



Humphry Davy School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112067
LEA Cornwall
Inspection number 278841
Inspection dates 21 June 2006 to 22 June 2006
Reporting inspector Barbara Wintersgill HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Coombe Road
School category	Community		Penzance
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Cornwall TR18 2TG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01736 363559
Number on roll	830	Fax number	01736 331042
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr I Harris
Date of previous inspection	13 September 1999	Headteacher	Mr Roderick James

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 16	21 June 2006 - 22 June 2006	278841

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Humphry Davy School serves Penzance and surrounding villages, including some areas of deprivation. Nearly a quarter of pupils are entitled to free school meals and over a quarter are on the special educational needs (SEN) register. The school is growing in popularity. After a turbulent period, the current headteacher was appointed in 2001. Humphry Davy recently gained Music College status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a school that, because of the assertive leadership of the headteacher, is gaining the confidence of the local community. It provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils and those in charge of the school recognise the need to raise standards and improve teaching so that pupils, and especially the more able, make better progress. Teachers and subject leaders would benefit from sharing the good teaching practice that exists in some pockets of the school, and also in relation to departmental self-evaluation. The school leadership has introduced a number of new ideas designed to give pupils more responsibility and at the same time to improve the care and support provided for them by the school. Some of these ideas have already proved successful, such as the introduction of 'lead learners,' but others, such as the replacement of form tutors by learning mentors, have not been sufficiently tested to find out whether or not they have a positive impact. The school has acted upon most of the points for improvement in the previous report but since that time standards and progress have got worse. However, the appointment of the new management team means that the school has the capacity to improve, providing it establishes clearer lines of accountability and monitors teaching and learning more systematically and rigorously.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve achievement, particularly of the more able pupils.
- Establish clear lines of accountability.
- Monitor teaching and learning systematically and rigorously.
- Share good practice in teaching and departmental self-evaluation within the school and from outside it.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is about average and remains so throughout Years 7 to 9. Standards in Years 10 to 11 are also average and although the proportion of pupils gaining five A* to C grades has fallen over the last three years, the proportion gaining five grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has risen. Year 9 pupils make satisfactory progress overall but last year they made particularly weak progress in English. The English department has put some good measures in place that are likely to reverse the trend and in English lessons observed, pupils were making satisfactory progress. The pupils who achieve most in Years 7 to 9 are those with special educational needs because they are monitored very carefully and receive good additional support. The most able pupils generally make less progress than others, although it is still satisfactory. The progress made by Year 11 pupils was significantly above average in 2003 but has dropped to about average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is satisfactory overall. The school has made some improvements since the previous inspection; notably, collective worship is provided daily and as a result of the school's efforts, attendance has improved. Pupils enjoy their education reasonably well, but their attitudes to learning are dependent on their relationship with their teachers, which in a few cases are negative. Pupils' behaviour is generally satisfactory but pupils do not tolerate the few teachers who sometimes treat them disrespectfully, for example, by shouting at them without good cause. Pupils feel safe from bullying, in part thanks to the student anti-bullying group, and pupils know who they can go to with any problem. They have a good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle and would like the opportunity to participate in even more sporting activities. Several pupils make a valuable contribution to the school community, for example, by applying for the role of lead learner and belonging to 'student voice.' Most make satisfactory progress in developing economic awareness and those who have additional opportunities, for example, through the Peninsula Programme or the Education Business Partnership, make good progress.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but in the school as a whole there is too much variation in the quality of lessons. Some teaching is outstanding, notably where staff have very high expectations and employ exciting and imaginative ways to help pupils learn. These lessons are very well structured and resourced, the pace is brisk and purposeful and expectations clearly communicated and understood by all pupils. There are high levels of participation and pupils' enjoyment is a crucial part of their learning. By contrast, weaker learning is characterised by slow pace, low expectations of pupils and boring lessons. In many lessons that are satisfactory overall, teachers do not make sufficient use of information and data to pitch their lessons to all pupils' individual learning needs, particularly the most able. Pupils with difficulties and disabilities are generally well catered for and supported by teachers and learning support assistants, but lessons are less well matched to the needs of higher-attaining pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Overall, the curriculum is satisfactory. The school matches the Year 10 curriculum to pupils' capabilities with three different 'pathways' which, for some, involve studying fewer subjects or vocational courses. The school continues to develop this area, with Year 9 pupils having an even greater choice for September. There have been fewer

curriculum developments in other years, although the newly created Creative and Cultural Studies department is the principal means of improving the teaching of citizenship and personal, social, health and work-related education.

