



Office for Standards
in Education

Inspection Report

SKEGNESS GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Unique Reference Number: 120696

LEA: Lincolnshire

Inspection Dates: 25 – 27 May 2004

Reporting Inspector: Phil Jarrett HMI

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996, and was
deemed section 12 (3) under the same act

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INTRODUCTION

This inspection was a pilot of the new arrangements for inspection announced by Ofsted in its consultation paper of February 2004. It was carried out with the support and co-operation of the staff of Skegness Grammar School and of the local education authority.

The inspection was conducted by five of Her Majesty's Inspectorate

Key for inspection grades:

Grade 1	Very good
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Adequate
Grade 4	Not adequate

Description of the school

Skegness Grammar School is a small selective school on the Lincolnshire coast. It has nearly 800 pupils including an average sized sixth form of 190. Pupils travel from a wide and predominantly rural area to the school. The number of pupils claiming free school meals is very low. As this is a selective school, pupils have reached high standards before they enter the school; however, the school takes pupils from a wider range of ability than many other grammar schools. The school has boarding provision for around 60 pupils. A small number of pupils come from a range of ethnic minority heritages although all speak English fluently. The school is a specialist college for sport.

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL

Effectiveness of the school

Skegness Grammar School believes that it is a very effective school and the inspection team agrees. It provides a traditional education with an emphasis on high academic standards and strong discipline but with a wide range of sporting and other activities. It receives able pupils who are keen to do well and the school is particularly successful in creating an orderly and productive environment where standards of behaviour are excellent and relationships very good. As a result, standards are very high and nearly all pupils make good progress with their work, with many making very good progress. Teaching is good overall, with much that is very good. Overall, the leadership and management of the school are good; the headteacher and governors know exactly what sort of school they wish to run and are successful in achieving this. However, there are some weaknesses in aspects of management which the school is currently seeking to improve. The school provides very good value for money.

Grade: 1

Effectiveness of the school's sixth form

Because of study leave and preparation for exams, there were no sixth formers present during the inspection. However, standards are very high and the evidence available, including exam results, interviews with staff and discussions with pupils who attended school specifically to meet with the inspection team, confirm that pupils make good progress as a result of effective teaching. Evidence available suggests that the leadership and management of the sixth form are good.

Grade: 1

Improvement since the last inspection

Since its last inspection, the school has successfully maintained and, in some respects improved, very high standards in attainment and pupils' personal development. The school has also moved forward in a number of areas. It is now a sports college and this initiative has had a significant impact on pupils' physical well-being and on the range of activities available. All the key issues from the last report have been addressed. The effective response to the Key Stage 3 Strategy shows that the school, while wishing to retain its core values, is able to embrace change and improve existing good practice. However, this report shows that, in an already successful school, there is still room for improvement.

Grade: 2

Capacity to improve

The school is very clear about what it does well, especially in relation to standards of work and the pupils' personal development. At present, there is no formal, systematic approach for gathering the views of stakeholders such as parents and pupils and this is a weakness. Nevertheless, the school's leadership has a clear sense of direction; it has been successful in achieving and maintaining very high standards and understands what it must do to improve further. Its capacity to improve is good.

Grade: 2

What the school should do to improve further:

- improve the analysis and use of performance data so that pupils' progress can be monitored more closely
- evaluate more effectively the quality of teaching and learning in order to improve the teaching that is at present merely satisfactory
- establish better links, and improve communication, between senior and middle managers
- ensure all statutory requirements for race equality are met

ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARDS

At the last inspection, standards were judged to be very high. The school sees this to be the case now and the inspectors agree. Standards remain very high and pupils make at least good progress overall; some achieve even better than that.

Attainment on entry is good, but is lower than in many other grammar schools. Within Years 7 to 9 pupils make particularly good progress and standards are very high, showing an upward trend in recent years. Results achieved by Year 9 in 2003 showed that the progress from Key Stage 2 was outstandingly good. Attainment at the end of Year 11 is consistently high although the pupils' progress last year, whilst good overall, was not quite as high as for previous groups, due to a range of factors particular to that year group. Previous cohorts had made very good progress across these key stages. The attainment of the sixth form pupils in 2003 was very high reflecting good progress from Key Stage 4.

Grade: 1

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

The previous inspection reported pupils' personal development to be very good and inspectors agree with the school that it still is. It is a real strength of the school. The pupils' attendance, punctuality and behaviour are excellent as are their attitudes to work, reflecting the high expectations of the staff. The pupils enjoy school, want to learn and have a strong will to succeed. Relationships are excellent throughout and pupils interact confidently with adults.

Provision for pupils' moral and social development is very strong because of the positive school ethos, the high expectations of teachers, the effective pastoral system and the insistence on high standards of self-discipline. Spiritual and cultural development are addressed satisfactorily although pupils have relatively few planned opportunities to be reflective or to develop a better understanding of a wide range of cultures.

