

Minster School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122898
Local Authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	380555
Inspection dates	23–24 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Kevin Sheldrick HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	7–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1601
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	348
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nigel Turner
Executive Headteacher	Canon Phil Blinston
Head of School	Barbara White
Date of previous school inspection	31 January 2007
School address	Nottingham Road Southwell NG25 0LG
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Age group	7–18
Inspection date(s)	23–24 November 2011
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 50 lessons taught by 47 different teachers, and held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation relating to planning, monitoring, safeguarding and communications with parents and carers. They analysed questionnaires returned from 150 parents and carers, from staff and students.

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

- Does the school have a realistic view of the progress made by all students?
- How effectively is the school's provision adjusted to meet the needs of all groups of students, particularly in the junior department and for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and for those with special needs and/or disabilities?
- What is the quality of students' cultural development?
- What has been the impact of the school's involvement in partnerships, and what does this indicate about the school's capacity for sustained improvement?

Information about the school

This is an above-average-sized secondary school that takes students from a wide geographical area. There is a very small junior section that consists of Southwell Minister choristers and students selected because of their musical talent. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is also well below average. In addition, the proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average. The school has a well established specialism in the humanities and music. The school has been based in a new building on a single site since 2007.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This school is highly effective so that the outcomes in all areas are outstanding. All aspects of provision were judged to be of the very highest quality and as a result students make outstanding progress. The school has done exceptionally well in ensuring high levels of consistency across all subjects and for all groups of students. This highly impressive picture applies equally to the sixth form.

The school's unrelenting focus on improving teaching and learning has paid off. Teachers use their subject knowledge exceptionally well to inspire students. Teachers are expert in their use of assessment so students are always challenged and supported effectively in lessons. Students develop very well all the attributes associated with effective learning. For instance, they show the ability to work independently of the teacher and to collaborate in highly productive ways with students of different abilities. Students develop a clear set of values that include a strong sense of right and wrong. As a result they are highly appreciative of cultural diversity and their behaviour is impeccable at all times. The priority given to meeting the needs of every student is exemplified by the provision for students with special needs and/or disabilities. The school is meticulous in the attention it gives to meeting the needs of these students and as a result they make progress at the same rate as their peers. Very high quality care and a well designed campus combine to ensure students and their parents and carers have very positive views about being safe. The school goes to great lengths to ensure all students can positively contribute and as a result all students spoke of how well the school takes account of their ideas. The curriculum and the specialism make a major contribution to the very positive outcomes. For instance, the geography specialism has contributed to community cohesion, particularly at a local level and through a focus on environmental issues.

The success of the school is a direct result of highly effective leadership at all levels. Senior leaders are highly principled and have shown excellent judgement in determining exactly the right priorities. Governors, through the whole-hearted backing they have given to the development of partnerships, have been instrumental in enabling the school to develop an outstanding capacity for sustained improvement. Leaders at all levels have gained important experience and increased confidence as a result of the support provided to other schools. Leaders have successfully identified effective practice and have ensured this becomes consistent whole-school practice. Leaders have an astute awareness of the relative weaknesses that exist, for instance, the lower rate of progress pupils make in the junior department and the minor inconsistencies in the marking of students' work.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the progress students make in the junior department through further establishing approaches to teaching that are better adapted to meet the needs of different ability pupils in this phase.
- Ensure all marking identifies strengths and provides guidance on how students can improve their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Students enter the school with levels of attainment that are above average. They make outstanding progress overall because all groups of students make at least good progress in all subjects. The school's examination results are consistently well above average in all subjects. Attainment is consistently high, including in the junior department. All the subjects associated with the school's specialism achieve very positive outcomes. Those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals are making accelerated progress so their attainment is becoming closer to the school average. Students with special needs and/or disabilities do especially well because the school very accurately identifies their needs. Support from teaching assistants allows them to participate exceptionally well in all aspects of school life, including benefitting from the excellent teaching in the school.

Students' behaviour is outstanding and this positively contributes to their learning, primarily because there are no distractions in lessons. Students' very positive attitudes bring other benefits. Students are proud of their new school building and treat it with great respect. For instance, there are no maintenance issues associated with all students having unsupervised access to the multifunction printers dotted around corridors in the school. All students use the school's learning platform. This ready availability of appropriate technologies combined with the effective teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) skills contributes to the development of independent learning.

In lessons students were observed to concentrate very well, in part because teachers regularly adopt effective strategies to ensure all students have to think about the key ideas. One student captured the views of many in stating, 'Our teachers make sure we always have to be alert in lessons because you never know when you might be asked a question.' Students show high levels of perseverance when undertaking problem-solving exercises. They have very high expectations of themselves so they are quite self-critical when they perceive they have fallen short. For instance, despite the fact that the large majority make healthy choices some older students think they could do more in this regard.

