



Neatherd High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121182
Local Authority NORFOLK
Inspection number 292045
Inspection dates 20–21 September 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Lindsay Hebditch HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Norwich Road
School category	Community		Dereham
Age range of pupils	11–18		Norfolk NR20 3AX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01362 697981
Number on roll (school)	1187	Fax number	01362 698463
Number on roll (6th form)	343		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs. Susan Ferguson
		Headteacher	Mr. John Horsfield
Date of previous school inspection	3 December 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	20–21 September 2006	292045

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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

Neatherd High School is a large, popular comprehensive school which draws its students from a broad catchment area in Breckland. Some 36% of students travel to school by bus. The number of students attending the school has increased rapidly in recent years. Students entering the school are of above average ability overall, but the proportion of students with learning difficulties is slightly above average and increasing. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average. The school achieved specialist status in modern foreign languages in 2002. The majority of students transfer to Dereham Sixth Form College on completion of their GCSE courses. The college is jointly managed by Neatherd High School and Northgate High School and occupies a separate site with its own specialist facilities. Teaching at the college is shared between teachers from both of the feeder schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of Neatherd High School is good. It is a safe, happy school that cares well for every student. Students enjoy coming to school and attendance is good. Behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. Students feel well cared for whilst at school. They value the high priority which the school attaches to adopting a healthy lifestyle and participate well in a wide range of sporting activities. Students welcome the opportunities they have to extend their learning, for example through the many excellent additional activities available to them because of the school's specialism in modern foreign languages. They also develop a strong sense of community. Older students are well aware of the choices they have for future employment or further education and develop the skills they will require to achieve their goals. The school has trebled in size during the last 10 years, placing a continuing strain on accommodation and resources. The headteacher has been in post throughout this period and has displayed strong and effective leadership in guiding the school through this time of change. Governors share his clear vision of what needs to be done to take the school forward. There has been a clear and successful focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Most students make good progress, although there are not enough learning support assistants to provide help for all of the students who need it. High standards have been maintained. Key Stage 3 test results are very good. The school has maintained pass rates at GCSE which are well above the national average, with boys achieving particularly good results. There are excellent opportunities for the more able students to take some of their GCSEs early and then start on more advanced work. The school is aware however that the development of its curriculum at Key Stage 4 has not kept pace with the increasing demand for courses other than GCSEs. There are currently insufficient opportunities for students to follow alternative vocational courses. The school is accurate in its own evaluation of the quality of provision and its effectiveness, and has good capacity to make further improvements. It provides good value for money. The majority of parents are very pleased with the education which the school provides and the standards it achieves.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Sixth form provision is good overall, with some outstanding features in the personal development and well-being of students and in the quality of care, guidance and support provided for them. Students are especially well supported by tutors in how to manage their work, and very well informed about careers and choices in higher education. Students enjoy their learning, make good progress and reach standards at GCE AS and A-level which are above the national average. Very few students do not complete the courses they begin. The sixth form curriculum gives a good choice of GCE AS and A-level courses, but the absence of lower-level courses denies opportunity to students of lesser attainment who lack alternative provision locally. Students are articulate, confident and have mature and highly positive attitudes to learning. They have a strong work ethic, shown by a determination to gain further skills and

qualifications to reach economic independence. The college has created in the sixth form a safe, supportive and challenging environment in which most students flourish and mature as fine young adults.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the range of vocational courses to meet the needs of all students at Key Stage 4. - Provide a range of courses below advanced level to meet the needs of all students from the contributing high schools in the sixth form. - Increase the number of learning support assistants.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Achievement and standards are good in the main school and in the sixth form. Students' attainment on entry to the school varies a little from year to year but their standards are generally above average for their age. They make good progress in Years 7 to 9 and reach standards which are well above average in the national tests at the end of Year 9. In 2005 some 25% of students took GCSE in French and ICT at the end of Year 9 and achieved outstanding results. Students make good progress overall in Years 10 and 11 but the school recognises that some girls of lower ability do not make the progress that they should. The school has maintained GCSE pass rates at grades A*-C which are well above the national average in each year since the last inspection and the proportion of students who achieve five GCSE grades A*- C including English and mathematics is high. Students with learning difficulties, those of minority ethnic heritage and looked after children achieve at least as well as expected of them, compared to their starting points. Sixth form students make good progress and achieve well. Consequently, they attain standards above the national average on advanced courses. Students and parents are pleased with standards in the school and in the sixth form college.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The personal development and well-being of pupils are good. Students feel confident and safe and most of them thoroughly enjoy coming to school. Consequently attendance is good. Behaviour is mostly good, although the misbehaviour of a small minority of students sometimes detracts from the learning of others. Bullying is rare and decisive action is taken in response to any reported incidents. Younger students particularly value the mentoring which is provided by some of their older colleagues. Students are pleased with the improvements to school meals and generally make healthy choices. They also enjoy plenty of energetic physical activity through timetabled lessons and the wide variety of lunch and after school clubs. Students' spiritual, moral,

