



Dinnington Comprehensive Specialising in Science and Engineering

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 106958
Local Authority Rotherham
Inspection number 287664
Inspection dates 6–7 March 2007
Reporting inspector Heather Barnett HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Doe Quarry Lane
School category	Community		Dinnington, Sheffield
Age range of pupils	11–18		South Yorkshire S25 2NZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01909 550066
Number on roll (school)	1455	Fax number	01909 550170
Number on roll (6th form)	183		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs M Carroll
		Headteacher	Miss Sue Carhart (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	6–7 March 2007	287664

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Dinnington is a larger than average comprehensive school with specialist science and engineering status. The percentage of students entitled to free school meals is below average as is the percentage of students from minority ethnic backgrounds or with English as an additional language. The proportion of students with statements of special educational need or who need additional help with their learning is below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Dinnington School is providing a satisfactory education for its students. Students enter and leave the school with broadly average standards, making satisfactory progress through Key Stages 3 and 4. However, the school is not satisfied with this and is working hard to support students in making better progress. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. There are many examples of good lessons, but also sessions where teaching does not take account of the learning needs of individuals, so they do not make adequate progress. The school has identified this aspect of teaching as a key area for improvement.

The personal development of students is satisfactory. Most students are well behaved, but there are examples of poorer behaviour in some lessons. The school is aware of this and is working on improving the behaviour policy and ensuring its consistent application. Care, guidance and support for students are satisfactory. The curriculum meets all statutory requirements and at Key Stage 4 is being developed to cover a wider range of options to meet students' needs. However, it is too early to see the impact of these changes on student achievement. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities and students particularly enjoy the sporting opportunities.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The senior leadership team, which has been in place since September 2006, has put a number of new strategies in place to improve students' achievement. It is too early to see their full impact on progress but early signs are positive. The school is working hard to improve its self-evaluation. It has made satisfactory progress in addressing the areas raised in the last inspection, provides satisfactory value for money and has the capacity to improve further. Effective use has been made of specialist status and there is good development of partnership working to promote students' well-being.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are good. Standards are average and students achieve well in relation to their starting points. This is because the curriculum meets students' needs and aspirations well, and they receive good care, guidance and support. The latter prepares them well for the next stage in education and the world of work. The majority of students follow advanced level courses and retention rates are high, with significant numbers continuing their studies in higher education. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Tutors work effectively as a team to support students and enable them to achieve their goals. Systems for monitoring and tracking students' progress are good. As a result, tutors are able to intervene promptly and effectively if there are signs of underachievement, to ensure students achieve well. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. In lessons opportunities for students to develop independent learning strategies are often limited. Personal development is good. Students are well motivated, take their work seriously and enjoy their learning. They particularly value the relationships they have with their

teachers and the support they receive. This is a key factor in enabling them to achieve well. Students play an important role in decision-making in the school through the school council. They enjoy their responsibilities for organising fundraising activities, leading extra-curricular activities for younger students and in helping younger students with their learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve achievement.
- Ensure consistency in the way teachers manage behaviour in the classroom.
- Make sure teaching meets the differing learning needs of all students in their lessons.
- Improve the accuracy of self-evaluation and its use to inform planning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are broadly average. For several years, students have entered the school at age 11 with standards just below average in English, mathematics and science. Standards at the end of Year 9 have varied over time. In 2006, they were broadly average in English and mathematics, where the school met its targets. But in science, standards were below average and targets were not met. Progress overall was satisfactory.

Tracking data shows that standards for students currently in Year 9 are in line with national expectation in mathematics and science, but below expectation in English. Overall progress remains satisfactory.

Standards at the end of Year 11 have been consistently below average for several years and the school recognises that inconsistencies in learning have undermined achievement. In 2006, as in previous years, students made satisfactory progress overall when measured against their starting points. Students studying design and technology and science made good progress as a result of the school's specialism. Monitoring shows that students currently in Year 11 are well placed to improve on the 2006 results.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well. This ensures that they make the same satisfactory progress as their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Students learn about safe and healthy lifestyles and receive good support from physical education classes and extra-curricular activities. Healthy food options are offered, but are not popular with students. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory.

They generally show concern for others and know right from wrong. Students make a good contribution to the welfare of those less fortunate than themselves, for example through raising money for education projects in Burundi. This also helps their appreciation of other cultures as well as learning about their own. The work of the school council reflects students' willingness to take responsibility and to contribute to the community.

