



Smithdon High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121157
Local Authority NORFOLK
Inspection number 292036
Inspection dates 18–19 October 2006
Reporting inspector Anthony Knight HMI

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

| | | | |
|---|--------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Type of school | Comprehensive | School address | Downs Road |
| School category | Community | | Hunstanton |
| Age range of pupils | 11–19 | | Norfolk PE36 5HY |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01485 534541 |
| Number on roll (school) | 985 | Fax number | 01485 535251 |
| Number on roll (6th form) | 146 | | |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair | Mr Christopher Gillett |
| | | Headteacher | Mr Jonathon Goodchild |
| Date of previous school inspection | 5 February 2001 | | |

| | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Age group | Inspection dates | Inspection number |
| 11–19 | 18–19 October 2006 | 292036 |

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

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

Description of the school

Smithdon High School is a slightly larger than average size comprehensive school with a sixth form. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. Few pupils are from minority ethnic groups and very few pupils do not have English as their first language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is in line with the national average although there are more pupils with statements. Pupils' attainment on entry is slightly below the national average. The school has specialist status for mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). It has also achieved Sportsmark and Investor in People.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

While the overall effectiveness of Smithdon High School is satisfactory the school has recently made good improvement and is now poised for further progress. The school is led excellently by the headteacher, who has addressed significant staffing issues and established secure mechanisms for school improvement. However the full impact of these systems has yet to be seen.

The school knows itself well and has a clear understanding of what needs to be done to achieve further improvement. For example, the school is aware that in order to increase the progress pupils make, there needs to be greater consistency in the quality of teaching and leadership and management.

Pupils feel safe and generally enjoy school as a result of good care, guidance and support provided. Their personal development and well-being are satisfactory as, while behaviour around the school is generally good, pupils' attitudes towards work, shown for example in lateness to lessons, tend to be too casual. The overall quality of teaching and the curriculum is satisfactory and there are sensible plans to improve teaching through the sharing of good practice. While there is some good teaching, expectations are generally not high enough and pupils need more information about what they can do to improve their work.

Most parents express praise for the school but there is a significant minority who have some concerns about different aspects of the school, in particular that the school does not take sufficient account of their children's views. These concerns are being addressed by the school. The specialist status of mathematics and ICT has enabled the school to improve resources and has had an impact on the quality of learning across the curriculum, for example, through the use of ICT in all lessons. Financial management is strong as the school has successfully managed a significant deficit. The school now offers good value for money and is showing good capacity for improvement.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Sixth form provision is satisfactory overall, with some good features in the personal development and well-being of students and in the quality of care, guidance and support provided for them. They are good signs of improvement, as seen in the significant increase of 30% more students joining the sixth form this year. The sixth form is led well and students enjoy being part of the school community. Students are enthusiastic, mature, and co-operative and make a strong contribution to the school. They benefit from a broad curriculum and enjoy their learning. They feel they get 'a good deal'. They make satisfactory progress and standards are in line with national averages. Teachers have good subject knowledge and make good use of targets to raise the standards of students' work. However, there are not enough opportunities in some lessons for students to develop independence as learners. Links with universities and further education colleges ensure that students are properly equipped for their future careers.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by raising expectations and ensuring all pupils know what they need to do to improve their work.
- Increase consistency in the quality of senior and middle management so that school priorities are implemented effectively.
- Improve pupils' punctuality to lessons.
- Provide more opportunities for students to learn independently in the sixth form.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Pupils' overall attainment in Key Stage 3 has been broadly in line with the national averages over the last three years. Standards are rising in Key Stage 4 but attainment has been significantly below the national averages for the last three years. The average points score and average capped total points score have increased but are still significantly below the national average. However, the rise in the percentage of pupils achieving at least five GCSE passes has taken the school above the national average for the last three years. Pupils' attainment on entry is slightly below the national average and pupils make satisfactory progress overall during Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Particularly good progress is made in mathematics in Key Stage 4. Students in the sixth form make satisfactory progress and attain in line with national averages. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities also make satisfactory progress. The school's targets are challenging and, while they were not met in 2006, there was improvement within each target.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is satisfactory and they behave well around the school. They are friendly and co-operative and have positive relationships with staff and with each other. However, pupils are often late to lessons and some find it difficult to get fully involved in the work. While pupils' attendance has improved, and is now broadly in line with the national average, too many pupils still miss school due to family holidays. The number of exclusions, although still relatively high, has reduced as a result of the new 'behaviour for learning' policy.

Pupils' moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall as while pupils' social development is good there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to consider and explore spiritual issues. Pupils feel safe and are aware of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. Older students contribute much to the school, supporting form tutors and organising successful social events. There is a good school council which is taking an

active part in improving the school. Pupils feel well prepared for life in the sixth form and beyond.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. While there are many good features, the school is aware that there is a need to further improve consistency in the quality of teaching and to ensure high expectations for all pupils. Where lessons are good, teachers use questions that challenge pupils' thinking and develop their learning. In these lessons, teachers have thorough subject knowledge and display a love of their subject, such as in a lesson on Shakespeare. They also adapt lessons to meet the needs of their pupils, use a range of different learning styles and use examples of pupils' best work to raise standards. Pupils enjoy these lessons as learning is made fun and they respond well to the high level of challenge.

