

# North Axholme School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118093
<b>Local Authority</b>	North Lincolnshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	301960
<b>Inspection dates</b>	4–5 July 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Susan Bowles HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	540
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Leesa Murray
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Joe Sellars
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 March 2003
<b>School address</b>	Wharf Road Crowle Scunthorpe DN17 4HU
<b>Telephone number</b>	01724 710368
<b>Fax number</b>	01724 711923

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<b>Age group</b>	11–16
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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

North Axholme is a smaller than average secondary school. The number of students has grown by 10% over the past four years. Almost all students are of White British ethnicity and all speak English as their first language. The socio-economic profile of the area from which the school draws students is about typical, neither advantaged nor disadvantaged. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is below average, although the area experiences some rural deprivation. Although the school takes students from across the whole ability range, standards on entry to the school overall are a little below average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is half the average, although the proportion with statements of special educational need is double.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

North Axholme School provides a satisfactory education for its students. It is an improving school with several good features, including the teaching and the curriculum it offers. The care, support and guidance given to students have some outstanding features. Students' personal development and well-being are good overall, while their academic progress is satisfactory. The school has begun to make progress towards its ambition of providing top class education.

This is an efficient, friendly and inclusive school, where every young person is known and supported well. Drawing on the enthusiasm and commitment of staff, the strengths of its community and its effective links with partners, it offers a good range of opportunities for developing students' talents, interests and understanding of the wider world, as well as very good support for individual needs. The school band and many sports teams make a notable contribution to the local community. Every display in the school speaks of the pride taken in students' achievement and the encouragement for all students to broaden their outlook and aim high.

A strong effort is being made to raise achievement by updating the curriculum and improving the quality of teaching and learning. Both are now good overall, and outcomes are satisfactory and improving. Challenges and risks remain: students need to make better progress in mathematics and science. Further professional development for teachers and middle managers is needed to bring all teaching up to the quality of the best, particularly in using assessment effectively. However, the school's leaders, including the governors, know its strengths and weaknesses well and plan effectively for change. They have a sound track record in tackling weaknesses and show strong resolution to work with staff, parents and students to achieve high quality. The school's capacity for further improvement is good.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement, particularly in mathematics and science.
- Develop teachers' skills in using assessment to support students' learning.
- Build on existing best practice in the school to develop middle leaders' skills in rigorous monitoring and self-evaluation and in leading improvement.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. Standards have improved and are broadly in line with the national average. Students' standards when they enter the school are typically slightly below average. For the past three years, outcomes for those leaving in Year 11 have also been below average. Last year's 2006 cohort showed an improvement: a half of all students gained five or more good grades at GCSE. This was just below the national average and the school's target. It was a step forward and the best performance by the school in 13 years. The upcoming cohorts are doing better still. Results are moving upward at the same pace as the national trend. For two years running, Year 9 students have made better than average progress in Key Stage 3. Their achievement in 2006 placed them at the top of the list of local schools and above average for

achievement nationally. The school's own monitoring indicates that this better progress should feed through into above average results for the current Year 11 and an increase in the students reaching the highest levels in Year 9.

No identifiable groups of students underachieve, though a small number of individuals seriously underachieved in 2006. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities consistently achieve in line with others, satisfactorily. There is a similarly sound track record for the few students from minority ethnic backgrounds. However, those who take free school meals achieve slightly below the mean for similar students. In 2006, when boys outnumbered girls, they made better progress, but that was a blip and there is no unusual pattern of gender difference.

The English department has set a good pace in raising achievement. Students make good progress in English at both key stages, though few students gain the highest levels in Year 9. Students make satisfactory progress in mathematics and science at Key Stage 3. Standards in mathematics have risen but are still significantly below average at GCSE. The proportion of students gaining five or more good grades at GCSE including mathematics and English, recognised as an important indicator for future life chances, stood at 35% in 2006, below the national median and below the school's performance in 2004. The introduction of new qualifications has considerably increased the proportion of 16-year-olds with qualifications in functional mathematics and literacy in 2007, so prospects are better. Improving standards and achievement, particularly in mathematics and science, is a key area for improvement.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The personal development of students is good. Students enjoy school because it offers them lots of opportunities to improve their learning and to develop new skills. Many enter school with a significant lack of confidence and, from this starting point, acquire good attitudes and behaviour.

