

The Netherhall School and Sixth Form Centre

Queen Edith's Way, Cambridge, CB1 8NN

Inspection dates

8–9 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Some groups of students are not making good progress. Activities in lessons are sometimes too easy for more able students or too hard for less able students.
- Teaching requires improvement. Teachers do not always check to make sure all students are learning.
- The pace of learning drops when teachers spend too long talking to the whole class. When taught in large groups some students do not join in enough.
- Students are not all clear on how to improve their work.
- There are a few incidents of poor behaviour outside lessons. Some younger students are concerned about older students being unkind to them.
- Leadership and management require improvement because actions are not having a quick enough impact. Plans do not show the clear steps needed for rapid improvement.
- Leaders and managers do not have effective enough systems to check on the progress of students and identify problems early. This means it takes longer to do something about any slowing of progress.
- Extra money given to the school is not specifically targeted at the students it is intended for, and the school does not check to see if the support provided has made enough difference.
- The sixth form requires improvement, as teaching and achievement are not yet good.

The school has the following strengths

- Students from minority ethnic groups are achieving well.
- Behaviour in lessons is usually good. Sixth form students get on well with each other.
- Leaders and managers have identified the right things to improve. They have had success in improving some subjects.
- The school has changed some sixth form courses to help students do better.
- Strengths in sports, music and art give students good opportunities to take part in activities with other local schools.
- Most students feel safe in school. Attendance has improved over the last three years.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 52 lessons or part lessons.
- Nine observations were carried out jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also observed senior leaders feeding back to teachers on students' learning and progress in lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with governors, staff, a local authority representative and five groups of students including the school council and sixth form.
- They analysed the returns from 82 staff questionnaires and 55 responses to the Parent View on-line questionnaire.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and scrutinised documents including the school's self-evaluation and development plan, governing body minutes, information about behaviour, attendance and progress, safeguarding procedures and documents about how the school checks on performance of teachers.

Inspection team

Susan Williams, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Clare Adamson

Additional Inspector

Margaret Jones

Additional Inspector

Sian Sewell

Additional Inspector

Patrick Taylor

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The majority of students are White British with other groups from a range of backgrounds including Indian, Bangladeshi and Chinese.
- The proportion of students identified with special educational needs and supported through school action is above average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, extra funding the government gives schools to support certain students, including those who are in local authority care or known to be eligible for free school meals, is below that found nationally.
- The school has five students who attend The County School, the local authority pupil referral unit.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the national minimum levels of attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is good overall by ensuring:
 - work for all students is at the correct level, so it is not too hard or too easy
 - there is not too much time in lessons directed by the teacher and enough time is provided for students to work on their own or with each other
 - students know how well they are doing and how to improve their work
 - teachers check on learning in lessons and adapt teaching to make sure all students make good progress.
- Ensure behaviour is as good around the school as it is in lessons by:
 - improving supervision around the school site at breaks, lunchtimes and between lessons
 - developing students' understanding of the impact of their actions on each other
 - monitoring incidents of poor behaviour and checking that actions taken are successful.
- Improve leadership and management at all levels by:
 - ensuring that leaders have sharply focused action plans with clear steps for improvement and that these are checked regularly
 - developing systems to check thoroughly on the progress of individuals and groups of students so those who are making less progress can be identified early and actions taken
 - targeting pupil premium funding more closely to the students it is for, tracking its impact and reporting on this to governors.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The achievement of students is not good because the progress of some groups of students requires improvement. In Years 7 to 11 students of White British heritage make slower progress than other ethnic groups. In some lessons particular ability groups make slower progress than others, sometimes the more able and sometimes the less able.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are given additional support and make steady progress, but it is not rapid enough for them to catch up with other students. Students known to be eligible for the pupil premium are also not catching up enough.
- The school has started to use the pupil premium funding for support in the 'hub', with 'motivational sessions' and they run a summer school for some new Year 7 students. However, these sessions do not target this funding specifically at students who are eligible. The school has not checked on how much difference this support has made. The 2012 GCSE results for Year 11 students show there remains a significant gap between standards reached by students eligible for the premium and other students.
- The school is confident that the few students who attend the pupil referral unit receive the right provision. However it does not track these students' progress in enough detail.
- Students from minority ethnic groups and those new to learning English make good progress. In an English lesson for Year 7 students new to learning English, on the topic of 'getting to know you', the teacher skilfully encouraged good levels of participation. The questioning, how students were encouraged to share their own experiences and the way these were valued, meant the students learnt well.
- Attainment in Key Stage 4 has remained broadly average for the last three years. However, the school's decision to focus on GCSE qualifications has meant that students do better in the English Baccalaureate than in other schools. The school does not enter groups early for GCSE examinations.
- Achievement in the sixth form requires improvement because teaching is not yet good enough to secure good progress. Students do better in Year 13 than Year 12. Some of the students in Year 12 find the work difficult and they do not all do well enough to continue into Year 13.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Too much teaching requires improvement and not enough is good. In some lessons teachers spend too much time talking or directing the lesson from the front of the classroom. Students do not all answer questions or engage in listening for these long periods, which slows their progress. Activities are often planned to meet the needs of the middle of the ability range, which means some students find them too easy and some find them too hard.
- In the best lessons the teachers involve the students with interesting, practical activities where students have to experiment and find out things for themselves. For example, in a Year 13 photography lesson, students worked on computers to apply new skills to photographs. The teacher gave excellent support and adapted their teaching to make sure all students made excellent progress. Not all teachers check on learning this thoroughly in lessons and they do not consistently adapt their teaching to make sure that students make rapid progress.

