

Notre Dame High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121189
Local Authority	NORFOLK
Inspection number	292046
Inspection dates	14–15 May 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 category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1297
6th form	377
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Linda Bennett
Headteacher	Mr John Pinnington
Date of previous school inspection	25 February 2002
School address	Surrey Street Norwich Norfolk NR1 3PB
Telephone number	01603 611431
Fax number	01603 763381

Age group	11–19
Inspection dates	14–15 May 2007
Inspection number	292046

© Crown copyright 2007

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 five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is above average in size and has a large sixth form. It is considerably oversubscribed. It is the only Catholic high school in Norfolk or North Suffolk and hence many students travel long distances. Half of the sixth form students join from other schools.

The school's socio-economic context is average, although the proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average. It has an average proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds, although fewer than average speak English as an additional language. Students' attainment on entry is a little above average. The proportion who have learning difficulties or disabilities is a little below average.

The school is a specialist school for both languages and science. It is also a training school. It has many partnerships with schools in the local area and across the world. In Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, it collaborates with other local schools and colleges to provide additional courses. The school has many awards - Healthy Schools, Investors in People, Eco-School, Artsmark Silver, Sportsmark, Work-Related Learning Silver, International Schools and the Princess Diana Memorial Award.

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 with outstanding features. It has a very special ethos that stems from the way it is led and the strong emphasis placed on its Catholic principles. Students' enjoy school, and this is evident in the excellent relationships and trust between students and adults. The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. Students feel safe and make a very positive contribution to their community, both within and outside the school. Their personal development and well-being are outstanding.

The school is also exceptional in the extent and quality of innovation. It evaluates its work well and strives for continual improvement. As a result it is an exciting place for students and staff. The two subject specialisms have had a very positive impact on students' opportunities and standards. Languages in particular, which has been established for longer, has broadened students' outlook through the many international links. Staff development is a high priority and is supported well through the training school initiative. The curriculum is good and is under development to provide an even better match to students' individual needs and interests.

Leadership and management are good overall and in some respects outstanding. Recent improvements in management have led to a rise in standards over the past two years. In particular, the use of assessment to set targets for individual students, track their progress and provide additional support where necessary is very rigorous. The links between senior and middle managers have been strengthened and have thus improved the work of departments. However, these developments have not yet had a full impact on raising standards because there remains too much variation in the quality of departmental management. Governors make an outstanding contribution. Resources are very well managed and the school provides good value for money. It has good capacity to improve further.

Students achieve well throughout the school and reach standards that are well above average. In Key Stage 3, progress has been consistently good. GCSE results show a rising trend but in 2004 and 2005 progress on GCSE and A-level courses was less impressive than in Key Stage 3. In 2006, the measures taken by the school led to significantly better progress at both stages and the higher standards have been sustained this year.

The quality of teaching is good, and sometimes outstanding, although not consistently so. Most lessons are well planned and interesting, and enable students to think for themselves and make good progress. Students generally behave very well. In a minority of less successful lessons, however, a small minority of students are not challenged sufficiently and in some cases not managed well enough, leading to low-level disruption. The training school contributes well to improvements in teaching.

Most parents are very positive about the school, several commenting particularly on the high quality care and their children's increasing confidence. A minority of parents expressed concern about variations in behaviour and teaching quality and about long gaps between parents' evenings, on which the school is taking action.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is good with outstanding features. It is a supportive and challenging environment in which most students flourish. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching that combines opportunities for independent learning with very good support. Students much enjoy learning

as a result of their excellent relationships with teachers. Their attendance is good and almost all complete the courses they begin. Their personal development is outstanding, with very good opportunities to take responsibility, including mentoring younger students.

The sixth form is well led, providing outstanding guidance for students and a wide range of courses. Students are very well informed about their career choices and almost all progress successfully to higher education.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve students' progress through ensuring that teaching is consistently good.
- Improve the consistency of middle management in the rigour of monitoring, evaluation and planning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Achievement and standards are good in the main school and the sixth form. Students' attainment on entry is a little above average. They make good progress and achieve standards that are well above average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11.

Year 9 test results are consistently above average and in 2006 were exceptionally high in English, mathematics and science. Progress is good and has improved steadily over the past three years, although in 2006 it was better in English and science than in mathematics. Students from all backgrounds made similarly good progress, as did both boys and girls. Students with learning difficulties made good progress.

GCSE results are well above average and show an improving trend over the past three years. In 2006 all students gained at least one pass and almost all gained at least five. The proportion gaining at least five A* to C grades including English and mathematics was well above average. Prior to 2006, however, the progress made in Key Stage 4 was less impressive than in Key Stage 3. In 2006, it improved significantly and was good overall, although progress in English and mathematics still lagged behind students' overall performance. The school sets itself challenging targets. In 2006 it met most of these, including its specialist targets for science and languages, which are among the highest performing subjects. The improvements last year have been sustained and standards in the current Year 11 are on a par with the 2006 results.

Attainment on entry to the sixth form is broadly in line with the national average for A-level courses. Students make good progress and achieve above average A-level results. Students' progress and their results improved significantly in 2006. This rise in standards has been sustained and taken further in the current school year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. The school welcomes students from a broad range of social and cultural backgrounds and succeeds in creating a harmonious community. The strong Catholic ethos threads through the school, having a positive influence on students' attitudes and relationships.

Teachers' enthusiasm and their excellent relationships with students result in outstanding enjoyment of learning. Students' attendance at school is above average. They are caring towards one another and hence feel very safe. Behaviour is good. Most students behave very well, but they are let down by a small minority whose immature behaviour impacts on the learning of others in a few lessons. Most students embrace a healthy lifestyle and participate in many sporting activities, although the amount of physical education in Key Stage 4 is a little low.