There are well established systems in place to deal with bullying, but parents and students are concerned about the effectiveness of the action taken, and there is more work to be done. Behaviour in and around the school is satisfactory overall. However, the lack of consistency in the ways teachers tackle inappropriate behaviour means that in some classes the progress made by students is adversely affected. Exclusion rates are high. This is partly due to the strong stance taken by the school towards poor behaviour and bullying. The school is actively exploring ways to deal with persistent offenders. Attendance is below average. The school continues to work hard to tackle unsatisfactory attendance and the very poor attendance patterns of a small minority.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory in the main school. The school's specialist status is beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. A recent review by management has identified the best features of lessons and training opportunities are in place to improve the quality of all teaching. The school now uses assessment data more effectively to track and monitor students' progress and to identify any underachievement: the link between assessment and learning has begun to be taken on board by teachers when they plan lessons. However, this approach has yet to be embedded across the school by all staff and it is too early to measure the impact on standards.

Overall behaviour is satisfactory in and around the school. However, where classroom management is not good, students' inappropriate behaviour disrupts lessons. There is variability in the quality of teaching and learning. Where teaching is less effective, learning objectives and explanations are unclear and the individual learning needs of students are not addressed. Some lessons lack variety, or are over-dominated by the teacher: students lose interest and work with minimal effort. As a result, they do not make sufficiently rapid progress or acquire good learning habits.

The best lessons are planned carefully, so that work is accurately matched to students' abilities and specific needs. In these lessons, teachers' high expectations and good subject knowledge usually result in effective learning and good progress. A variety of challenging activities help to engage students in their work and probing questioning extends their knowledge and understanding. The quality of marking varies with the

best showing students how well they are doing and making helpful comments about how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is satisfactory. All students have the opportunity to learn two languages in Key Stage 3 and all students follow a course in information and communication technology to Year 11. The school has recently adapted the curriculum to meet the needs of individual students more effectively. In Key Stage 4, for example, there is a wider choice of science and technology courses and vocational options. However, it is too early to see full impact on students' achievement.

A small number of Year 10 and 11 students for whom the full range of courses is not appropriate follow an alternative curriculum. This meets their needs well. The provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enables them to progress as well as their peers. The quantity, quality and popularity of extra-curricular opportunities such as sports and drama as well as visits and residential trips make a good contribution to students' personal and academic development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care, guidance and support for students are satisfactory. Pastoral care has many good features, particularly in the provision for vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are good relations with outside agencies, who give additional support to students in need. Learning mentors are used effectively to give targeted support to students with particular needs. There are sound arrangements for safeguarding students and good attention is paid to ensuring their health and safety.

Guidance is satisfactory. Students benefit from satisfactory careers education throughout Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11 they receive helpful advice in relation to Year 10 options choices. The school's systems to monitor and track the progress students make is not yet well developed in Years 7 to 9, but is better in Years 10 and 11 and is good in the sixth form. Systems are being further developed to use information about students' progress more effectively to identify and tackle underachievement, but they are not yet fully embedded in the school's practice.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The current leadership team, which has been in place since September 2006, has put a number of new strategies in place to focus on the key issues and has set a clear direction for the school. Target setting and monitoring procedures have improved and staff are working hard to improve teaching and learning. The role of middle managers is being developed so that they are more accountable and more closely focused on checking the performance of students in their area. Although new systems and structures are in place, and can be seen to be having some positive effects, it is too early to see their full impact on student progress and achievement.

Self-evaluation is satisfactory. There is a strong emphasis on improving its accuracy and on using it more effectively to inform planning. There is increased collaborative working between departments with continuing professional development being closely linked to school priorities for teaching and non-teaching staff. Good links are being developed with other providers and the local authority to share best practice and support new initiatives. The school is aware that it needs to improve communication with parents and is working to address this issue.

The governors now have a clear idea of the strengths and areas for improvement for the school. They have an effective committee structure and provide appropriate support and challenge to the leadership team. The school has sound financial management practices and has achieved the Department for Education and Skills Financial Management Standard in Schools. They have used the benefits of specialist status to good effect in improving resources, expanding the curriculum and increasing partnership work, particularly with feeder schools.

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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 effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	2
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	3	3
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	3	

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below 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	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for the contribution you made to the recent inspection of your school. We enjoyed visiting your lessons and talking with many of you. We also read carefully the questionnaires completed by your parents. These were very helpful to us.

We think your school is providing you with a satisfactory education and is working hard to improve. You make satisfactory progress in your studies and your personal development. However, some of you do not behave as well as you should, especially in certain lessons. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. You work best when you have lots of activities and the teaching matches the way you learn. The range of subjects you can study is satisfactory and you like the extra-curricular activities, particularly those in physical education. The school cares for you well and is improving the way it tracks your progress to help you achieve better results.

You enjoy your life in the sixth form and make good progress in your studies and personal development. You have a good range of courses to study and appreciate the good care, guidance and support you receive from staff. The leaders and managers of the school know where the school does well and where it needs to improve. They have put lots of new strategies in place to move the school forward and help you do better in your studies but it is too soon to see their full impact. So that your school can improve further, we have asked managers to:

- help you to achieve better results
- make sure all teachers deal with behaviour issues in the classroom in the same ways
- make sure teaching meets the different ways you learn.

You have a role to play here in making sure you behave well at all times.