However, the focus of the lesson is not always clear and pupils are not given enough information about what they need to do to improve their work. For example, several classrooms have good displays that illustrate different levels of response but these are not always related directly to the task being completed. Lessons in the sixth form do not always enable students to develop independent learning. Pupils' books show little marking that will help them make progress and homework is not set consistently.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum which is broad and balanced. Pupils can study two modern foreign languages in Key Stage 3 and follow vocational courses in Key stage 4. This good breadth is continued into the sixth form curriculum. However, the statutory requirement for religious education is still not being met in the sixth form, although plans are well advanced to ensure its inclusion for all students. There is a good variety of extra-curricular activities and pupils are particularly positive about their experiences in sports and the performing arts.

The school is aware that further work is needed on the timetable to improve the timing of lessons during the week and to take account of the time needed for pupils to travel between lessons. The pupils' lack of punctuality to lessons is significantly reducing the time available for teaching. This is having a negative impact on the extent to which the school can deliver the citizenship curriculum and ensure sufficient time for creative work in subjects such as physical education and music.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The care, guidance and support provided by the school are good. Year 7 pupils are particularly appreciative of the way the school has helped them feel secure and settle in well. Staff work effectively with external agencies to support pupils who may be at risk. Good guidance is offered to pupils about future career and life choices. Secure procedures are in place to ensure the necessary checks on personnel are completed satisfactorily.

Heads of year and the head of inclusion work closely together to ensure pupils receive appropriate individual support. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively across a wide range of subjects. Pupils with special educational needs are identified quickly and individual learning programmes are devised and shared with the rest of the staff. The school has recently established a very well run inclusion centre where excluded pupils can be reintegrated into the school. However, while pupils are supported well pastorally the monitoring of pupils' academic progress and use of this data to identify and support underachieving pupils is at an earlier stage. Some teachers also find it hard to adapt their teaching to meet the very different learning needs of lower attaining pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall with some areas of significant strength. The headteacher, who is respected by staff, governors, pupils and parents, has provided excellent leadership since joining the school two years ago. Important mechanisms for staff development such as the systematic monitoring of teaching and subject reviews are now in place. Difficult staffing issues have been resolved and the school is poised for further improvement. The school is sensibly focusing on improving the effectiveness of senior and middle management to ensure isolated good practice is shared more widely and agreed priorities are carried through more consistently. For example, while there are appropriate procedures for risk assessment, the central record is still being completed. There is also insufficient emphasis on encouraging pupils to arrive punctually to their lessons.

Much of the school's self-evaluation is excellent and there is a good school development plan with clear, appropriate priorities. The governing body is providing good support and most parents are very pleased with the school. However, a significant minority of parents have some concerns about different aspects of the school, in particular that the school does not take sufficient account of their children's views. The school is actively addressing these concerns through, for example, the way that it regularly invites parents' views in the newsletter and acts on the points raised. The role and

potential contribution of the school council are being developed and the pupils involved are keen to ensure all views are shared and discussed openly.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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 |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|

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 | 3 |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 3 | 3 |
| 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? | 3 | 3 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 | 3 |
| 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? | 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? | 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 | 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

20 October 2006

Dear Pupils and Students

Smithdon High School, Downs Road, Hunstanton, Norfolk, PE36 5HY

We enjoyed coming to your school and would like to thank you for welcoming us and talking to us so openly. We were very pleased to see that most of you enjoy being at the school and agree that the school is improving. While we have judged the overall effectiveness of the school to be satisfactory we are clear that much has been done already and the school is beginning to make even greater progress. You have helped the school improve and have a key role in helping to make it even better.

It was good to see that most of you understand that you have to make the most of your time at school if you want to have more choice about what you can do when you leave. Most of you work hard and do well but it is a pity that some still do not realise that every time you miss school it gets more difficult to show what you can really achieve. It would help you if you could ask your parents not to take you on holiday during term time. It is also a pity that many of you arrive late to lessons. This makes it very hard for you to make as much progress as you could. We have asked your headteacher to find ways to make sure all lessons start on time.

We were pleased to see that there is good teaching in many subjects. We have asked your headteacher and subject leaders to find ways to make sure that all teaching increasingly matches the best. We have also asked your teachers to make sure that you always know what you can do to improve your work. You can help by asking your teachers if you are not sure how you could provide a better answer, or piece of work. We have also asked your teachers to make sure they give you helpful information when they mark your work. You can help by reading these comments carefully and making sure that you apply them in your next piece of work.

We were very impressed by the way the sixth form students help younger pupils and support the work of your form tutors. You have a good school council and I know they are keen to hear your views and make sure that they are considered.

It is clear that your school knows what you need and what to do to improve the school even further. I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Knight

Her Majesty's Inspector