Students show concern for others and make an outstanding contribution to their school and wider community. They have many responsibilities and are active in supporting younger students. The school council plays a leading role in representing students' views. Many students are active in charity work. Students' academic and social skills give them a very strong start to their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and in most lessons use this well to plan interesting activities. Many lessons benefit from excellent rapport between students and teacher, with students showing much enjoyment in learning. Teachers often use questions well to explore and extend students' understanding, although they do not always encourage students sufficiently to explain their thinking to the whole class. Learning support assistants contribute well to the progress made by students with learning difficulties.

The best lessons challenge students to think for themselves, often working in groups, which they do well. Students know what they are aiming at and evaluate their own progress. In a small minority of less successful lessons, however, the activities do not engage or challenge students enough. In these lessons, students are unaware of their targets and in some cases lose concentration. Marking is often good, but in a few classes students' work is left unmarked or lacks sufficient feedback on how to improve.

Teaching in the sixth form is good. It is well informed and clear, giving students good opportunities to learn independently. The training school has had a positive impact on teachers' professional development through sharing good practice and reducing inconsistency in the quality of teaching.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum is good in the main school and outstanding in the sixth form. In both stages, there are exciting and robust plans to widen the opportunities and hence meet students' individual needs even better.

The Key Stage 3 curriculum is enhanced by drama and a second language. Flexible planning allows able students to start some GCSE courses early. There is good provision for students with learning difficulties and those who speak English as an additional language. The Key Stage 4 curriculum includes a wide range of GCSE options and a number of vocational opportunities, including college courses and Young Apprentices.

The sixth form curriculum offers a very wide range of A-level courses, mostly academic with a few vocational. The choices are further extended through the school's collaboration with other schools and a college. Trips and activities make a significant contribution to students' development.

Specialist status has had a very positive impact on the opportunities available. This includes new courses in science and an exceptional number of languages, as well as other activities. Students' learning is enriched by a particularly wide range of extra-curricular activities and the school's many links with schools in other countries. These contribute to the good provision for gifted and talented students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding, giving students self-confidence and security. Students have very good relationships with their form tutors and heads of year, trusting them to resolve any problems effectively. There are rigorous procedures to safeguard students and ensure safety in school. Good attendance is promoted well.

Students' progress is monitored very thoroughly, with fortnightly individual meetings with tutors, regular assessment of attainment in relation to targets and termly reporting to parents. Heads of year provide very good academic support, checking individual students' progress and providing additional support where needed.

Many sixth form and Year 11 students provide an excellent example to younger students and contribute to their care through peer mentoring. The achievement support centre provides strong support for students with behavioural difficulties. Students are prepared well for their educational and career choices. Sixth form students are particularly appreciative of the support provided by teachers and tutors.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good and in some respects outstanding. The headteacher provides a very clear vision to guide the school. He and senior leaders have created a distinctive ethos of a caring, inclusive school that is outward looking and embraces educational development. These features help to bond staff and inspire them to pursue excellence with dedication and enthusiasm. The language and science specialisms and the training school are all well led and have resulted in significant curriculum enhancement.

The headteacher has developed an able and confident senior leadership team. They are empowered to make substantive developments, such as improving the rigour in the line management of departments. Senior staff use assessment data exceptionally well to identify strengths and weaknesses in the performance of individual students or subjects and take action appropriately. The school is thorough in evaluating its work and planning improvements. Teaching is monitored regularly, although the approach to monitoring teaching and students' work is not sufficiently consistent across the school.

Subject leaders are increasingly involved in self-evaluation and planning. Middle management is good overall, but varies in how well managers use data to check performance and set clear planning targets. The leadership and management of special needs provision are good and much improved since the last inspection.

Governance is outstanding. Governors are very involved in the life of the school and know its strengths and weaknesses very well. They are supportive and yet very effective 'critical friends'.

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?	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	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	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	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
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	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	1
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.

Annex A

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	1	
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	1	
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

16 May 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Notre Dame High School, Norwich NR1 3PB

We enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you for your help and sharing your views with us. Many of you told us that you enjoy the school very much. We agree that it is a good school and in some respects outstanding.

The school has a very special atmosphere due to the way it is run on Catholic principles. Relationships are very good, with mutual respect and trust between students and adults. Teachers provide outstanding care and guidance and as a result you develop exceptionally well as young people. We were pleased to see that many of you take on responsibilities and support younger students. Most of you behave extremely well, though in a few lessons some disruption spoils things for others.

You told us that the school is continually improving. Staff regularly bring in new ideas and make it an exciting place to be. This gives you many extra opportunities, including those resulting from the languages and science specialisms and the links with local and overseas schools. Students in Years 10 and 11 have a good range of courses to choose from; in the sixth form the range is outstanding.

Overall you make good progress and the examination results are well above average. The target setting, mentoring and extra support that teachers provide contribute well to that. Teaching is good overall. It is often interesting and challenging, but, as some of you told us, not all the teaching is as good. We have asked the school, therefore, to focus particularly on increasing the number of good and outstanding lessons.

The school is well led and managed. There have been recent improvements in the way senior staff track your progress and check how well things are going. As a result, standards are rising. However, management systems are not equally good throughout the school and we have asked the school to make sure that all departments are rigorous in checking quality and planning improvements.

We are confident that the school will continue to improve. You can help by making sure you know what to do to reach your targets and concentrating in all lessons. We wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Godwood Lead inspector