



Thorpe St Andrew School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121180
LEA NORFOLK LEA
Inspection number 280947
Inspection dates 30 November 2005 to 1 December 2005
Reporting inspector Mr. Charlie Henry LI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Laundry Lane
School category	Community		NR7 0XS
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01603497711
Number on roll	1741	Fax number	01603497712
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs.Linda Steynor
Date of previous inspection	17 January 2000	Headteacher	Mr. Ian Clayton

Age group 11 to 18	Inspection dates 30 November 2005 - 1 December 2005	Inspection number 280947
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Thorpe St Andrew School is a large mixed 11-19 comprehensive school on the outskirts of Norwich. It serves Thorpe St Andrew and the rural community to the east of Norwich. The number of students in the sixth form has grown rapidly in the last two years to its current size of 307. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals and with special educational needs are low. Few students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and very few speak English as an additional language. The school has a split site, with the two main buildings approximately 300 metres apart. Thorpe St Andrew School is a specialist sports college and, in 2004, it gained a second specialist status for technology. The school's mission is based on the belief stated in the school motto: 'Success for All'.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides an education that is at least satisfactory in all aspects of its work and many aspects are good. The principal provides strong leadership and has a clear vision about how the school will continue to improve, based on raising students' achievements. Students enter the school with attainments above the national average. They make satisfactory progress and continue to show high standards in their work compared with national levels at age 16. Science does not do as well as the other core subjects. Students in the sixth form make good progress and achieve well. Students enjoy school. They feel safe and that they are encouraged to learn. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, however inconsistencies do not ensure students take sufficient responsibility for their learning. Teaching and learning are good in the sixth form. The curriculum is good and provides a wide range of opportunities to learn and is strengthened by the school's specialist college status. The sixth form curriculum is outstanding. Care and support are good throughout the school. Provision for vulnerable students is good. There is effective guidance and advice on the choice of subjects and future opportunities. There have been significant changes in the management of the school, including through developing the role of curriculum and pastoral managers. These changes are now established and the school has a firm basis for raising standards and improving achievement and progress. The school has an accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses. While some plans for improvement have had a positive effect, it is too early to evaluate others effectively. The school has successfully improved the key issues from the last inspection. It demonstrates good capacity for further improvement and provides satisfactory value for money

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The effectiveness and efficiency of this large and rapidly growing sixth form are good. Standards are above average and students achieve well. The school offers very good guidance and is flexible and responsive in ensuring that students have access to courses to suit their needs. The outstanding range of AS and GCE A level subjects is supplemented by a very good range of vocational courses. Students are well supported and retention rates are very high. The quality of teaching is good. Strong subject expertise and positive relationships contribute to a keen enjoyment in learning. Students' personal development is good. The importance of working hard is well understood. Students regard the sixth form highly and contribute effectively to shaping aspects of provision. Within the school, they provide good role models and play an active part in community life. Very effective leadership and management of the sixth form are focused on ensuring that all students achieve their very best. The sixth form has an excellent capacity to improve based on an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. It provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve achievement in science. - Raise the quality and consistency of teaching to that of the best. - Ensure that students are more aware of and responsible for their learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Inspectors support the school's assessment that standards are good and achievement is satisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4, and good in the sixth form. Students enter the school in Year 7 with levels of attainments that are above the national average. They make satisfactory progress and maintain standards that are above national averages by the end of Year 11. Standards in Years 7 to 9 have improved steadily over the last four years. Results for 2005 indicate that achievement in English and mathematics is generally good, but continues to be only satisfactory in science. Overall, standards at Key Stage 4 are above the national average and, given their abilities, students achieve satisfactorily. The most recent results show good achievements for a range of subjects including mathematics, however, although improved, science remains satisfactory. The school is good at enabling students of lower abilities to gain success, with an above national average proportion of students achieving 5 GCSEs at grades A*-G. Students in the sixth form achieve well and standards, as shown by the results of GCE A level examinations, are above average. They do well in English, mathematics and science as well in a range of other subjects, including drama, geography, history and physical education. Students who have special educational needs make good progress. The achievement of those who speak English as an additional language and those from different economic and cultural backgrounds is similar to that of other students. Children looked after by the local authority make exceptional progress. The school sets suitably challenging targets for attainment. These targets are based on the accurate assessment of students' prior attainment.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. This is in agreement with the school's self-evaluation. Students enjoy school life. Behaviour is good and clearly benefits learning. Students are friendly and courteous and there is a positive ethos around the school. They are generally conscientious and develop work styles that will help them when they leave school. Students report that they feel safe in school and are confident that they could talk with a member of staff if they had a problem. They contribute well to the school community. They feel that the staff listen to what they have to say, through, for example, the school senate and questionnaire surveys. However, they also consider that they receive too little feedback from ideas and views channelled through these means. Students' moral and social development is good. They are regularly involved in fundraising for a range of charities. They show growing

