

Humphry Davy School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112067
Local Authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	378416
Inspection dates	9–10 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Andrew Redpath HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	685
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Katherine Uren
Headteacher	William Marshall
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 23 lessons taught by 23 teachers, made brief visits to several additional lessons to follow up particular aspects of students' learning, and held meetings or telephone conversations with members of the governing body, the School Improvement Partner, parents, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of evidence including data on students' progress, students' work, teachers' planning, curriculum documents, school improvement plans and minutes of meetings. They also attended two assemblies and an after-school mathematics session for students and their parents. The responses, in questionnaires, of 428 parents and carers, 97 students and 31 staff were also analysed.

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

- The progress of students who enter the school with lower than the typically expected levels of literacy.
- The contribution to students' learning made by the school's specialism for music and mathematics.
- The strength of leadership across the school to ensure consistent improvement.

Information about the school

Humphry Davy School is of smaller than average size. Almost all students are of White British heritage and speak English as their home language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average. A higher-than-average proportion of students have special educational needs and/or disabilities, mainly associated with the acquisition of numeracy and literacy skills, although a few have more complex communication difficulties. The school was granted specialist status for music and mathematics in 2005.

The school gained an award from the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust for being the most improved specialist music college nationally in 2011. It also holds the International School and Healthy School awards.

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

Humphry Davy School is a good school. Outstanding links with the local community and with parents and carers underpin its success in promoting students' engagement with learning. The school uses its specialist status extremely well to provide a broad curriculum, including both academic and vocational courses, which is tailored effectively to meet students' individual needs. The outstanding quality of care, guidance and support, based on a system of individual student mentoring, has underpinned many improvements and raised attendance levels to well above the national average. In the words of one parent, 'Children are treated as individuals and are nurtured by an interested and supportive teaching staff.' Students enjoy coming to school and make an outstanding contribution to their school and to the local community. Their knowledge of local Cornish culture and of some international cultures is very good, although their knowledge and understanding of the different cultural and religious traditions in the wider United Kingdom are less developed.

Following a period when students' attainment was low in key areas, there has been significant improvement since the last inspection. Good teaching and the improved curriculum ensure students' progress and their learning in lessons are good. Attainment is now broadly average and there is an established trend of improvement. The school is particularly successful in ensuring all leavers move on to a suitable destination.

Strategies have been introduced to raise the attainment of the significant number of students who enter the school with lower than the typically expected levels of literacy. These students have been targeted for additional support both individually and in small groups. It is too soon to judge the full impact of these initiatives, although early evidence confirms students are making satisfactory progress. Initiatives have also been introduced to develop students' literacy skills across the curriculum. Some curriculum planning contains insufficient detail, particularly in relation to developing students' writing. Good arrangements for assessing students' progress and marking their work are evident in several lessons. However, there is inconsistency between subjects in the use of marking and assessment information to help students understand how to improve their learning.

At the heart of the school's improvement is the drive and dedication of the headteacher and the support he receives from senior leaders. The school has a positive ethos in which staff and students show respect towards each other. One

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parent commented, 'The headteacher is available and highly visible and an excellent example to the students.' While leadership is good overall and senior leaders have a very accurate picture of teaching and learning across the school, a few middle leaders have assumed their responsibilities recently and are not yet monitoring teaching and learning in sufficient depth to ensure new initiatives are implemented consistently. The school has good arrangements for reviewing and evaluating its performance. Significant improvements since the last inspection, especially in students' progress, the curriculum and the quality of care, guidance and support, demonstrate that the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring there is greater consistency in the use of marking and assessment information to give students a better understanding of the next steps in their learning
 - monitoring lessons more closely to ensure new initiatives are implemented consistently and that they are accelerating students' progress in all subjects.
- Plan more detailed activities for students with low levels of literacy to develop their literacy skills in subjects across the curriculum.
- Extend opportunities for students to develop their knowledge and understanding of the different cultural and religious traditions in the United Kingdom.

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

The achievement and enjoyment of learning of almost all groups of students are good. High expectations and a focus on matching activities closely to students' individual needs ensure that learning and progress in lessons are good. Examples were observed during the inspection where students were absorbed in their work and learning moved at a brisk pace. In a mathematics lesson, students used their prior knowledge to develop their own proofs, and in a French lesson, probing questioning ensured that a close check was kept on students' understanding as they extended their use of vocabulary. Occasionally the pace of learning slows when activities do not build effectively on students' existing knowledge and skills.

Results in examinations have improved steadily each year and the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is now in line with the national average. Students enjoy the new vocational courses which are provided in collaboration with the local college. As one commented, 'I like my course because I learn best by doing things.' The range of courses and opportunities to use information and communication technology enable students of all capabilities and interests to have a good preparation for their future economic well-being.

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The school has worked successfully to raise the attainment of boys and bring it close to that of girls and to ensure the most capable students gain the highest grade GCSE passes. It has also improved the attainment of other groups of students who are vulnerable and at risk of disengaging from learning. The attainment of some students is limited by their weak literacy skills and this is a current focus for improvement. However, students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress overall. The quality of their learning is enhanced by the mentoring support they receive and the opportunities for learning through practical activities.

Students behave well and they are enthusiastic ambassadors for their school. They make an excellent contribution to the school and to the wider community, for example through the school council and the prefect system and by involvement in local performances and projects to redesign the dining hall or school memorial garden. Students have a good understanding of how to lead a safe and healthy lifestyle, which is reinforced by the high participation in sporting activities. However, pupils and parents recognise that school dinners do not always promote sufficiently the choice of healthy food.

