



The Minster School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 122898
Local Authority NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Inspection number 292536
Inspection dates 31 January –1 February 2007
Reporting inspector David Martin HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Nottingham Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Southwell
Age range of pupils	8–19		Nottinghamshire NG25 0LG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01636 814000
Number on roll (school)	1191	Fax number	01636 814788
Number on roll (6th form)	334	Chair	Mr A W Poole
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Headteacher	Canon P J Blinston
Date of previous school inspection	25 November 2002		

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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

The Minster School is in many ways unique, having a small junior department that consists of Southwell Minster choristers and talented musicians. It is also a larger than average secondary school with a relatively large sixth form and has specialist status in humanities and music. The school draws its students from a very wide area, most of which is significantly advantaged in socio-economic terms. The great majority of students are from White British backgrounds, with a very small proportion having English as an additional language. A relatively small proportion of students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or statements of special educational need. The school currently operates on a split site that entails much student movement. This should improve with the opening of the new school building.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Minster School offers its students a good standard of education. Specialist status in humanities and music contributes strongly to the outstanding partnership working in the community, as well as in raising standards in key areas of the school's work. Students have an excellent preparation for the future through well developed basic skills and very good examination results. Alongside this, personal and social development is very strong, and is outstanding by the time students are in the sixth form, as a result of high quality care, guidance and support.

Pupils get off to a sound start in the junior department. Their attainment on entry is well above average; they progress satisfactorily and attain very high standards at the end of Year 6. Teaching is well planned and delivered, although there are issues of matching the work to all pupils in a mixed age class that still need to be considered at times. The musical enrichment offered to this group of pupils is exceptional, and greatly appreciated. Students are enquiring and imaginative and show very strong personal qualities.

Sound progress is seen when students enter the main school, both in their academic performance and personal growth. Test results show that very high standards are maintained, with all students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, making similar progress. Students are very aware of local, national and international issues and are involved in a range of charitable and social initiatives. They demonstrate excellent cultural, spiritual, moral and social awareness through such experiences and in the mature way in which they interact with each other and with adults. They show an increased independence in their learning and continue to have very positive attitudes, as shown in high attendance figures and their willingness to contribute in class. Progress accelerates in the later years. Results at GCSE are very high, commendably so in English and mathematics but also in a range of other subjects. Students take on greater responsibility and become very involved in having a real voice in the school, for example through the school council.

This good progress in students' academic and personal development is a result of good provision across the whole range of the school's work. Teaching is usually good, and sometimes inspirational, although this good practice is not yet consistent in all subjects. Teachers do not always adapt tasks to meet the needs of different abilities. The curriculum is well matched to students' needs and aspirations, except that vocational elements are at an early stage of development. Students are well cared for and supported, despite the difficulties of the split site.

The sustained progress made by the school in recent years is due to the clear focus of school leaders and governors. They have, through rigorous monitoring and evaluation, identified appropriate priorities for improvement. These have been pursued with urgency, always leading to strong improvement. Weaknesses at the last inspection, including information and communication technology (ICT) are developing well. This demonstrates good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form is good. There are some outstanding features. Good curriculum provision is based on a wide choice of Level 3 courses but there is no vocational Level 2 provision. Good, well-planned teaching leads to good progress and high standards. Performance at A Level shows a steady and sustained improvement over five years and is above average. Students make good progress in almost all subjects. Students' personal development and the provision for care, welfare and guidance are outstanding. They appreciate the guidance in preparing for the sixth form and the academic and personal support in their sixth form courses. Assessment and target-setting contribute significantly to their achievement. Students make a significant contribution to the school by mentoring younger students, providing a homework club and in many other ways, including accreditation through sports leadership. Their contribution to the wider community includes raising money to improve a school in Uganda. They fully discharge their responsibility as role models for younger students and acknowledge their pride in belonging to the school. They enjoy their time in the sixth form such that almost all students complete the full two-year course. Through good leadership and management the capacity to further improve sixth form provision is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Match work more carefully to students' different abilities, particularly by adapting tasks, when appropriate.
- Ensure that the best practice in teaching and learning is identified and shared in order to further improve student attainment.
- Implement existing plans to extend the curriculum 14-19, including a wider vocational choice.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The attainment of students on entry to the junior department is very high. Standards reached by the end of Key Stage 2 are very high overall, being strongest in English and relatively weaker in science. Students make satisfactory progress from their starting points.

At Key Stage 3 standards are very high overall and were exceptionally high in English and mathematics in 2005. In 2006 English has improved further at higher levels and mathematics and science results were all higher than in 2005. Students make at least satisfactory progress from very high starting points. At Key Stage 4 results overall have been exceptionally high over time as measured by capped average points scores. Results fell back a little in 2006, making present standards good. Students make good

progress, particularly the proportion achieving 5 A*-C grades including English and mathematics. No groups of students underachieve.

In the sixth form standards are again well above national averages. Despite very high standards on entry, students continue to make good progress, generally better at A Level than at AS Level.

