 lessons and 40 teachers were observed. Meetings were held with parents and carers, groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at whole-school development planning, teachers' planning and school policies. In total, questionnaires returned by 398 parents and carers were analysed. The team also analysed responses from 154 student and 105 staff questionnaires.

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

- Is teaching sufficiently challenging at Key Stages 3 and 4 to support the achievement of all groups of students, especially those who are looked after, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known to be eligible for free school meals?
- Has the school moved with sufficient urgency to tackle weaknesses in teaching and learning, improve students' engagement and participation levels and raise achievement?
- Are leaders and managers acting with sufficient speed to rectify weaknesses in teaching and learning and thus improve students' progress and attainment?

Information about the school

Highfields is a larger than average high school. The percentage of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average. The proportion of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is around the national average. The number of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The school consists of two sites nearly two miles apart. Students in Years 7 and 8 receive their education on one site and the remainder on the larger site. Highfields attained performing arts specialist school status in September 2005. The current headteacher joined the school in April 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?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to students' achievement.

Since the school was last inspected, students' achievement has not improved sufficiently to indicate that all students make at least satisfactory progress in their learning. Progress data for the last three years indicate that the majority of different groups of students within the school failed to make the expected progress. As a result, achievement is inadequate. The school's promotion of equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination is inadequate because students identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not make expected progress, as their needs are not met with sufficient accuracy. However, the recently appointed headteacher has begun to tackle these inadequacies with determination. Under his leadership, the confidence of the staff, governing body, students and parents and carers is rising. One parent summed up the view of many saying, 'I feel confident that the new headteacher will pay attention to all children's needs.'

Improvements in the work of the senior leadership team, together with middle managers, have ensured that the school has a realistic understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Senior leaders now monitor departments and have begun to set challenging targets for improvement; staff are being held to account for students' achievement. As a result teaching has improved. However, there has been insufficient time for these steps to have a positive impact on students' achievement.

Students' attainment, including of those identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is broadly average and has improved slightly since 2010, particularly with regard to GCSE results within the five A* to C range. Teaching, while satisfactory overall, includes some examples of good practice. However, students' needs are not accurately met as teachers do not use assessment data carefully enough to set challenging targets. In addition, teachers miss opportunities to help students meet their targets as learning outcomes are not sufficiently clear. Feedback received by students on their work lacks clarity and as a result, they are not always sure what they have to do to improve further.

The curriculum is carefully tailored to meet the complex needs of some individual

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students. However, opportunities are missed to broaden vocational education. The school has a number of key strengths. In particular, students report that they feel safe in school. Behaviour is good and students enjoy coming to school, as reflected in their above average attendance.

Robust action taken by the headteacher and senior team to improve the quality of education, alongside accurate self-evaluation, improved attendance and behaviour provides evidence of the school's satisfactory capacity for improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise students' achievement in all subjects and particularly in English and mathematics, including for those students currently in Year 11 by:
 - ensuring that all teachers accurately use assessment data to set challenging targets
 - ensuring that students' targets underpin the teaching and learning in lessons
 - ensuring that all teachers set clear learning objectives for all groups of students and that these are reflected in lesson planning
 - ensuring teaching effectively engages students and provides more hands-on learning activities
 - ensuring all forms of feedback, including marking, clearly indicate to students what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve.

- Broaden the curriculum so that it meets the needs of all students by:
 - engaging students in stimulating and imaginative work
 - ensuring it provides opportunities for students to develop their interests, gain qualifications and enhance their personal development.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

Attainment on entry is above average. The school has recognised the inadequate progress made by students in the past, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. It has set appropriate and challenging targets for the current school year. The expectation is that every student will make at least satisfactory or accelerated progress. The school has recently introduced a reliable system for tracking students' progress that ensures timely interventions are made, helping to promote satisfactory progress. In English and mathematics lessons, the work closely matches the level of understanding and personal development needs of the students. Questioning in English and mathematics lessons carefully unpicks students' understanding, and feedback to students reflects how well they have understood the concepts being taught. This helps all groups of students to make at least satisfactory progress. In some lessons, boys dominate question and answer sessions. Where teachers are aware of this, they carefully ask a range of questions to both boys and girls. At times, opportunities are missed to encourage boys to give

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more detailed and complex answers to support thinking at a higher level. Recent improvements are beginning to have impact. Looked after children achieve in line with those in similar schools. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are taught in small groups and they receive good quality, well-tailored support. Interventions from teaching assistants are skilful and ensure that all students participate well, enabling them to make good progress.

The ethos of the school promotes students’ well-being and provides a good climate for learning. Relationships in lessons are good. In lessons where students are actively involved in their learning, especially in group and paired work, they enjoy their learning and participate well. Students’ behaviour both around the school site and in lessons is good. Little time is lost as students move into different groups or activities.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
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	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Most teaching is satisfactory and some is good or outstanding, no inadequate lessons were observed. During paired lesson observations, inspectors and senior school staff agreed on the standard of lessons seen in all cases. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are well organised. At times, teachers talk for too long and this slows learning. In good lessons, learning is more active and students make quick gains in their knowledge and understanding. In the most effective lessons, students are encouraged to manage their own time and take responsibility for their learning. Information relating to how well students are progressing in lessons is not used consistently well. Where teaching is satisfactory teachers concentrate on managing

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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activities and not sufficiently on what they want students to learn. Assessment information is not used effectively, and teachers do not intervene well to promote understanding. In a good Year 11 mathematics lesson, students were supported to take risks and to use peer- and self-assessment methods. Therefore, they tackled tasks with confidence and understood what they needed to do to improve their learning.