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	3
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
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Classroom routines are well established and students settle quickly to their work. Teachers establish a purposeful and tolerant climate for learning which enables students to offer their ideas with confidence and to challenge sensitively the views of

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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their peers. Teachers’ good subject knowledge is used effectively to plan a variety of activities which capture students’ interests. In the best lessons, teaching assistants also use their skills fully, for example when leading singing during a music lesson. Occasionally, questioning is quite brisk and does not draw out extended answers from students. While most students are aware of the level at which they are working and of their target grades, they are not always clear about what is needed to improve their work. This is due to inconsistencies in the use of assessment information and the variable quality of marking within and across subjects. Students with more complex communication and learning difficulties benefit from thorough assessment, although occasionally this information is not shared effectively with all teachers across the school.

The impact of the school’s specialist status in music and mathematics is evident in the high quality outreach work with local primary schools and the strong partnerships with the local community and beyond. The school is recognised as a centre of regional excellence for music, and provision includes choirs, ensembles, music scholarships and joint productions with other schools, both in the local area and further afield in London and Northampton. The higher profile given to mathematics has had a marked impact on raising attainment and in meeting challenging targets. The curriculum is enriched by the wide range of popular after-school clubs and sporting activities.

Students report that they feel safe and if they raise any concerns, staff deal with them effectively. Transition arrangements for when students join or leave the school are excellent. Year 7 students value the residential trip at the beginning of the year which helps them to settle in and to make new friends quickly. The very strong links with, for example, local colleges and the careers service ensure students receive high quality advice in selecting optional courses and in making suitable career choices. Extremely robust procedures for tracking students’ attendance, coupled with swift action to tackle any absence, have had a major impact on raising the level of attendance to well above the national average.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior leaders are highly successful in involving parents, carers and staff in the school’s vision and in the drive for improvement. They have a good

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understanding of the school’s strengths and areas for development based on the regular review of each subject and on the thorough analysis of data to track students’ progress and the attainment of different groups. Good examples exist where decisive action has been taken to tackle weaker areas, for example to raise previously low attainment in science or to reduce the number of exclusions. Staff at all levels share a strong commitment to raising standards, although a few middle leaders are recent appointments and are developing their roles. Students from different backgrounds, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are represented in taking on responsibilities and this is an indication of the school’s success in promoting equality of opportunity. The school has satisfactory plans to promote community cohesion. Excellent links have been established with the local community and internationally with, for example, schools in France and Nigeria. Links with groups representing the diverse cultural and religious traditions in the wider United Kingdom are less developed. Procedures for safeguarding are thorough and meet all the requirements. Any concerns about individual students are followed up quickly and effectively. The governing body gives a good level of support and challenge to the school and ensures resources are deployed efficiently.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
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	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

A much-higher-than-average proportion of parents and carers returned questionnaires during the inspection. Parents and carers hold overwhelmingly positive views about the school’s work. They are particularly pleased with how well the school keeps children safe and the good quality of teaching. Several parents and carers made positive comments about the quality of leadership provided by the headteacher and the commitment of staff generally to the welfare of their children. A

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small number raised concerns about students' behaviour and about the lack of healthy food options provided by school dinners. Inspectors found that students' behaviour was good, both in lessons and around the school, but agree that more needs to be done to provide healthy food. The school recognises this is an issue and is currently reviewing the menu with the provider.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Humphry Davy 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 428 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 685 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	147	34	249	58	27	6	4	1
The school keeps my child safe	162	38	250	58	10	2	4	1
The school informs me about my child’s progress	212	50	189	44	19	4	5	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	147	34	244	57	24	6	4	1
The teaching is good at this school	124	29	278	65	18	4	1	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	110	26	258	60	41	10	6	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	69	16	275	64	68	16	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)	116	27	270	63	17	4	3	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	113	26	265	62	35	8	6	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	119	28	234	55	49	11	9	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	103	24	260	61	31	7	11	3
The school is led and managed effectively	175	41	224	52	11	3	4	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	178	42	225	53	19	4	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).

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.



11 November 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Humphry Davy School, Penzance TR18 2TG

As you know, your school was inspected recently and I am writing to let you know what the inspection team thought about the quality of education you receive. Thanks to those of you who took time to talk to us about your work and life at school. We also talked to your teachers and other adults connected with the school, visited lessons, looked at your work and took account of the views of your parents and carers to find out how the school is doing. The full report is available from the school or on the Ofsted web site. Here are the main points:

- Your school provides a good education and, due to the strong leadership and hard work of staff, it is continuing to improve.
- You make good progress with your learning and benefit from a good range of courses which prepare you well for future education, employment or training.
- Following a drop in examination results, good teaching has raised your performance and brought results in line with the national average.
- The school uses its specialist status for music and mathematics extremely well to extend the curriculum.
- Your behaviour is good and you make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community.
- The school has established outstanding links with your parents and carers and with community partners to help you learn.
- The outstanding quality of care, guidance and support has helped to raise your attendance to a much higher level than the average for schools nationally.

I have asked the school to do a few things to help it improve.

- Give more detailed help to those of you who struggle with reading and writing.
- Make better use of marking and assessment information to help you improve your work.
- Check more closely that some of the changes brought in to improve your learning are working.
- Provide more opportunities for you to learn about different cultural and religious traditions in the United Kingdom.

You can help by taking pride in your work and discussing how you might improve it with your teachers. Thank you once again for your help with the inspection.

Yours sincerely
Andrew Redpath
Her Majesty's Inspector

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