Adequate provision is made for the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils with learning and other difficulties have good access to the curriculum and choices within it. The curriculum is enriched through 'flexible day' activities such as the Peninsula Project and the Enterprise and Business Partnership. The school received specialist music and maths curricular activities. The numbers studying music GCSE are now three times higher than the national average, and alternative maths and music courses are options for September.

Many pupils take advantage of the wide range of extra-curricular activities available, such as those in sports and performing arts. Pupils also take part in local community music ensembles, which now use the new performing venues at school. All these activities have a positive effect on the pupils' academic, social and personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory, with some very good and innovative features that have the enthusiastic support of many parents and pupils. In the past year the school has replaced the tutorial system with a house mentoring system, which involves all adults who work in the school. They share responsibility for care, guidance and support. The success of the system and whether it meets the needs of pupils has begun to be monitored. A minority of pupils who were interviewed said they preferred the previous arrangement but most felt that being part of a very small group gave them the confidence to speak out and talk more openly about their work and concerns. Some parents of Year 7 pupils were less convinced by the new arrangement and whether it met the needs of pupils in their first year in secondary education. For the most part, pupils feel safe and able to talk frankly to Heads of House and to other adults. They feel that bullying, if it occurs, is dealt with very effectively. They also value the steps mentors have taken to guide them in their choice of work and further and higher education. Currently there is little data produced in a form that helps staff track pupils' achievements and set them challenging targets. Other information, for example, about behaviour, well-being and emotional development, is used very effectively in the day-to-day contact with pupils and parents.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership of the school is satisfactory, while management is inadequate. The headteacher has strong beliefs and a vision of a school where trust, openness and creativity are encouraged. Over the last few years he has instigated significant changes in many aspects of the school, for example, completely transforming the care, guidance and support processes. He has created a climate of innovation and a large senior

leadership team, incorporating key academic and pastoral leaders, many of whom are inexperienced. There are a number of creative ideas to improve processes within the school over the next academic year, but as these are not yet in place it is too early to judge their effectiveness.

Systems for monitoring the work of staff and tracking pupils' progress are in need of improvement. Processes in some departments, such as music, are effective, but these are not disseminated and shared across the school. There have been recent changes in roles and responsibilities, but no clarification of accountabilities; for example, the collection of departmental analysis of GCSE results is not followed through sufficiently to ensure that all heads of department are using the same systems. This, combined with a lack of monitoring, results in variations in practice.

At present, the school's self-evaluation is not consistently robust. While there are a number of mechanisms to elicit the views of parents, pupils and staff, these are not consistently systematic. They do not always provide a sound basis from which to ascertain how well the school is doing or to determine future priorities.

The governing body is well structured and active in working with the school. As a result of weaknesses in evaluation, they do not always have the information necessary to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities. Financial processes are sound and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

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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?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4	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?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	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?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	4	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	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

23 June 2006

Dear Students

As you know, a team of inspectors recently visited your school and I am writing to let you know what we said in our report. We very much enjoyed being in the school. Thank you very much for making us so welcome and for telling us your views.

We judged that your school is providing a satisfactory quality of education. Your headteacher has introduced a lot of new ideas but it is too soon to see how successful they are. He has worked very hard to make the school more popular with local people and the fact that more and more parents make this school their first choice shows that he is succeeding.

We were a bit worried that for the last two years test and examination results have not been as good as in the past, particularly the results of Year 9 English tests. We agreed with you that there is too much variation in the quality of teaching and several of you told us that you knew you could do better.

I would like to thank those of you who spoke to us about the school and you will find that the report does take notice of your views. We found that you enjoy school reasonably well but that you do not do so well in lessons where you do not get on with the teachers. We have passed your comments to the headteacher. We were pleased to find that most of you feel safe from bullying. We were very impressed with those of you who serve the school, for example, the lead learners and members of 'student voice.' We found that most of you like the new system of learning mentors but it is too soon to tell how successful it will be in helping you do your best.

We have suggested a number of things the school should do to improve. For your part it is important that you try to do your best. In particular you should work hard to improve your English as this makes such an important difference to your other subjects.

I wish you all very well in the future.

Yours sincerely Barbara Wintersgill Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools