



Neston High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111398
Local Authority Cheshire
Inspection number 288950
Inspection dates 8–9 November 2006
Reporting inspector Heather Barnett HMI

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

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|---|--------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Type of school | Secondary | School address | Raby Park Road |
| School category | Community | | Neston |
| Age range of pupils | 11–18 | | Cheshire CH64 9NH |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 0151 3363902 |
| Number on roll (school) | 1261 | Fax number | 0151 3530408 |
| Number on roll (6th form) | 323 | | |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair | Cllr R Chrimes |
| | | Headteacher | Mrs R Winterson |
| Date of previous school inspection | 12 March 2001 | | |

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|------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Age group | Inspection dates | Inspection number |
| 11–18 | 8–9 November 2006 | 288950 |

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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

Neston High School is a larger than average, 11 to 18 comprehensive school. It is an oversubscribed, stable school with a lower than average percentage of students entitled to free school meals. There are few students from minority ethnic backgrounds or with English as an additional language. The proportion of students with statements of special educational needs is above average. The school has specialist science and visual arts college status and extensive community links. It is also involved in a wide range of partnership work.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The inspectors judge that Neston High School is a good school. Students' personal development is excellent. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning are good and they feel safe, happy and secure. Teaching and learning are good and students make good progress. Strategies for further developing teaching and learning, for example, in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) and developing students' independent learning skills, are in place, but have yet to be fully implemented in all areas. Students enter the school with attainment levels that are in line with national averages and by the end of Key Stage 4 achieve results that are above average. The curriculum is good and the wide ranging extra-curricular activities provided are highly regarded by all. The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support, based on an excellent house system. There are excellent links with numerous external organisations to support the welfare and education of students.

The leadership and management of the school are good. The senior leaders have a detailed understanding of the school and are working hard to drive the school forward. Self-evaluation is thorough and enables the school to make accurate judgements about its provision. Good use is made of data to monitor and improve the performance of students. The school provides good value for money and is well placed to improve further. The specialist status of the school has been very effective in broadening the curriculum, improving resources and enhancing community links.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. The sixth form is open access and provides well for the range of students that attend it. Standards and progress are satisfactory and improving. Effective leadership of the sixth form has introduced strategies for sustaining and furthering this improvement. For example, although teaching is good overall, there is now a sharper focus on promoting independent learning. Students' work is closely monitored: students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. They enjoy their lessons and their personal development is excellent. The curriculum is good and meets the differing needs of a sixth form that has open access. The high proportion of students who complete their courses reflects this provision. There is mutual respect between teachers and students and the quality of students care, guidance and support is outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement further in the sixth form.
- Make greater use of ICT in lessons to aid learning.
- Ensure independent learning skills are developed consistently across all areas.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Achievement is good in the school overall and satisfactory in the sixth form. The majority of students enter the school in Year 7 having achieved standards that are in line with the national average. In 2005 and 2006 standards achieved by the end of Year 9 were above the national averages. In 2006 student progress was significantly above that made by students in similar contexts and in line with the challenging targets set for English, mathematics and science.

Achievement by the end of Year 11 is good. GCSE results in 2005 indicated standards that were above the national averages, progress being above expectations when compared with similar students. In 2006 standards continued their upward trend and progress was further above expectations, based on an analysis of available data. There is no significant difference in the progress made by boys compared with girls and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar good progress to others at the school. Very few students leave school with no qualification. Subject areas for improvement have been identified. There is evidence from the school tracking system, targets set for 2007 and from lesson observations that achievement is on a continuing upward trend.

Standards attained at AS and A level are broadly in line with the national averages. An analysis of sixth form results shows satisfactory performance when compared with similar students in other schools and colleges. Girls achieve better than boys.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students make outstanding progress in developing their personal skills which helps them develop into mature young people. They enjoy their education as evidenced by their good and improved attendance. Students' behaviour is good. They respond very well to opportunities to express their opinions both formally through the school council and informally as teachers always make time to talk to them. Students are always keen to express their views, knowing that they can influence the decisions made on a range of matters such as introducing a filtered water fountain.

A personal, social and health education programme together with a rich programme of out-of-school activities underpins the students' excellent moral and social development. Students exercise responsibility and help others, such as 'Email Buddies' in the feeder primaries, peer mentors and house leaders. They take full advantage of the many opportunities for both spiritual and cultural development, such as spiritual and secular assemblies, numerous visits and visitors including local clergy and artists in residence. Many students are involved in links with partner schools abroad and the recent visits from Dutch and French students. Students take part in a wide range of

fundraising activities, raising money for local, national and international charities. In addition some students undertake work placements in the Childrens' Centre, which is a 'Sure Start' nursery for the community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are good. A whole school approach to improving teaching and learning has contributed to improving standards of attainment. Lessons are planned so that objectives are clearly expressed and good learning opportunities are provided for students of all abilities. When this good planning is combined with lively and enthusiastic teaching, students make good progress. Homework is generally well used to reinforce and extend learning.

