



Northfield School and Sports College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111731
LEA Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number 278764
Inspection dates 14 September 2005 to 15 September 2005
Reporting inspector John Paddick

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Thames Road
School category	Community		Billingham
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		TS22 5EG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01642 557373
Number on roll	1113	Fax number	01642 360392
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Geoff Harris
Date of previous inspection	13 November 2000	Headteacher	Mr D J Youldon

Age group 11 to 16	Inspection dates 14 September 2005 - 15 September 2005	Inspection number 278764
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Introduction

Five additional inspectors carried out the inspection.

Description of the school

Northfield School and Sports College is an above average sized comprehensive school for girls and boys serving the town of Billingham. The school achieved Sports College status in 1999. There are slightly more girls than boys, especially in Years 10 and 11. Most pupils are white British but there are very small numbers from minority ethnic groups. Very low numbers of pupils have English as an additional language. There is special provision for pupils with visual impairments. Unemployment is high in the locality and a large part of the area that the school draws its pupils from is recognised by the local authority as socially and economically deprived. Nevertheless, pupils come from a very wide range of backgrounds.

The school population is quite stable. Attainment of the pupils on entry to the school is broadly average compared to the country as a whole. However, there are fewer of the highest attaining pupils than normal and also fewer with special educational needs and formal statements.

There have been recent awards including 'Sportsmark' Gold, 'Artsmark' Silver and 'Healthy Schools' Bronze and Silver in recognition of the quality of the school's provision for its pupils.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Inspectors confirm the school's view that it is good and effective, and provides its pupils with a good quality of education. It gives good value for money, and serves an economically disadvantaged area well.

Standards are high and rising and pupils make good progress, especially in Years 10 and 11, where there are many examples of work of the highest quality. Curriculum, welfare arrangements, and personal development all benefit from highly effective leadership and management. The pupils and their parents believe that they are getting a good deal. Pupils enjoy coming to school and respond well to the individual attention that they are all given. They learn to value a safe and healthy style of life. The headteacher, governors and senior team use self-evaluation particularly well to inform planning for improvement. They set very challenging targets for all aspects of the school's work and monitor them rigorously. This means that the school is never fully satisfied and always seeks improvement. As a result, the school has improved markedly since the last inspection, and is well placed to improve further. There are weaknesses in drama and physical education which affect standards in those areas, and in the use of assessment data, especially in Years 7 to 9.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the GCSE results in drama and physical education.
- Improve the sharing of targets and assessment data with pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 to help them make the same good progress as in Years 10 and 11.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards have risen substantially since the previous inspection and are continuing to improve. In the 2004 national tests in Year 9 in English, mathematics and science, results were broadly average overall and better than at the time of the previous inspection. There was a further considerable improvement in 2005 but governors' very challenging targets were only partially met.

The 2004 GCSE results were below average in terms of the proportion of pupils gaining five results in the range A* to C but very high in the range A* to G. The 2005 results were very much better than those of the previous year and represented good achievement for the pupils over five years. Although they broadly met the school's overall targets, they were not good enough in physical education or drama. A feature of the school's sharply rising results is the success of pupils with special educational needs. It is rare for any pupil not to leave the school with five results in the range A* to G. This is much better than the national picture and represents real success for these pupils. Since the previous inspection, GCSE results at A* and A grade have also risen sharply. Apart from the particular success of the pupils with special educational needs, all other groups of pupils achieve equally well.

Current standards and achievement in the school reflect the improved GCSE results of 2005. Pupils display good numerical competence; they are literate, and demonstrate a good range of competence with computers. Progress accelerates as pupils move into Years 10 and 11 and is good overall.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils behave very well both in and out of lessons and have positive attitudes to learning. They enjoy school and actively participate in the many extra-curricular activities that are available. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. Pupils show respect for each other and for their teachers and they are confident that the rare incidents of bullying will be swiftly and effectively dealt with. They are given good opportunities to take responsibility, for example, through the peer-mentoring scheme, the School Council, and by acting as prefects. They feel that the school takes their views into account, for example, in its response to requests for lockers and changes to school meals.

Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and, through citizenship lessons, pupils are well prepared for life after their school years. For example, some pupils recently took part in the national finals of a mock trial competition and achieved a good result, whilst the whole school took part in a mock general election. The development of pupils' economic well-being is being successfully addressed by the provision of vocational courses, careers guidance, and work experience. It is further enhanced by thorough development of numerical, literacy and computer skills. The school actively promotes healthy living lifestyles through the provision of healthy food and encouragement in sports participation, and has received the Healthy Schools bronze and silver awards. The sex and drugs education programmes are comprehensive and enhanced by contributions from the school nurse and the Health Education Council.

Attendance is average overall and the school is working towards reducing the incidence of authorised absence by discouraging parents from taking pupils on holiday in term time. Unauthorised absence is below average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school, pupils and parents that teaching is good and sometimes exceptional. This quality of teaching enables pupils to make good progress in their learning and accounts for their good achievement in national tests in Year 9 and GCSE examinations.

A strong feature of teaching is the planning and preparation of lessons, with tasks carefully matched to pupils' needs. Consequently, pupils are interested in their work and are able to learn at a good pace. Pupils say that they really enjoy opportunities to research topics, both independently and in groups, and to present their work to

the rest of the class. The school's most able pupils are now sufficiently challenged and make good progress. Pupils with learning difficulties make very good progress, because specialist teaching and support are of high quality and extremely effective.

