



Newcastle Community High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 124413
LEA Staffordshire
Inspection number 281715
Inspection dates 28 June 2006 to 29 June 2006
Reporting inspector David Anstead HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Ostend Place
School category	Community		Newcastle
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Staffordshire ST5 2QY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01782 667650
Number on roll	636	Fax number	01782 667667
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr S Clifford
Date of previous inspection	4 December 2000	Headteacher	Mrs Deborah Hunton

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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

Newcastle Community High School is much smaller than the average secondary school and, as a result of a reduction in the number of school age children in the community, the roll will decline further in the next few years. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion with learning difficulties and disabilities has fallen in the last few years and is now below average. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds represent a much lower proportion than the national average. The school intends to apply for specialist status in science next year. The headteacher is leaving at the end of this term.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory. Students enjoy coming to this school. They feel safe and appreciate the way the school cares for them. The school is particularly effective at developing students' self-confidence and sense of responsibility. Behaviour and relationships are good. Students say they feel valued and they recognise the high priority the school attaches to seeking their views. The school council and its committees make an outstanding contribution to improving the school. The curriculum offers a good choice of academic and vocational subjects through a partnership with a local college. Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory. In the best lessons, students are enthused and motivated by the work they are given to do. In some lessons, the pace is slow and the tasks do not interest students. In many lessons, teachers plan the same work for students regardless of their differing starting points. Nevertheless, students with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress because of the good support they receive. More able students, however, only make satisfactory progress because they are not sufficiently challenged. In many lessons there are too few opportunities for students to learn independently. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher's determination and commitment has brought about clear improvements. Consequently, achievement and standards overall are now satisfactory and attendance good. Achievement is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. The school has a reasonably accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses but tends to be too generous in its judgements of itself. Its overall effectiveness is satisfactory and not good as its self-evaluation concluded. Satisfactory progress has been made on issues from the last inspection. The school has the capacity to continue to improve. It gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards at Key Stage 4 by ensuring consistently good teaching and learning in all subjects.
- Match work more closely to individual students' capabilities and particularly those of the more able.
- Create more opportunities in lessons for students to work independently.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and standards overall are satisfactory. Students join the school with below average prior attainment. They make good progress in English and science during Key Stage 3 so that standards in the national tests in these subjects, at the end of Year 9 are broadly average. Until recently, progress in mathematics during Key Stage 3 has been satisfactory and standards exceptionally low. The national test results for 2006 arrived during the inspection. These show that progress in mathematics has improved to be good and that standards are now average. Progress during Key Stage 4 was good in 2003 and outstanding in 2004. However, during 2005, a group of Year

11 students following a new alternative curriculum provision substantially underachieved. This was because they were entered for a lower tier of examination than they were capable of achieving. Consequently, progress overall fell to being satisfactory in 2005 and standards were exceptionally low. The school has ensured this error cannot occur again. Students currently pursuing the alternative curriculum are now entered early for many examinations. The results so far show that this group is now making satisfactory progress. Standards in some subjects at Key Stage 4, such as mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT), have been exceptionally low. This is partly attributable to the difficulties the school faced in recruiting specialist teachers. Improvements in the quality of teaching and learning in these subjects have now been brought about and the students' progress in lessons is now satisfactory. The school is predicting better GCSE results in mathematics and ICT this summer. Less able students make good progress. There is no underachievement amongst any particular groups of students. The school follows national guidance in setting performance targets derived from prior attainment. The targets for last year were met at Key Stage 3. The school is predicting that it will achieve its GCSE targets this summer.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development is good. The school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well and this supports their academic achievement. Contentious issues are tackled very well in citizenship classes and students are introduced to a wide variety of cultural projects in the arts. The students are helped not only through taught lessons, but also in enrichment activities and drop in sessions provided by a variety of agencies. They are given many opportunities to visit other countries and areas of Britain to give them a perspective of life beyond the local community. The students, even the youngest, take on responsibilities willingly. They enjoy and learn from the opportunities they have in groups, such as the school council, which is very active and is organised superbly. It interviewed candidates for the headteacher post, and reported its views to governors. The students are keen to make a contribution to the community and they also support a number of local and national causes. They say they enjoy coming to school, and their attitudes to learning are mostly very positive. They acquire a useful range of skills, both social and academic, which prepares them for life after school, but the very close teacher direction of many lessons does not always allow them to gain the skills they need to learn independently. Students' attendance and punctuality are good. They are polite, friendly and confident, and their behaviour in and around the school was good during the inspection. They cooperate well and any minor incidents of misbehaviour are dealt with effectively. Students say that bullying is rare, that it is dealt with quickly and that they discuss the issues amongst themselves.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The influence of the secondary national strategy is evident in many lessons and the clear focus on lesson structure is having a positive impact. However, the quality of teaching across the school is inconsistent. In the most effective lessons, teachers use assessment well to analyse and diagnose individual and group learning needs in planning future learning. Teachers are very clear about what they want students to achieve and provide interesting, relevant and stimulating learning activities that engage the students well. In these lessons, students' enjoyment of learning is evident. They are confident because they know what level they are working at, the level they should be aiming for and what they need to do in order to improve. As a result, they make good progress. Where lessons are less effective, students' work is marked, but teachers have not adjusted their lesson plans to take into account each individual's different starting points. Although student behaviour is good overall, in these lessons, groups are not always fully focused on learning and there are periods of inactivity. Students with learning difficulties receive good intervention and support and so make good progress. Learning activities in many lessons do not always provide sufficient challenge for more able students and there are insufficient opportunities for them to learn independently.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school offers a good curriculum. Provision has recently improved at Key Stage 4. Students are entered for a good range of GCSE courses. Provision for ICT and citizenship is satisfactory, with the majority of students following a GCSE course in ICT. A few students have the opportunity to follow a good alternative curriculum that enables them to spend some of their time working at the local further education college. An applied engineering course reflects the needs of the local community, where a shortage in this area has been identified. The school provides a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities that are well attended. The curriculum is well enhanced by a 'learning to learn' course that is effectively taught and supports students well in improving their important revision skills. All students are entered for GCSE mathematics and English, or appropriate literacy and numeracy courses, preparing them well for the world of work, continuing training or employment. The needs of students with learning difficulties and disabilities are particularly well met enabling them to make good progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care, guidance and support for students, especially those who have learning difficulties and disabilities. Strategies are organised well to help