social and cultural development is good. The school provides good opportunities for students to contribute to their community. Fund raising is an important aspect of school life. Students value the opportunity to bring about changes in the school through the activities of the school council. Prefects and monitors have a high profile in school and develop good leadership skills. Students are acquiring good skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT that are equipping them well for employment. Sixth form students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Their behaviour is exemplary and they are highly motivated to learn.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Many lessons are characterised by enthusiastic and knowledgeable teachers, the use of a variety of challenging tasks and a considerable amount of enjoyment. Such lessons are planned to include clear learning objectives which are well matched to students' differing learning needs. In the majority of subjects, students work in pairs and small groups to solve problems and analyse their learning to good effect. Teachers and students are well supported by learning support assistants, when they are present. In a few less productive lessons students are not always clear about the standards they are expected to reach, the pace of learning drops and they become distracted. Sometimes teachers are slow to deal with any consequent misbehaviour. Teachers set homework consistently and mark work in detail so that students and their parents have a clear understanding of how they might improve. Teaching in the sixth form is good and helps students to learn independently. As a result they gain in confidence, make good progress and reach standards which are above the national average.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school's curriculum is good. The curriculum meets all statutory requirements and provides a large range of optional subjects. Students follow a broad programme that includes good experience of modern foreign languages, meeting the requirements of the school's specialist language school status. The most able students take GCSEs in French and information and communication technology (ICT) at the end of Year 9. They then go on to take GCE AS level French in Years 10 and 11 and may also take GCE AS information technology (IT). This accelerated provision has led to some outstanding results in external examinations. Some students in Years 10 and 11 attend college for one day each week to follow courses in such areas as horticulture and animal husbandry. In its self-evaluation the school has correctly identified the need to widen the curriculum to provide opportunities for students of all abilities in

vocational subjects and plans to extend this provision in future. Throughout the school students benefit from the excellent opportunities they have to participate in sports. An imaginative range of extra-curricular activities includes a science club that enables students to achieve the British Association Science Communicators' award and the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme. The sixth form curriculum is satisfactory. It provides a good choice of advanced courses, but the absence of lower-level courses denies opportunity to students of lesser attainment who lack alternative provision locally.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school provides good care, guidance and support for its students. Rigorous procedures ensure students' health, welfare and safety. Child protection procedures are fully in place and well understood. Care for vulnerable students, in conjunction with other agencies, is a particular strength. Arrangements for the safety of students are very effective. For example, many travel long distances to the school but the arrival and departure of buses is extremely well organised and supervised to ensure safety. Learning support assistants have been well trained to provide help in the classroom for individual students who need it. However there are too few assistants for the growing number of children with special educational needs. Systems for tracking how well students are progressing are effective. Students' individual short-term targets are well established and help each student to do their best. They receive good advice to support the choices they make in their future education and training. Parents report that the school seeks their views and are in the main very happy with the support given to their children. The care, guidance and support that sixth formers receive are outstanding. Tutors are highly committed to helping individuals to manage life and work problems and students greatly appreciate the help they receive.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides strong and effective leadership for the school. Parents, teachers and governors respect and share his dedication to promoting high standards of behaviour and achievement for all students. Senior managers have complementary skills and form a cohesive team, effectively driving forward new developments. Self-evaluation presents an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses and is used well to inform school planning. Planning procedures are good. The priorities in the school improvement and development plan form the basis of subject reviews and action plans. There are comprehensive reviews of the progress which is being made against the targets contained in the plans throughout the year. The school has good systems for monitoring the quality of lessons and managers have a good understanding of teaching strengths and weaknesses. Effective staff development procedures are in place and the school

is working hard to improve still further the skills of teachers. Resources are used efficiently and effectively. The school has used its specialist status well to improve its resources, particularly in terms of the plentiful computers and interactive whiteboards in the school. The strong team of governors discharge their duties well. They have a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are highly supportive, yet provide sufficient challenge to the headteacher and managers when they think it is necessary. Financial planning is secure. Value for money is good. Leadership and management in the sixth form are good. The director and senior staff effectively balance the input of the two contributing high schools while retaining the college's own sense of identity. Heads of department co-ordinate the input from the staff of the two contributing high schools extremely effectively.

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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?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	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	2
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	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	1
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	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
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	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

22 September 2006 Dear Students Neatherd High School, Norwich Road, Dereham, Norfolk NR20 3AX I'd like to tell you what our inspectors thought of your school when we visited it recently. We met and talked to quite a few of you during our two days at the school. We watched some of your lessons and looked at the quality of your work. We were also pleased that so many of your parents wrote to us to tell us what they thought about the school. We think that Neatherd High School is a good school that is improving all the time. We think that it is a safe and happy school which cares well for all of you. We were pleased to see very good behaviour around the school and in lessons. We saw some very interesting lessons and thought like you that teachers really help you to do your best. You told us how much support they give, both during and outside of lessons. This is reflected in the good examination results you achieve. You have very good opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities, particularly in sport, languages and charity work. We were very impressed with the various international events which you participate in. We identified three things that the school could do to help it improve further. These were: - Develop the range of vocational courses to meet the needs of all students at Key Stage 4. - Provide a range of courses below advanced level in the sixth form to meet the needs of all students from the contributing high schools. - Increase the number of learning support assistants. Keep up the good work, and thanks for your help. Lindsay Hebditch HMI