

Dereham Neatherd High School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	121182
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	380181
Inspection dates	29–30 May 2012
Lead inspector	Ian Seath 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	1255
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	213
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gill Spillman
Headteacher	Peter Devonish
Date of previous school inspection	20 September 2006
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

Inspection team

Ian Seath	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ed Powell	Additional Inspector
Anne White	Additional Inspector
Aune Turkson-Jones	Additional Inspector
Alan Jarvis	Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors visited 48 classes and observed 43 teachers. Meetings were held with managers and leaders, representatives of the governing body and local authority, and students. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at much of the school's documentation and students' work. Inspectors visited the nearby sixth form centre and ensured that the lessons observed included a sample from the sixth form. Inspectors paid particular attention to behaviour in class and around the school. Separate visits were made to the majority of classes in order to specifically evaluate whether lessons were disrupted by poor behaviour. Inspectors took account of the 398 questionnaires received from parents and carers, as well as those completed by students and staff.

Information about the school

The school is larger than average. Most students are White British, and the proportion of minority ethnic heritage is low. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The proportion of students supported by school action plus or with special educational needs is just below the national average. The school exceeds the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

The school's sixth form is amalgamated with the sixth form of another school and they are taught together at a nearby sixth form centre. The centre is staffed by teachers from both schools, as well as some staff who are employed directly at the centre. In addition, the school incorporates a recently opened Special Resource Base for up to 20 students with autism. Students are referred to this from across the county. These students are integrated into the mainstream school as appropriate or may spend most of their time in the centre. The school has a modern foreign languages specialism.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. The school is not yet outstanding because teaching and learning are not consistently outstanding.
- Students demonstrate good achievement. Students make good progress in the core subjects of mathematics and English and attain standards that are above the national average. Differences in the achievement of boys and girls are small. In the main school and in the specialist resource base for autism, disabled students and those with special educational needs demonstrate progress that is in line with their peers and sometimes better because they receive support that is well-matched to their needs.
- Teaching is solidly good, with some that is outstanding. Students acquire good skills of independent learning in classes where these skills are encouraged, for example in the sixth form. However, in the lower school these skills are not consistently well developed. A minority of lessons are not planned to ensure that all students learn as well as they could.
- Behaviour and safety are good. A higher-than-usual proportion of parents and carers expressed concerns about disruption of learning due to poor behaviour. Inspectors investigated this thoroughly. These concerns were not confirmed. Bullying is rare and is dealt with promptly and effectively. Students and parents overwhelmingly agreed with inspectors' judgements that the school is safe and welcoming.
- Leadership and management are good. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well. It is effective at driving improvement because the governing body and managers at all levels are intolerant of poor performance and tackle it promptly. Improvement plans are based on accurate self-evaluation and accurate monitoring of the school's performance. The monitoring of teaching is well-developed and accurate, though lesson observations do not always focus on evaluating students' learning.

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- The sixth form provides a good quality of education. The standards reached by students are above average and the progress they make is good, particularly in their AS examinations. The sixth form centre prepares students well for the next stage in their education and the very large majority progress to higher education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By January 2014, move teaching and learning to outstanding by:
 - devising and implementing a strategy to ensure that all students develop skills of independent learning and enquiry
 - ensuring that the learning in lessons is planned and implemented so that all students make the best possible progress, including those who are finding the work difficult
 - ensuring that lesson observations accurately and systematically monitor learning and progress in lessons.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students join the school with attainment that is broadly in line with the national averages. They leave having attained standards that have been consistently above average since the last inspection, and this represents good progress. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is above the national average and showing an improving trend. Performance in English and mathematics has been consistently strong for a number of years. Some recent variations in the success of a few other subjects, notably French and core science, have been tackled robustly and successfully. The school's most recent tracking data indicate that students are expected to do well in these subjects this year, as they have in the past. Achievement in the sixth form is good, and a little better for AS qualifications. In all areas of the school, gaps between the attainment and progress of boys and girls are not significant. The very large majority of parents and carers felt that students make good progress; a view reflected in students' questionnaires.

In lessons, students learn well and are keen to practise the skills of independent and group learning when given the opportunity. This results in good learning. However, such opportunities are not given often enough and, as a result, these skills are not as well developed as they could be, though they develop well in the sixth form. Disabled students and those with special educational needs make good progress, in line with their peers, because they are well supported by a team of skilled specialist staff who know them well as individuals. Inspectors observed interventions to support learning carefully matched to pupils' needs so that they learnt effectively.

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Although it has not been operational for long, students attending the specialist resource base for autism demonstrate good progress in their development and successful integration into mainstream classes.

Good literacy skills, including reading, are developed systematically through a carefully coordinated programme of support. By the end of Year 11, most students have developed good literacy skills, and this is reflected in the above-average GCSE results in English.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is good, with some that is outstanding. In the best lessons, teachers plan effectively so that students have a clear understanding of their objectives. Questioning by teachers is searching and used effectively to check learning, actively challenging those who are reluctant to contribute. In these lessons, skills of independent learning are often well developed and so students are interested and work productively to learn well. Planning takes good account of students' levels of attainment so that those who are finding a topic or subject difficult receive different teaching to those who are able to work more independently. Consequently, all students make good progress.

The school monitors students' progress systematically. This monitoring is accurate, and shows that progress accelerates as students move from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4. Inspectors noted that this is associated with a higher proportion of outstanding teaching observed in Years 10 and 11. Inspectors noted generally good and comprehensive marking of written work.

Literacy is frequently taught well in subjects other than English because most teachers are aware of the constraints that poor literacy places on the ability of students to access learning. Additional support is based on clear diagnosis of obstacles to progress, and includes systematic phonics teaching using Key Stage 3 reading leaders. Reading is given a high profile for pupils of all abilities. Inspectors observed teaching assistants working very effectively to support literacy. The teaching of numeracy within subjects other than mathematics is also developing well.

