



Netherthorpe School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112985
Local Authority DERBYSHIRE
Inspection number 289482
Inspection dates 31 January –1 February 2007
Reporting inspector John Godwood

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Ralph Road
School category	Foundation		Staveley, Staveley
Age range of pupils	11–19		Chesterfield, Derbyshire
			S43 3PU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01246 472220
Number on roll (school)	1116	Fax number	01246 476116
Number on roll (6th form)	222		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Father William Butt
		Headteacher	Mrs Pamela Hedley
Date of previous school inspection	18 November 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–19	31 January –1 February 2007	289482

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is larger than average and has an average sized sixth form. It is oversubscribed. It serves an area in which social deprivation is above average, although the proportion of students eligible for free school meals is average. Very few students come from minority ethnic backgrounds or speak English as an additional language. The proportion who have learning difficulties or disabilities is average.

Part of the school's building dates back to 1572, when the school was first formed. The campus also includes many temporary buildings. The school gained specialist science status in 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school that provides good value for money. It has a strong tradition and is well regarded by most parents. It is continually improving as a result of the headteacher's clear direction and good management.

Most students are proud to belong to the school. This is due to the school's tradition, the many opportunities they are given and the close interest staff take in their achievements and well-being. Pastoral care and the support for students who have personal difficulties are outstanding. As a result students' personal development is good. In particular, they make an outstanding contribution to the school and community through the many opportunities to take responsibility. They behave well and are rarely absent because they enjoy school. They learn how to stay safe and healthy. The school is successful in raising students' aspirations and prepares them well for their future careers.

Students achieve well and gain above average results in Year 9 tests and GCSE examinations. Very few students underachieve. This is due to good teaching and very strong academic guidance. Students' progress is tracked carefully and they are guided and supported well in improving their achievement. The guidance is enhanced by good communication with parents and the strong interest that the headteacher and senior staff take in each individual student.

Teaching is good because teachers know their subjects well and give clear explanations. They establish excellent relationships with students and plan interesting activities. As a result, students enjoy most lessons. In some lessons, however, students do not show enough independence in their learning. This is partly because, although guidance is good overall, the feedback given in lessons on how to meet targets is not consistently good across all subjects.

The curriculum for Years 7 to 11 is good. It provides a good range of subjects and is adapted well to meet students' needs, including work-related learning for a small number of older students. There is good support for students with learning difficulties. The school provides an extensive range of additional activities and trips that support students' personal development well and give them good opportunities to develop their talents. Specialist science status has improved learning in science and mathematics through new computer equipment, additional courses and new teaching posts.

As a result of good leadership and management, the school knows itself well and is already working on the improvement points identified by this inspection. Senior staff and middle managers regularly check the quality of teaching and students' work. Effective staff development is improving teaching and management practice. Governors are well informed and provide good direction. The school has good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The school has a good sixth form. Students are well motivated and enjoy their studies. New students feel welcomed and settle quickly. Many students take on responsibilities as prefects, attend student committees or support younger students. As a result, their personal development is good and they are excellent ambassadors for the school.

Students achieve well. Although attainment on entry is below average, standards in A-level subjects are average overall and, in addition, students take more subjects than is usual. However, a small minority of lower attaining students underachieve, usually on AS-level courses. This is because, although the curriculum includes a wide range of subjects, not all students are on courses that are well matched to their abilities.

Students' good achievement is a result of good teaching and very good support. Students appreciate the extra help that teachers willingly provide and the guidance they receive from the head and deputy heads of sixth form. The sixth form is well led, with a strong commitment to improving students' opportunities and achievement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop students' independence in lessons through teaching methods that engage them actively and by providing more individual guidance on their learning targets.
- Ensure that the sixth form curriculum includes courses that enable students of all abilities to achieve well.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Achievement is good in the main school and the sixth form. When students join the school at age 11, attainment is broadly average. They make good progress and by the end of Year 9, national test results are above average. In 2006, results improved in English, mathematics and science and the school exceeded its targets. Boys and girls make equally good progress.

Students' good progress continues and GCSE results are above average overall. The proportion of students who gain at least five passes is above average, but the proportion gaining at least five grades A* to C is average. GCSE results improved in 2006, particularly in English and mathematics, although the best performing subjects were science, design and technology, geography and history. The school met most of its targets but not the challenging target it set as a science college for five or more A* to C passes. Students with learning difficulties make good progress.

In the sixth form, attainment on entry to A-level courses is below average. Students make good progress and their subject results are average overall. Moreover, they take more subjects than is the case in many schools and the total point score per student is above average. Most students successfully complete their courses. However, there

is some underachievement for a small minority of lower attaining students, mainly in AS-level courses.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good in the main school and the sixth form. Students enjoy school and many feel privileged to belong because of the school's tradition and good reputation. Students have many opportunities to take responsibility and, as a result, they make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community, for example as peer counsellors, in the school parliament or in charity events. Sixth form students provide good support for younger students in clubs and lessons.