The pupils enthusiastically take part in the many social and extra-curricular activities available. The very good provision for sports activities successfully promotes their healthy physical development. Many pupils contribute to community life through a wide range of activities embracing music, voluntary programmes and charity events. Sixth formers deal maturely with younger pupils and provide good leadership models for them. The pupils show enterprise and readily take on responsibility, when available. However, pupils have too few opportunities to contribute to decisions about improvements to the school; this is something they would very much like to do.

Grade: 1

QUALITY OF PROVISION

The school considers its provision to be very effective. Inspectors judge it to be good mainly because there are minor shortcomings in teaching and the curriculum does not fully meet the needs of a very small number of pupils.

Teaching is good and much is of a very high quality across many, different subject areas. It was not possible to observe any lessons in the sixth form but exam results suggest that teaching is at least good. In the most effective lessons, teachers' strong subject knowledge, presented enthusiastically, engages pupils and makes them keen to learn. There is a high degree of challenge, lessons are well planned and teachers use a wide range of different strategies which help pupils to learn well. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility and to work independently.

In lessons that are not as good, teachers' expectations are too low and pupils are not challenged to think for themselves. The pace of learning is slow and pupils are not stimulated. There are weaknesses in assessment and some pupils do not know what they need to do to improve.

The school's curriculum for years 7-11 is consciously academic and effective. Within Years 9-11, there is a narrow core curriculum but with a good range of option choices for pupils. The curriculum for the sixth form is similarly academic. Within this framework, based on A level courses, there is a good range of choice, particularly with recent additions as a consequence of the school's sports focus. The deliberately academic curriculum meets the needs of the vast majority of learners; however, a small number of pupils struggle.

Developments as a result of the school's sports college status have enhanced the curriculum. New options at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form are a positive response to this initiative and have been welcomed by pupils,

The curriculum meets statutory requirements. Provision for Careers education and guidance is sound and citizenship has been introduced well. Information and communication technology is well planned for years 7 to 9 but less effective for years 10 and 11.

There are excellent opportunities for extra-curricular activities and most pupils are involved on a regular basis with a wide range of events. This makes a positive contribution to pupils' physical well-being and personal development.

Pupils are well supported; they feel safe and secure in school. Most are happy to discuss any problems that arise with teachers. Pupils' well being and personal development are successfully promoted through effective pastoral systems and personal, social, health and education programmes (PSHE). Pupils receive clear guidance when making their option choices in year 9 and when considering what to do in the sixth form.

Pupils' academic progress is monitored thoroughly through tests and examinations but teachers do not make enough use of the information from these tests to set specific learning targets for individual pupils. As a result pupils do not know clearly enough how to improve. Better practice is found in the sixth form but targets are still too general. There are similar weaknesses in annual reports where teachers do not identify ways of improving.

Provision to identify and meet the needs of the small number of students with special educational needs is effective. Child protection procedures are in place. Vulnerable pupils receive guidance which is effective in helping them to maintain their studies, although not all teachers fully understand how best to provide effective support for them.

Grade: 2

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school's self-evaluation judged leadership and management to be very effective. The inspection team considers it to be good, with weaknesses in aspects of management.

Leadership and management of the school make a significant contribution to the very high standards in attainment and personal development reached by pupils. The headteacher and governors have a clear vision for the school which is reflected in the emphasis on academic achievement, excellent discipline and the school's ethos. The small senior management team of the headteacher and two deputies positively promotes the school's ethos and values, maintaining a visible presence around the buildings. They have been conspicuously successful in maintaining and enhancing academic standards and the headteacher's commitment to good results is particularly influential.

The school's improvement plan reflects this vision. However, it does not set out a sufficiently detailed strategy for the actions to be taken and their intended impact, nor are links with all heads of departments sufficiently strong. Heads of department and senior pastoral staff share the commitment of the school's leadership to its values and are given a substantial measure of autonomy. Some thrive on being left to get on with the job but others lack support. Communication between the middle and senior managers is, in some cases weak.

The school monitors the overall outcomes attained by the pupils and analyses the relative performance of different subjects and classes. Heads of department are rigorously held to account for the results achieved in their subjects by the headteacher. However, the progress of individual pupils in relation to their prior attainment is not analysed well enough.

The quality of teaching is evaluated through performance management and through pupils' results. Low scores are deemed to indicate weaknesses in teaching. This process is too limited to give a detailed picture of the quality of teaching across the school.

The governors are fully committed to the school and conduct their business efficiently, maintaining active links with departments. They do not contribute to the school improvement plan; nevertheless, they are involved in strategic planning for the school's future. The school acknowledges that it does not fully meet the requirements for a daily act of collective worship and that its policy for race equality is not yet fully implemented or monitored.

Grade:2

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