In the less successful lessons observed, planning for students who are finding the work difficult is not well developed. Consequently, these students receive the same teaching as all others and make less progress. In these classes, opportunities for independent learning are not well developed and some students get bored and restless. In a small minority of lessons, this distracts others. In a very small number of lessons, inspectors observed teaching of subject material that was insufficiently demanding. Having said this, the very large majority of parents, carers and students agreed with the questionnaire statement that teaching is good. Teaching is the sixth form is consistently good.

Teachers plan effectively to raise students' awareness of other cultures and of individual differences. Students respond well to this and to opportunities to work

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collaboratively, including constructive peer-assessment and personal reflection on learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The behaviour and safety of students is good. A small minority of parents and carers expressed concerns about disruption of lessons due to poor behaviour. In a small number of lessons, inspectors observed students becoming restless when teaching was less effective and this disrupted others. However, this was not widespread and certainly not present in the large majority of lessons, when students were taught well and given the opportunity to develop skills of independent learning and to take responsibility for their own learning. In response to this apparent parental concern, inspectors visited most classes specifically to judge behaviour, and again it was judged good. Students behave well around the school and in lessons they are almost always enthusiastic, attentive, and eager to learn. This makes a strong contribution to students' good learning and progress. Students' comments agreed with the findings of inspectors. Almost all felt safe at the school, and parents agreed. In the sixth form, students take excellent responsibility for their own learning. They apply themselves to their studies with a mature and conscientious approach.

The school has worked hard to develop strong systems to monitor attendance and persistent absence, and to give support in these important areas to those who need it. As a consequence, attendance and persistent absence are better than average with an improving trend. Punctuality at lessons is very good. Exclusion rates are low. Internet safety is good, and students have a good understanding of safety issues. There have been very few reported instances of bullying and no clear trend or pattern is evident. These rare instances of bullying are dealt with promptly. Students report that they are clear about the limits of acceptable behaviour and the consequences if they are exceeded. However, students and a few parents and carers commented that these are not followed consistently by a few teachers.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management of the school and its sixth form centre are good. Managers at all levels give a good strategic direction to the school under the purposeful and enthusiastic guidance of the headteacher and governing body. The school has successfully maintained above-average standards since the last inspection. Where variations in provision have occurred, leaders have evaluated the causes and acted promptly, for example in core science and French. As a result, the quality of provision has remained good. The headteacher, managers and governing body have the confidence of staff, students and the large majority of parents and carers. Many parents commented to the effect that this is a welcoming and happy school, and inspectors agreed.

The school's self-assessments, at all levels, are thorough and accurate. The school is aware of its own strengths and areas for development. Accurate and challenging improvement plans are translated into actions at curriculum and subject level by very

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effective middle managers. As a result, staff understand their roles in school improvement. Progress towards challenging targets is monitored well. Performance management is good, with appropriate and challenging individual targets. Teachers are held to account well for the performance of their students. Student tracking and performance data are both accurate and used well throughout the school.

The management of teaching and learning is good. Professional development is extensive and new staff are supported well. Good practice is clearly identified and shared. Leaders' lesson observations are accurate and drive improvement. However, they sometimes focus on the features of teaching rather than on how well students are making progress in their learning. The school recognises the next steps to improve teaching and learning further by planning for and monitoring the development of students' skills of independent learning. These skills are well developed in the sixth form.

The school ensures equality of opportunity and that there is no discrimination. Differences in achievement between groups are small because the quality of provision is good for all. The curriculum is broad and balanced and is especially good for those who need additional support or specialist intervention, for example through the specialist resource base for autism. The curriculum supports students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, for example by providing extensive opportunities to develop confidence and self-reliance, and through a well-developed assembly and tutorial programme. Students are able to undertake various leadership roles, for example sports leadership, and by becoming prefects. Extra-curricular activities such as sports and cultural visits are plentiful and enjoyed by many. The school's language specialism has introduced a further international dimension to students' experiences.

The governing body ensures that safeguarding arrangements meet regulatory requirements. It provides good support and appropriate challenge. Its members bring a wide range of relevant skills to their role, and much experience. They conduct structured visits and link with individual subjects areas. School performance is effectively monitored. The provision of performance data at all levels is very good.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.

31 May 2012

Dear Students



Inspection of Dereham Neatherd High School, Dereham, NR20 3AX

As you will be aware, I visited your school earlier this week together with four other inspectors. We sat in on many of your lessons, met with many of your teachers, looked at much of your work and talked with many of you. Throughout this, you were welcoming and polite and I would like to thank you for that.

You told us many things, for example that you enjoy your school and feel safe, that bullying is rare, and many of you shared your aspirations to progress to the successful sixth form centre and take advantage of the good preparation that it gives for the next stage in your education. Your school is a good one. It is well run, and you make good progress to attain above-average standards. We were pleased to see that your behaviour is good, and your positive attitudes to learning contribute to your good progress.

The school agrees with us about how it can improve further. These improvements are all around teaching and learning. Although we judged that this is good overall, some of you told us that you find some lessons more interesting than others, and this is also what we saw.

We have asked that the school looks at ways to enable and encourage independent learning in lessons. We found that the best teachers used this, and that it made lessons more interesting for you.

The school will also be planning lessons more carefully to make sure that when you are finding a topic or subject difficult the teaching is changed to help you learn better. Part of this will involve the school changing the way that it measures its own teaching so that it also looks at your learning.

You have a part to play in this. If you are not clear about something, you should say so and ask for help. Remember, that it is your education and you are entitled to it.

I wish you all well, and thank you once again.

Yours sincerely

Ian Seath
Her Majesty's Inspector

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