Students are consulted well, for example working with the caterers to plan the introduction of more healthy meals. The food on offer and wide range of sports gives them a good basis for adopting healthy lifestyles. They feel safe in school and are confident that any bullying will be resolved effectively. Students generally behave very well. There is some low-level disruption in a few lessons but this is usually managed well. Attendance is good because students enjoy school and because it is closely monitored. Students are well prepared for their future economic well-being through events such as enterprise days, work experience and their good progress in basic skills. In addition, although some students lack confidence, the strong support and guidance they receive is often successful in raising their self-esteem and their aspirations for achievement.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are good in the main school and sixth form. In most lessons, teachers establish excellent relationships with students that result in good behaviour and motivation. Lessons are planned well and usually include a range of activities that maintain students' interest and help them to learn in different ways. Teachers often use resources effectively to make learning more practical and in some cases interactive whiteboards to give their presentations more impact. Teachers know their subjects well and give clear explanations. They use questions well to check students' understanding, but in some lessons do not encourage students sufficiently to join in discussions or take responsibility for their own learning.

Good support is provided for students with learning difficulties. Teachers are very willing to give extra help both in and outside lessons, and this is much appreciated by students and their parents.

The school is improving the quality and consistency of teaching through staff development. In particular, teachers are increasingly using assessment to target learning to students' needs. Marking is generally thorough. In some subjects, students are guided very well in assessing their own work and what they need to improve. However, this good practice is not yet consistent across all subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum in the main school is good. Additional literacy is provided for those needing support with reading. In Years 8 and 9, higher-attaining students take a second foreign language. Special classes are provided to meet the particular needs of higher-attaining and lower-attaining students. The Key Stage 4 curriculum includes a good range of academic subjects and two vocational courses. All students undertake work experience and study information and communication technology (ICT) to GCSE level. The curriculum is adapted effectively to meet individual students' needs, including work-related learning for a small number. Physical education and the personal development course effectively promote students' understanding of safe and healthy lifestyles.

The sixth form curriculum is satisfactory. It includes a wide range of A-level options but these do not always meet the needs of lower attaining students. There is a limited number of vocational courses, in which students achieve well. Religious education is not studied regularly by all students but an annual conference is held to debate issues. The school has plans to extend the range of courses offered to students in the sixth form.

The school provides many extra-curricular opportunities and enrichment activities that help to develop students' enterprise. Specialist science status has widened the range of courses in science and mathematics and strengthened links with partner primary schools. Through specialist status, the good opportunities for gifted and talented students are being further enhanced.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care, guidance and support are good in the main school and sixth form. They contribute very well to students' good progress and personal development. Procedures for child protection and ensuring safety in school are rigorous. Pastoral care is outstanding, led strongly by senior staff and the heads of year. Students know that they are valued as individuals and trust the staff. Students who need additional help in their learning or social development are carefully identified and supported very well through a wide range of programmes. The support is enhanced by outstanding links with other agencies, primary schools and parents. Several parents commented positively about the quality of care.

Academic guidance is also very strong and is a key factor in raising students' aspirations. The headteacher and senior staff take a keen personal interest in every student's progress, through individual interviews and mentoring. Heads of year track progress well and intervene effectively if students are in danger of underachieving. Parents are involved well through two progress review days each year. The quality of monitoring and guidance within subjects is very good in some cases and is currently being made more rigorous and systematic.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good in the main school and the sixth form. The headteacher provides a clear direction and a drive for continual improvement. She is well supported by a strong leadership team. Self-evaluation and planning are good, informed by very thorough analysis of examination performance and good attention to the views of students and parents. As a result, the school knows itself well and is already working on the issues for improvement identified in this inspection.

Heads of department and heads of year monitor the quality of work in their areas well. Clear guidance from the headteacher is leading to increasingly consistent practice. The school is effectively improving the quality of teaching through lesson observations and the sharing of good practice. Specialist science status is making a valuable contribution to these improvements through new leadership posts.

Governance is good. Governors provide strong support for the school's strategic direction, monitor how well it is doing and challenge where necessary. They have good links with teaching departments. Finances are managed well. The historic school buildings enhance the school's tradition and identity, but the many temporary buildings limit its ability to develop the curriculum.

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?	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	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	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	2	
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	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
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	2	

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	3
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 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

2 February 2007

Dear Students

Netherthorpe School, Ralph Road, Staveley, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S43 3PU

Thank you for your help when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you and visiting your lessons and other activities. Many of you told us that you enjoy school and feel proud to belong. Most of you behave very well and you develop well as young people. We were particularly impressed by the outstanding contribution that many of you make to school life - in the school parliament, as peer counsellors and in many other ways.

A feature of your school is the outstanding care from heads of year and other staff that ensures there is extra support available if you need it. Academic guidance is also very strong through the progress review days and the keen interest taken by senior staff, heads of year and your teachers in every student's progress. This helps you to set your sights high and achieve well.

Overall you make good progress and achieve above average results in Year 9 and Year 11. In the sixth form, A-level subject results are average overall, but students take more subjects than is often the case and their total points score is above average. You are well supported by good teaching. Teachers know their subjects well and explain things clearly. In most lessons they establish a good learning atmosphere. You are sometimes too dependent on your teachers, however, and we have asked the school to give you more opportunities in lessons for independent learning.

The school provides you with a good range of subjects and extensive additional opportunities. In the sixth form, there is a good range of AS and A-level subjects, but a small minority of students underachieve because their courses don't suit them. We have asked the school to make sure there are courses available to match the interests and abilities of all sixth form students.

Your school is well led by staff who have your interests at heart and, as a result, standards are rising. We are confident that the school will continue to improve. You can help by taking full advantage of all that the school offers and taking responsibility to achieve the very best that you can.

We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Godwood Lead inspector