students progress in their work and develop personal skills. These are delivered effectively by expert staff who are very committed and always available to the students, whom they know very well. Students' progress is tracked regularly, especially in examination classes, and results from national tests that arrived during the inspection indicate that this system is accurate. There are regular target-setting meetings for individual students that make them aware of how well they are doing. Students feel safe and secure and are appreciative of the access they have to teachers and other staff for academic or pastoral problems. Risk assessments are complete and thorough checks take place on current and recent staff. A range of well planned initiatives has created an awareness of healthy lifestyles. The school provides detailed information about potential choices of courses and careers. The school has developed good links with primary schools and other institutions.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides clear direction for school improvement. The actions she leads are carefully planned to ensure the best use of limited resources. Her determination and commitment are important elements in ensuring that there is a focus on improving teaching and learning and on ensuring there is good care and support for students. The middle leaders of the school improvement group, under the direction of the senior leadership team, have ensured that professional development for teachers is effective. This has resulted in most middle leaders taking responsibility for the quality of provision and standards in their departments. This has brought about clear improvements in progress in English, mathematics and science and in attendance. A number of processes have been developed to monitor and evaluate the work of the school, particularly teaching and learning. Some of these are effective but the school has sometimes missed weaknesses. For example, the school did not realise that a group of students pursuing an alternative curriculum had been entered for an inappropriate examination. Lessons are monitored frequently. Overall judgements are broadly in line with those made by inspectors although tend to be too generous. The views of parents are sought through a questionnaire and the involvement of students in evaluating the work of the school is exemplary. There have been considerable difficulties in recruitment and retention of teaching staff exacerbated by the shrinking size of the school. Some teachers are teaching outside their normal specialist subjects. The school has supported individual teachers well through this period of transition. Finances are managed well and the governors have made a significant contribution to this. Governance is satisfactory. There has been a satisfactory resolution of the issues raised by the previous inspection.

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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?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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	4	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?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	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	2	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?	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?	3	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	3	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	2	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

Dear Students Following our visit to inspect your school, I am writing to tell you about our findings. I would like to thank you for the friendly welcome you gave us and your honest responses to our questions. We found this helpful in deciding what is good about your school and what needs to be improved. We think the education you receive at your school is satisfactory overall. These are the strengths of your school.

You enjoy coming to school because you feel safe there and because behaviour and relationships are good.

Your student council and its committees enable you to make an excellent contribution to helping the school improve.

The choice of subjects available to you is good.

The extra help and support some of you receive is good.

The school looks after you well.

The school makes a good contribution in helping you develop into confident and responsible members of your community. There are some aspects of the school's work which we think can be better. In many lessons, teachers set everybody the same tasks and there are few opportunities for you to decide on the best way to tackle the work. In a few of your subjects, the work does not motivate you and the pace of the lessons is slow. We have asked your headteacher to help all teachers prepare lessons that have a range of tasks, including more difficult work for those of you who are capable of doing it. During the inspection, the results of the national tests in mathematics and science taken by Year 9 arrived in the school. We were pleased to see how well you did. We have asked the school to make sure GCSE examination results improve to be as good. You can help by always trying your best. I wish you every success in the future. Yours faithfully David Anstead HM Lead Inspector