Very good relationships and a purposeful delivery of lessons ensure that pupils remain on task, enjoy their work and make good gains in their learning. In the best lessons teaching is inspirational. For example, in a lesson on transplant surgery, the teacher's expertise and use of excellent resources really inspired pupils who readily contributed to a class discussion in a mature and confident manner. There are some lessons which are less effective but nevertheless satisfactory. These have a slower pace of learning because there is too much explanation from teachers. Opportunities to involve pupils more in their own learning are missed.

Marking is constructive and informs pupils how to improve their standards. However, especially in Years 7 to 9 and sometimes in Years 10 and 11, pupils are not routinely informed of the standards they are reaching in terms of targets for National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades. Improvement in this aspect of teaching would accelerate progress.

Grade 2

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides its pupils with a good curriculum that has improved markedly since the previous inspection. Statutory requirements are now met. The curriculum is well planned, flexible, and meets the needs of all pupils well, including those with special educational needs. It allows all groups of pupils to develop well and make good progress in their learning. It engages their interest and results in the vast majority passing at least five GCSE subjects and in effective development of numerical, literacy and computer skills.

The school has extensive and well-supported opportunities for sports and fitness activities. These confirm its commitment, as a designated Sports College, to developing the health of all pupils and providing fitness facilities for the wider community.

There are now increased opportunities for pupils to study vocational courses, such as engineering in Years 10 and 11 which, together with a strong work related learning programme, helps to prepare them well for the future. A priority for development is to improve the GCSE physical education course so that it meets pupils' needs more fully.

The guidance programme ensures that health and safety education is good. A very effective citizenship curriculum makes learners aware of their rights and responsibilities, and gives them very good opportunities to participate fully in the life of the school and the wider community. For example, learners organise activities for primary school pupils as part of the Sports Leadership Scheme and have raised over £20,000 for various charities in recent years.

Most pupils participate in the wide range of enrichment activities that the school offers them, including the many sporting opportunities that reflect the Sports College status. These play an important part in helping pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles and add to their enjoyment of school life.

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school cares for its pupils well. The provision for their welfare, health and safety is good, with some very good features. All necessary procedures relating to child protection and health and safety are firmly in place and effective. The strong pastoral system monitors the personal development of each pupil and there is very good support for those with special educational needs. Pupils feel that they can turn to an adult for help or advice on personal or academic matters if they need to. Learning mentors operate drop-in sessions and are always available. Discussions with pupils reveal that they feel safe in school. A very small number of parents expressed concerns about bullying but pupils say that such incidents are rare and are swiftly and effectively dealt with. Parents are kept well informed of their children's progress through regular reports, consultation evenings, review days and the pupil planners, which are used effectively.

The school vigorously and effectively promotes healthy living lifestyles, particularly with regard to food and sport. For example, the school monitors food consumed by pupils at lunchtime through the swipe card used to pay for it and this information can be relayed to parents should they so wish, so that they can monitor what their children eat.

The school sets high targets for pupils' academic standards and tracks their progress towards them well. However, targets and assessment data are not shared sufficiently regularly with parents, especially in Years 7 to 9.

Grade: 2

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good overall. The vision of the headteacher powerfully conveys the principle that every child does indeed matter. The excellent senior team very successfully helps him to transform this vision into reality. Consequently, the school provides a safe and healthy environment, a view confirmed by pupils. The headteacher seeks, welcomes and reflects on the views of others. Recent improvements such as the 'closed campus' lunchtime arrangements and healthier menus resulted from a full consultation with pupils, parents and the local community.

Senior members of staff have a very good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Excellent development planning contains very challenging targets, which are then included in subject development plans. The head and his team carry out the most stringent reviews of examination results, teaching and learning. They take

effective action to remedy underachievement, as the improvements in the 2005 GCSE results demonstrate. Weaker GCSE subjects, such as physical education and drama, receive high quality support, which is currently being effective in identifying shortcomings and attending to them. Management at other levels is good. Since the previous inspection, targeted training for middle managers has led to most becoming effective in evaluating and improving the performance of their subjects. Nevertheless, some variation in results at GCSE persists, suggesting a need for more consistency in management at subject level.

Governors make an excellent contribution. They presided over the realisation of the school's vision to become a specialist college. They not only hold the school to account for its standards but also take part in initiatives that have supported improved results. Since the last inspection, they have ensured that the curriculum meets legal requirements. Effective partnerships between senior staff and governors ensure that the school's financial management is secure and focused on improved facilities, such as the excellent Sportsdrome.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

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16 September 2005

Dear Pupils,

I wish to thank you all for making us so welcome when we came to carry out the inspection of your school earlier this week. The team's special thanks go to those of you whom we interviewed and spoke to about your work and about all aspects of school life.

I am delighted to be able to tell you that we thoroughly agree with you about the school's many strengths. Northfield is a good school and you get a good deal there. Academic standards are rising all the time and you all have every opportunity to do well at GCSE if you use your talents to the full. You should think carefully about the link made in assembly this week between the journey from childhood to the Olympic Games and your journey from Year 7 to GCSE.

There are very few areas that need to be improved upon. However, GCSE results in drama and physical education should be higher. We believe that many of you would make even better progress if you were given more frequent information about your targets and whether you are meeting them.

Your good conduct, positive attitudes to work and the way that you respond to your teachers impressed us. The atmosphere for learning is good. We know that the vast majority of you enjoy coming to school and that this is because teaching is good and you feel safe and well cared for. Sports College programmes and facilities are a real bonus.

As you are aware, good schools don't just happen. They result from good leadership and management at all levels. This is particularly true at Northfield and your headteacher and the senior team make sure that every one of you really does matter to all who work in the school.

Yours sincerely,

John Paddick
Lead Inspector
Annex B