The school sets ambitious targets and has a good track record in meeting them; there is no sense of complacency in its ambition for students.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students' personal development and well-being are good in the main school and outstanding in the sixth form. Students learn in a supportive and inclusive environment where they feel safe and valued as individuals. They are proud of the school and many become enthusiastic, independent learners who enjoy all aspects of school life. During lessons most students concentrate well and work hard. Many are articulate and contribute enthusiastically during discussion and group work. Attendance is good and above the national average. Students establish good relationships with one another and with all adults who work in the school. Many students develop a keen awareness of healthy lifestyles. Although concern was expressed in some parental survey returns, behaviour is good during most lessons. There is a minority of students who can become rather over-exuberant as they move around the school. However, the self-disciplined manner in which most students move between the two sites is commendable. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

Students are enthusiastic about their involvement in an exceptionally wide range of additional activities. They make a particularly strong contribution to the life of the school and wider community, especially through the specialist school status. Students have a strong voice through the school council and are proactive in their involvement in making decisions about improvements to the school. This helps them to develop important skills and experience which, along with good achievement prepares, them exceptionally well for adult life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching is good overall. There are some outstanding features. In the best lessons, teaching is stimulating and well paced and provides an appropriate level of challenge for different learners. In some excellent lessons, teachers encourage students to learn independently and assess each others' work but this is not yet

embedded across the school. Skilful questioning and the appropriate use of student self evaluation leads to students making good progress. Work is not always well matched to the different abilities of students within a class, particularly in terms of providing different tasks when appropriate.

Teachers have high expectations of students' work and attitudes and the majority manage their lessons effectively to ensure that students remain focused and enthusiastic about their learning. Most teachers create a positive and supportive environment where students respond well, work hard and make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of the curriculum is good and offers a well balanced, traditional provision which allows students to progress and perform well. However there is not enough emphasis on the provision of vocational education. There has been a marked improvement in the attitude of students to modern foreign languages (MFL) in recent years. There is a strong emphasis on music in the school, reflecting its specialist status. The school recognises the difference between students with high ability and the talented. Arrangements are made to ensure that students are able to develop their talents, especially in the areas of music, languages and sport.

Information and communication technology (ICT) is now developing well in the school and is being developed across the curriculum as a tool for learning. All departments are working closely together to develop expertise in the use of hardware and dedicated programmes to support and enhance student learning and progress. The learning support team liaises closely with individual departments to ensure that the curriculum is accessible to everyone. There is a strong emphasis on developing literacy across the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support is good in the main school and outstanding in the sixth form. There is a clear emphasis on nurturing and developing students and helping them to reach their full potential. The staff are firmly committed to caring for students and providing them with good pastoral support. There are good procedures to identify students who may be at risk of under-achievement and their progress is closely monitored. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported. The arrangements for safeguarding students are good and well managed. The school follows good procedures for child protection and to monitor all health and safety issues.

Good careers guidance is available to all students and there is a dedicated work related learning programme in Year 10. This develops students' strong understanding of the

world of work, including financial awareness. There is a wide and varied range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in music and physical education. This breadth of provision supports students' interests and adds further enjoyment to their school experience.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good. Leaders and managers at all levels work efficiently within clearly defined roles and responsibilities to set clear direction. This has resulted in consistent growth and improvement. The far-sighted vision shown by the headteacher, governors and senior leaders in gaining funding for the specialist school status and a much-needed new building is inspirational, helping raise standards and contributing to students' personal development. All staff know their responsibilities in managing change co-operatively, and subject leaders apply rigorous quality standards to help improve students' achievement.

The school's self evaluation accurately identifies strengths, but does not fully reflect the success already achieved in areas such as ICT. Development plans focus clearly on areas for further development. The school's outstanding systems of financial control reflect a pro-active and highly committed governing body. Governors bring an outstanding range of expertise and experience and ensure that all statutory requirements are fully met. Monitoring and collection of data to set targets for students and track their progress is good. The school has rightly identified training to share the best practice in teaching and learning as a priority.

The school promotes equality of opportunity and ways of tackling discrimination well, aided by outside links and support. Communication was a concern expressed by some parents, although this was felt to be improving. The school has also developed some excellent partnerships with other schools, including a local school in challenging circumstances, to which it has given a great deal of support. Students and staff enthusiastically raise funds to help a new school in Uganda. The school offers good value for money and shows a good capacity to sustain the considerable improvements already made.

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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?	1	2
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?	2	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	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	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?	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	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

2 February 2007

Dear Students

The Minster School, Nottingham Road, Southwell, Nottinghamshire, NG25 0LG

I am writing to tell you what the inspection team found on our recent visit to your school. Firstly though, I need to thank you on behalf of the team for the mature way in which you gave us your views of the school and for your friendliness in classes and around the site.

Minster school is a good school. These are some of the things that the school does very well, many of which you told us about:

- The specialist subject areas of humanities and music add a great deal to the life of the school and its outstanding links with the wider community.
- Students have an excellent preparation for their future lives through very good examination results and strong personal, social and spiritual development.
- This is particularly true by the time students reach the sixth form, where they are mature, considerate and well-rounded adults.
- All students make good progress in their learning as they move through the school.
- Teaching is usually good and you have access to a good range of subject choices.
- Adults manage your school with great energy and focus to improve your educational opportunities; they have even secured the funding of a new building!

Your school has been steadily improving over recent years. In order to build on this improvement in the future we have asked the headteacher and his staff to:

- match work even more carefully to students' different abilities.
- ensure that the very best teaching approaches are shared more.
- extend the choices offered to older students to include more vocational options.

Finally, the inspection team wishes you all well in the exciting times ahead, both in your 'new' school and your future lives. Your school has many things to celebrate, but its young people are undoubtedly its greatest asset!

Yours sincerely

David Martin HMI