Students possess excellent communication and high-level personal skills. High attendance and excellent punctuality are further confirmation that they are very well prepared for the next phase of their education and later life. Students, through the

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extensive work they have undertaken locally, have improved the communities’ perceptions of young people. Many students contribute through representing their school and/or house in many types of competition. Frequent musical events contribute to a sense of belonging to the school community. There are major strengths in students’ cultural development because this is addressed very well through the school’s curriculum and increasingly through the opportunities that are available for interactions with those from different backgrounds.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils’ behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers use their excellent subject knowledge to inspire students. For instance, Year 11 students of all abilities engaged well with their studies of Shakespeare’s ‘Richard the Third’ because of the highly effective way in which the teacher made the play accessible through the links made to the world of a modern teenager. Students with special educational needs and/or learning difficulties had the confidence to contribute, in part because of the support they had from the teaching assistant. Lessons are very well managed so students concentrate well on their learning. Students enthused about the mathematics lessons because they regularly are able to make choices that allow them to concentrate on those questions they found challenging. Excellent practice was seen in a Year 8 mathematics lesson on sequencing where the teacher constantly fine-tuned questions to ensure individuals experienced exactly the right level of challenge. Frequently, students are required to evaluate each other’s responses. In the vast majority of lessons students

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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experienced a wide range of activities that kept them engaged. Teachers often insist that students take responsibility for their own learning. For example, in an outstanding Extended Project lesson in Year 12 students were observed to be completely engrossed in planning the sophisticated research they were going to undertake on a chosen topic. Inspectors observed many highly effective lessons where there was clear evidence of students enjoying their learning, including the experiencing of 'awe and wonder'.

Many students have considerable assessment expertise as a result of the frequent opportunities they have to self- and peer-assess. This was observed to be particularly effective in a French lesson where students gained precise insights into how they could attain their target grade. Major strengths in the use of assessment have ensured that students know their targets and very often what they need to do to achieve them. However, inspectors agreed with students who indicated that there is some variability in the quality of marking both within and between subjects. The teaching observed in the junior department was not quite as effective because lessons are not consistently as well adapted to meet the needs of different ability pupils in this phase.

The school has sensibly been very considered in the developments made to the curriculum, thereby ensuring all students are on courses with clear pathways through to age 18 and beyond. Particular care is taken to ensure students with special educational needs and/or disabilities know the next steps when they leave school. Year 9 students appreciate the element of choice that has been relatively recently developed. Exceptionally large numbers of students undertake qualifications, including modern foreign languages, increasing the likelihood that they may gain access to Russell Group universities. The large majority of students undertake extra-curricular-activities. The participation of students known to be eligible for free school meals is high because these students have been specifically targeted. Students enjoy the many days they experience when the normal timetable is suspended so they can undertake activities related to the school's specialisms. Students mentioned the insights they gained into different cultures through the 'Carnival' event that took place in the summer. The school promotes ICT very well and its plans to further improve the way communication skills are taught through all subjects are well judged. Students in the junior department benefit from the easy access to specialist facilities and teaching.

The school's very caring ethos and the excellent relationships between students and staff contribute significantly to the effectiveness of the care, guidance and support provided. Students spoke of how their mixed aged tutor groups provide opportunities for older students to support those that are younger. The design of the building symbolises the school's desire to create a caring community. For instance, the huge central atrium has become a relaxed meeting place at all times of the year. Inspectors found many examples of the effective support the school provides, particularly for those students whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. High attendance, very low exclusions and the outstanding progress made by students with special educational needs and/or disabilities confirm the

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effectiveness of this aspect of provision.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The school's involvement in supporting another school for several years has benefited this school. Middle and senior leaders have had to step up to cover the work being undertaken by the leaders working in the partner school. The net result has been a more experienced and knowledgeable leadership that has been able effectively to embed the improvements that were becoming evident at the last inspection. The school has focused unrelentingly on improving teaching and learning. Crucial to the school's success in making teaching and the use of assessment outstanding has been the eclectic approach taken to monitoring and evaluation. Students' views, learning walks, the analysis of assessments together with regular observation of lessons have resulted in the school gaining an accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning. The professional development in response to this has been of a very high quality and has led to the successful establishment of consistent, effective practice across the school. Links with other schools and the involvement of staff in post-graduate study have deepened the impact of these initiatives. The school's planning for improvement is succinct and subject to regular review in order to ensure all initiatives have the maximum impact. Middle leaders are effective because they have a track record of success and an excellent awareness of what is needed to ensure further improvement.