The curriculum is satisfactory, although insufficient attention is given to promoting learning and preparing students for the future through vocational courses. Pastoral systems are secure and staff consider the well-being of students. Care, guidance and support are good. However, opportunities are missed to ensure the consistent promotion of students’ academic progress.

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?

The new headteacher has acted with determination to improve students’ learning. His vision is shared by the senior leadership team and middle leaders. The school has carefully reflected on its practice. A group of staff volunteers, ‘the inspire to learn group’, has been formed to develop teaching and learning and to ensure that teachers focus on active learning strategies. Some staff are already using these ideas in their lessons and the impact is beginning to be seen in the improved engagement and learning of students. Middle managers are leading their departments with increasing confidence and have changed the focus in departmental meetings from solely one of passing on information to discussing learning. Middle managers are increasingly confident in monitoring their departments and staff are encouraged to look in on others’ lessons and share good practice. However, these positive developments are in their early stages. Data is being used satisfactorily to track and monitor students’ progress. Consequently, staff have a greater confidence with regard to target setting procedures.

The headteacher has begun to make improvements with regard to equal opportunities and tackling discrimination but it is too early for improvements to be fully evident in students’ progress. The governing body has begun to take a more strategic role in holding the school to account. It is now questioning school leaders and has a better understanding of the available data about students’ attainment and progress. The school is adopting recommended good practice across all areas of its work in relation to safeguarding. All staff training is of good quality and this ensures

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that safeguarding policies are understood and followed.

Good community links and an awareness of the need to provide students with a good understanding of modern Britain ensure that community cohesion is constantly being improved.

These are the grades for 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	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4
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	4

Sixth form

Students' progress in the sixth form is good. All subjects in the sixth form perform consistently well, resulting in attainment that is above average. In 2011, boys achieved their best ever results in examinations. Students have very positive attitudes to the sixth form and to their learning. Attendance is above average. Students make an impressive contribution to the main school and support younger students' learning very well. Students' contribution to the wider community is also outstanding. For example some students work on a voluntary basis in local residential homes. Students' focus on learning and their contribution to the school and the wider community have been carefully fostered by the leadership of the sixth form. The new head of the sixth form has a thorough understanding of the needs of the sixth form and has used this effectively to bring about improvements, so that it is now good in all aspects.

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
	2

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The quality of provision in the sixth form Leadership and management of the sixth form	2
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Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents and carers who returned the questionnaire are positive about their children’s enjoyment of school and almost all believe that the school keeps their children safe. Parents and carers expressed above-average levels of satisfaction in all areas: these responses are in the upper band of positive responses for secondary schools. Parents and carers who spoke to the inspection team commented favourably on the positive impact of the new headteacher and the changes in the school’s ethos. They said there is improved contact and better information about how their children are getting on. Parents and carers expressed a number of individual concerns about behaviour, bullying, being healthy and the amount of homework. Inspectors investigated all parental concerns. They were able to confirm that the school has acted upon any concerns raised by parents, carers or students and followed them up assiduously.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Highfields 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 398 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1367 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	137	34	232	58	18	5	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	165	41	220	55	7	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	133	33	220	55	22	6	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	118	30	231	58	17	4	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	101	25	242	61	13	3	2	1
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	83	21	228	57	57	14	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	67	17	253	64	51	13	2	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)	159	40	196	49	20	5	1	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	126	32	225	57	21	5	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	130	33	205	52	32	8	4	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	82	21	230	58	22	6	1	0
The school is led and managed effectively	112	28	235	59	12	3	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	159	40	219	55	11	3	4	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).

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.



23 September 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Highfields School, Derbyshire, DE4 5NA

Thank you for the warm and friendly welcome you gave to the inspection team. We appreciated the insights you gave the team into your school. We have given the school a notice to improve because during the last three years it has not ensured that all students achieve well enough.

In the lessons we observed, you were making satisfactory progress. You told us that you enjoy learning when it is more active and you would like more information about how well you are doing with your work and how you could improve it. We agree with you that your new headteacher is working hard, together with the staff, to make your school the very best it can be. We were pleased to see the improvements to the sixth form, so that it is now good. We have asked your school to:

- raise the achievement of all students, especially in English and mathematics and those in the current Year 11 by:
 - ensuring all teachers understand and use data to set challenging targets which underpin teaching and learning in lessons
 - ensuring all teachers know what they want students to learn and plan their teaching to support this
- improve learning and progress in lessons through teachers' use of effective assessment information to give you good quality feedback that enables you to confidently take the next steps in your learning
- broaden the curriculum to ensure it is stimulating and imaginative and meets your needs through engaging your interest and allows you all to gain qualifications and enhance your personal development.

We are impressed with the contribution that the sixth-form students make to everyone's learning and encourage you all to follow their good example. We wish you all well in your studies and the next stage of your lives.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Parker
Her Majesty's Inspector

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