self-confidence and an increasingly mature outlook as they move up through the school. Sixth formers are good role models and many help younger students through mentoring. Spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. Preparing students for living in a multi-cultural society, however, is underdeveloped. Students make good use of opportunities to develop more healthy lifestyles, including through sports activities and the good range of healthy food choices in the canteen.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school's own assessment is that the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and that a significant amount is good. The school also judged the quality in the sixth form to be good. Inspectors agree with this evaluation. The school has a rigorous process for monitoring lessons. This includes routine observation of all teachers, with an additional focus on any areas identified as performing less well. As a result, further professional development is undertaken and improvements have been made. The majority of lessons are effectively planned for students to learn through a range of interesting activities that are aimed at the right level. Teachers skilfully maintain a brisk pace as they change from one part of the lesson to the next and keep students' motivation throughout. Classes are well managed and, as a result, students' behaviour is good and they work well throughout the lesson. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well by teachers, although there are too few occasions where students use this to aid their own learning. On too many occasions teachers do not adequately monitor and give feedback to students on how well they are learning, in particular to those who do not readily offer to answer questions that are asked. This contributes to limiting these students' ability to take responsibility for their own learning. The end of lesson plenary is also not always used effectively to contribute to this aspect. The assessment and recording of students' achievements is satisfactory. The school is aware that there is some inconsistency in this area and has begun to address this, for example, in marking and tracking progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The quality of curriculum at Key Stages 3 and 4 is good and is outstanding in the sixth form. It has greater flexibility than at the time of the last inspection, especially with respect to vocational and work-related learning. The broad range of courses meets effectively the needs of all students aged between 11 and 16 years. Opportunities are further increased by a number of additional accredited courses, such as statistics, which are run after school hours. Students in the sixth form have an outstanding range of advanced level and vocational courses from which to choose and the school is very

successful in responding to individual needs. There are good links with other institutions, employers and training providers, increasing students' economic understanding. An outstanding range of sporting, social and cultural extra-curricular events and activities adds to the enjoyment of coming to school for many students. The school's status as a sports college has improved markedly both the range of sports courses offered and in the participation of students. Provision for gifted and talented students in physical education is outstanding. The school is at an early stage of implementing its second specialist status as a technology college and has ambitious plans for further development of ICT across the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Inspection supports the school's self evaluation that it provides good guidance and support for its students. Students trust and value highly the help they receive from staff. Very good and careful consideration is given to new students so that they settle easily. This includes effective liaison with the main feeder primary schools and adaptations to the curriculum. The school successfully gives a high priority to supporting students' personal and emotional needs, particularly through the house system. In addition, they can seek help with school or personal problems through mentors and the school counsellor. Students are pleased that there is a high profile anti-bullying campaign and feel confident that the school is trying to stamp out any bullying in an open and effective way. The personal and social education programme contributes well to promoting healthy and safe lifestyles. The use of target setting is developing. Most students at Key Stages 3 and 4 are aware of their current levels of attainment and what the next level is. However, there is not consistent and regular advice to enable them to take greater responsibility, including about how well they are learning and what they need to do to improve to the next level. Older students are given good careers advice and guidance when choosing options in Year 9 or making decisions about future careers and post 16 planning. There is effective involvement with Connexions to provide a broader perspective on opportunities after leaving school. Students with special educational needs receive high quality help and support. Suitable arrangements are in place for ensuring that child protection and the needs of students in local authority care are met well. There are also good systems for ensuring students' health and safety, for example on school trips.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The principal gives strong leadership and provides the school with a good sense of direction. Governors are very supportive and undertake their role of 'critical friend' effectively. They and the principal have an accurate view of the school's current position and know what needs to be done to bring about further improvement. Their efforts are clearly focussed on ensuring that

students achieve as well as they can. They are informed by improving procedures to monitor and evaluate the quality of provision, including teaching and learning, and to analyse assessment data. The school's improvement and development plan is a helpful document. It clearly identifies the most significant areas that need to be addressed in order to move the school forward. The capacity of leaders to ensure continued improvement is good. The modifications to the school's management structure and appointments to subject leadership roles in some areas are recent and have not yet had enough time to result in improved standards. Improvement since the last inspection is good and all the issues identified at that time have been addressed successfully. The views of students, parents and members of the community are sought and careful consideration is given to their opinions. The day-to-day management of the school is good and ensures that everything runs smoothly. Governors are good at ensuring that the resources available to the school are used wisely. They take care to ensure the principles of best value are applied thoughtfully to the purchase of services and resources. 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	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

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	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	insufficient evidence

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

As you know, a group of inspectors visited your school. I would like to thank you all, on behalf of the inspection team, for your co-operation and assistance during our visit. We appreciated your comments and opinions. I am writing now to tell you about our findings. The inspection found many things that your school does well. Your principal has a good view on how to improve your school. He has worked hard with staff responsible for the different subjects and the houses and they have good plans to make these improvements. Students we spoke with told us they were happy to come to school and enjoyed the wide range of activities and events the school provides for you. They also told us they would like more feedback from the questionnaires and from the ideas put forward by the school senate, although they thought that these were listened to by the staff. Your parents also generally believe that the school is successful. The school provides you with a better range of courses than we usually see, especially in the sixth form. The information and advice you are given before you choose your courses are good. Teachers and other staff in the school know you well and work hard to help you succeed. This is helping to improve performance in examinations. Almost all of last year's leavers achieved 5 or more GCSE passes and well over half of them passed at least five of their GCSEs at the higher grades A* to C. We also believe that you would make greater progress if you were more involved in lessons and took more responsibility for your own learning. We want your teachers to make you think about how well you are doing and how you could do better. This is what we saw in the best lessons. We think that there are three aspects of the school's work that need to improve most: - Many of you could do even better in science. - Make sure that the quality of all of your lessons is like the best ones. - Make sure that your teachers tell you more about how well you are learning and how you can improve. We are confident that your school can continue to improve. We wish you well in the future.