- Some teachers use their good subject knowledge and passion for their subject to make lessons interesting and enjoyable. For example, in a Year 8 English lesson students were enthused when learning about the character Scrooge. The teacher gave the students clear ideas for improving their work. One student said, 'It's always like this, I am supported to learn'. However, students do not receive this same support in all lessons. They do not always know how well they are doing or how to improve their work from feedback in lessons or in their books.
- In the sixth form teachers have strong subject knowledge and question students well. An example of this was a Year 13 mathematics lesson where the teacher skilfully led the students through a series of questions that made working out problems on momentum manageable. Despite more good teaching in the sixth form there is still too much teaching that requires improvement.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Behaviour is not as good around the site at breaks and lunchtimes as it is during lessons. Some students do not walk calmly around the site and a few incidents of poor behaviour were observed during the inspection. There is not enough supervision around the site to ensure students behave well. Students do not manage their behaviour and look after each other as well as they could.
- Students know about different forms of bullying including cyber-bullying and homophobic bullying. Some younger students raised concerns about how they are treated by older students. They said that they are confident teachers would help them, but a few they said some name-calling does recur.
- The behaviour records show that the school follows up incidents of poor behaviour. However, it does not always check that its actions have made a difference. It has dealt effectively with homophobic and racist incidents. This demonstrates that it promotes equality of opportunity and discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- Staff have mixed views about how good behaviour is with a small minority saying that it is not good in school and that it is not well managed. Staff were more positive about how bullying was dealt with. The majority of parents said that the school makes sure students are well behaved and the vast majority said their child felt safe in school.
- Behaviour in lessons is generally good. Students engage willingly with group work and different activities. Behaviour in the sixth form is good; students are very supportive of each other and there are positive relationships between students and staff.
- Attendance has improved over the last three years. The school checks that the students in the pupil referral unit are looked after and ensures these students attend regularly.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leaders and managers know what the strengths of the school are and the school development plan identifies key areas for improvement including the achievement of students. However leadership requires improvement because planning is not thorough enough and does not indicate detailed steps of how the improvements will be made. Monitoring of the plan takes place but lack of clarity in the actions means this is not rigorous.

- The school's self-evaluation honestly identifies the underachievement of different groups and identifies where the school has not met its targets for students' achievement. However, systems do not ensure that underachievement is identified quickly enough.
- There has been some improvement since the last inspection. The percentage of students achieving 5 A*-C GCSE grades is rising and the school has improved performance of some subjects, including English.
- There is evidence of improvements to the teaching of individual staff, because of effective management of performance. Teacher's performance is judged against the national teaching standards and pay rises are linked to the quality of their work. A working group (the STAR group) is ensuring that identified good practice is shared with other staff.
- The school made the decision to remain with more traditional GCSE courses at Key Stage 4. It has recognised the need for a range of courses and has appropriately introduced a 'Foundation Learning Programme' and some work-related qualifications. The new head of the sixth form is rightly reviewing the curriculum, particularly in Year 12 where some students find some courses hard, so that all students can access courses at a level that suits them.
- The sports and arts specialisms are particularly strong and students take part in a range of events with other schools. Students also have opportunities to take part in various musical events and productions. These activities along with lessons and assemblies support students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- The local authority has worked with senior leaders to monitor its performance, ensuring that judgements are accurate. Local authority staff have recently supported the school with training on changes to the inspection framework.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have not ensured that pupil premium funding is specifically targeted to the students it was intended, nor have they ensured that the school is checking on whether the funding makes a difference. However, governors do have the necessary understanding of data. Senior leaders present information on student achievement to governors following external examinations and update governors on the quality of teaching in the school. Governors are involved in pay decisions for staff and use an external consultant to support them with the principal's annual review. Governors receive regular training. Safeguarding meets statutory requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	110873
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	405308

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community School
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	1283
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	300
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Goulder
Principal	Caroline McKenney
Date of previous school inspection	16 September 2010
Telephone number	01223 242931
Fax number	01223 410473
Email address	office@netherhall.cambs.sch.uk

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