Students respond well to their teachers and are keen to contribute to their own learning. They particularly enjoy practical sessions and other active lessons, but make less progress in lessons where there is an over-emphasis on teacher led activities and written work. They are well-informed of their learning targets and the progress they are making, both through detailed marking of their work and timetabled review sessions.

Staff are working to improve the quality of teaching and learning further. For example, the science and technology departments are focusing on extending the use of ICT and the humanities faculty sees developing students' independent learning skills as a priority. However, while subject leaders are sharing their experiences, many of these initiatives are in the early stages of development and have yet to be embedded in all subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good in both the main school and the sixth form. The 11 to 14 year old students benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum which complies with statutory requirements and makes good provision for developing literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. Staff go to great lengths to ensure that each Year 9 student is guided towards following a Key Stage 4 curriculum which matches their abilities and aspirations. The option scheme contains a good range of academic and vocational courses with a broad provision for the school's specialisms in science and visuals arts.

The school offers open access to the sixth form. Using information from GCSE results students are guided to follow courses that provide challenge and good chances of reward. They are able to improve, or extend, their Level 2 qualifications and to choose from a wide range of academic and vocational courses which again include good provision for the school's specialisms. The wide range of extra-curricular activities is

a strength of the school. Activities start before school with breakfast and literacy clubs and continue through lunchtime and after school. In addition there is good participation in the many visits organised by the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The quality of care provided for learners is outstanding. Every young person is treated with respect and dignity: in this school every student matters. An excellent house system is in place and students feel very much part of the 'house family', both their pastoral and academic progress and needs are successfully catered for. Support is very strong for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities: there is a very good enrichment programme within the learning centre which provides very well for them.

The school provides a safe and supportive environment for learning. Students have a trusted adult to turn to should they feel vulnerable. Child Protection requirements and health and safety procedures are adhered to rigidly and understood by all staff. Parents and carers are very appreciative of the school.

Students speak highly of the induction process and describe senior school as, 'an exciting place to be, where we have learnt loads'. They are well prepared for the world of work: the close ties with the local community help tremendously with this.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of leadership and management is good, both in the main school and the sixth form. The daily operation of the school runs smoothly and a secure and caring atmosphere has been created. Senior managers have a clear vision for the school, which is communicated effectively to all members of the school community. The leadership group is ably supported by good middle managers who play an effective role in the running of the school. Students are proud of their school and parents are very supportive.

There is a clear understanding of accountability at all levels and senior and middle managers have an accurate view of the standards and progress of all students. The academic review process, introduced last year, is having a positive impact on raising standards and improving progress and there has been an increasing use of data to support improvements across the school. Self-evaluation is thorough and supports planning and improvement. The school is committed to continuing professional development for its staff and they are appreciative of their opportunities for development.

The governing body is committed and diligent and has developed an effective committee structure. Governors focus closely on the priorities of the school and play

an active part in the management of the school. Resources are deployed to good effect, supporting the needs of students and giving good value for money. The specialist status of the school has had many beneficial effects in broadening opportunities for students, enhancing links with the community and improving resources. Good progress has been made in areas raised in the last inspection and the school is in a strong position to improve further. There is a wide range of partnership arrangements which are of benefit to the students, including extensive community links.

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Inspection judgements

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

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 | 2 |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 1 | 1 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 | 2 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes | Yes |

Achievement and standards

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 2 | 3 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 2 | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 | 3 |
| 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? | 1 | 1 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 1 | |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 | |
| The attendance of learners | 2 | |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 2 | |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices | 1 | |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles | 1 | |
| The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community | 1 | |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 1 | |

The quality of provision

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

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? | 2 | 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 | 2 | |
| 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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money | 2 | |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 2 | |
| 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

We enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you for being so pleasant and helpful when we came to your lessons, talked with you in discussion groups or met you around the school. We also found the questionnaire completed by your parents helpful.

We think that your school is a good school that is providing you with a good education and equipping you well for the future. The school provides outstanding care and support for all of you, teachers keep close track of how you are getting on in your courses. Almost everywhere we went we found that you were keen to learn and behaved very well. We saw some outstanding teaching in lessons that you greatly enjoyed: overall, teaching is good. You like the range of subjects you can study and enjoy all the extra-curricular activities.

Your teachers and other staff are very committed to you and the community. You told us that they are very approachable and help you to deal with any problems that you may have. We were pleased to note that there were very few instances of bullying and that any unpleasant incidents were quickly resolved.

The headteacher and senior staff work really hard to make the school even better. The school is doing well, but there are some areas where it can improve further. We have asked the school to work with you to develop your independent learning skills and on increasing the use of ICT in lessons. In sixth form we have asked managers to focus on continuing the upward trend in achievement.

The inspection team hope you are pleased with the things we have said about the school and are proud of what you, your staff, governors and parents have achieved.