Governance is highly effective. The governing body has perceptive insights into the strengths and weaknesses in the school. Governors have played a crucial role in increasing the school's capacity for improvement through the creation of an enlarged leadership team. The school's record in eliminating any gaps in the outcomes for different groups several years ago is absolute proof of a passionate commitment to ensuring equal opportunities and tackling any discrimination. The school is very commendably avoiding any hint of complacency by constantly checking the full range of outcomes to ensure it continues to be at the forefront of best practice in this area. The school meets all the government requirements relating to safeguarding and has created a community in which all members feel exceptionally safe. Inspectors identified several aspects of effective safeguarding practice worthy of sharing with other schools. This included the design of the school campus which had as a priority the need to ensure the whole school community felt safe. In addition the school has taken effective steps to ensure there are absolutely no safeguarding issues related to

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the presence of a very large number of sixth formers who do not wear school uniform. All were observed to be wearing photographic identification cards. The school promotes community cohesion very well at a school, local and global level. Effective plans are being implemented to promote cohesion at a national level through the development of links with schools that are ethnically different.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
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	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

Outcomes in this phase are outstanding. In every year since the last inspection students have consistently progressed at a faster pace than has been the case for students nationally. Students were also observed to be making outstanding progress in lessons. Attendance and retention are very high. Punctuality is excellent. The majority of students make an exceptional, positive contribution. For instance, all support younger students through their roles as associate tutors. Students demonstrate that they are already confident learners capable of working with a high degree of independence. A high proportion of students gain access to Russell Group universities, including Oxford and Cambridge.

The sixth form lessons seen were largely outstanding and had the same strengths as those seen in the main school. In all the lessons seen all students were made aware of what they need to do in order to achieve their targets. Students, including the very small minority not wishing to go into higher education, praised the quality of advice and guidance they received. Although the curriculum is largely academic, a few vocational options have been established since the last inspection. The majority of students in Year 12 take an Extended Project course specifically designed to develop the skills needed to undertake graduate level work. The progress students are making towards achieving their challenging targets is regularly reviewed.

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As is the case in the main school, excellent proof was found of highly effective strategies that ensure the best practice becomes consistent across this phase. Resources are very well managed. Self-evaluation is sharp so that at the first sign of any issues arising appropriate action is taken to remedy the situation

These are the grades for the sixth form

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

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of parents and carers returning a questionnaire was below the national average. However the response of parents and carers in the questionnaires was positive. Although many parents and carers did not make any comments on the questionnaires, those that did made a wide range of comments. These were very varied so no overall patterns were identifiable. The very large majority of those who responded to the questionnaire agreed with all the statements. A very small minority did not feel that the school helps them support their child’s learning, or helps their child to have a healthy lifestyle. Inspectors took these views into account but decided that strengths in these areas outweighed these criticisms made by a few parents. A very small minority of parents also made their views known through ‘Parent View’ on Ofsted’s website. These views were broadly in line with those expressed through the paper questionnaires.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Minster 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 150 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1601 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	85	57	60	40	0	0	3	2
The school keeps my child safe	100	67	47	31	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	80	53	63	42	3	2	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	75	50	53	35	14	9	3	2
The teaching is good at this school	78	52	56	37	5	3	2	1
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	69	46	52	35	18	12	4	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	59	39	67	45	17	11	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)	56	37	69	46	6	4	4	3
The school meets my child’s particular needs	66	44	67	45	9	6	4	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	48	32	70	47	15	10	6	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	56	37	62	41	10	7	5	3
The school is led and managed effectively	72	48	51	34	14	9	3	2
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	87	58	52	35	8	5	1	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.



25 November 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Minster School, Southwell, NG25 0LG

I would like to thank you for welcoming us so warmly when we inspected your school recently. I would like to thank those of you who met with us, for their highly perceptive and interesting comments that helped us in reaching conclusions about your school.

The inspection was a delight because almost every aspect of your school is outstanding. We reached this conclusion because the outcomes for students are so strong across the board. The school has done particularly well in ensuring that all groups of students in all subjects make at least good progress. For this reason you make outstanding progress to attain results that are consistently well above the national averages. As you are well aware there is far more to your school than academic excellence. Your behaviour is excellent and this appears to be the case even when inspectors are not in school! We were impressed with the very positive attitudes you have to learning and the high levels of concentration we observed in lessons. You also have a very positive set of values and you are well prepared for the next stage of your education.

In lessons we were very impressed with how your teachers use their subject knowledge very well to inspire you. Almost all your teachers use questions really well to make you think about your learning. The courses you undertake prepare you well particularly in the case of students applying to Russell Group universities. You have really good opportunities to contribute positively, particularly through your all-age tutor groups. For once we are making very few suggestions of things your school can do to improve further. The leaders of your school have proved that they are highly capable of identifying exactly what is needed to improve further. We have suggested that improvements need making to ensure the progress made by junior age pupils matches that made elsewhere in the school. We agreed with those students who told us that marking is rather mixed so we are suggesting that school takes steps to ensure you receive more consistent feedback on your work, including how you can improve. You can all obviously help by making sure you respond to these suggestions.

I wish you all the best for the future, and good luck.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Sheldrick
Her Majesty's Inspector

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