Students behave well in lessons and around school and staff manage the small minority of students with less self-discipline very effectively. The support of key staff in managing behaviour and innovations such as the anti-bullying club, formed and organized by students, are proving successful in dealing with aspects of anti-social behaviour. Students feel increasingly safe in school. Bullying incidents are few and are dealt with, although a few parents would like a swifter resolution. Around the school, incidents of vandalism and theft are rare, and this is partly because of the respect students have for the school and its staff. Attendance has risen steadily as a result of rigorous monitoring by the school and external services and is now good. The school is taking steps to reduce the number of students excluded, which is steady and broadly average.

Students are proud of their school and are keen to see it improve further. Year 11 students were happy to return to school after they had officially left to help appoint the next generation of school prefects and to test out the new candidates' assertions of what they wished to contribute to school life. Students respond well to the responsibilities that the school entrusts them with. This is apparent in the work of the recently revived school council, which represents the views of all year groups and has been a major force in introducing healthy snacks and changing lunchtime menus. They are active in organising charity fund-raising for local and school initiatives, but hold mixed feelings amongst themselves as to whether they are ready to run the council without staff support. Students' adoption of healthy lifestyles is good: they participate heavily in sport and most accept the wisdom of healthy eating. The school's cafeteria

menu has been improved to ensure that students can eat healthily, although not all students choose to take up these options.

Students' spiritual and moral development is well supported in assemblies and during cultural studies. Many take part in a wide range of artistic, musical and sporting activities and performances and in charitable fund raising. Students respond well to opportunities for reflection; for example, in an assembly when they were asked to consider the responsibility they have for safeguarding the future of the world. A varied programme of visits outside school, which includes residential trips both locally and in Italy and France, supports students' social and cultural development. Their preparation for life in an increasingly multi-ethnic society is more limited, but they show respect for people different from themselves. Work experience and work-related learning bring students into contact with local businesses and effectively prepares them for their economic future. However, for many students, basic skills which are no better than satisfactory limit their future progress.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. The lessons observed by inspectors were mainly good or satisfactory with some outstanding teaching. Classroom observation by the leadership team and the subject co-ordinators has been a focus of considerable attention since the last inspection. This work has led to an improvement in the proportion of well-structured lessons, carefully tailored to students' needs, and in the development of a varied range of teaching methods. Effective use of interactive whiteboard technology, power point presentations and open-ended questioning ensures that students make satisfactory and sometimes good progress. Teachers' good subject knowledge and positive relationships support students well in the next step of their learning. Generally, students are attentive and show respect for their teachers and, in the better lessons, students enjoy working really hard whatever their ability. In the best lessons seen, practical and investigative activities, opportunities for students to read and think for themselves, well-managed group work and discussions motivated and challenged all students, including the most able. In the lessons that were judged no better than satisfactory, students' progress was restricted because teachers' use of assessment to support students' learning was not applied consistently.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good. It is currently under review to make it even more relevant to the needs of the students and to offer them a more personalised curriculum. Statutory requirements are met and, as its Artsmark Gold and Sportsmark awards indicate, the school offers breadth and quality. The school provides a good and expanding range of new qualifications for its students, including vocational courses that are well suited to the full range of students' needs. Subject departments make good use of the national secondary strategy to enhance teaching and learning in their subjects. The students' ICT skills are improving with the provision of new ICT resources. Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well planned. The personal, social, health and citizenship education programme contributes well to students' knowledge and understanding of healthy and safe lifestyles and ensures that they are informed about future career and further education opportunities.

The extra curricular programme contributes positively to students' enjoyment and achievement. Participation rates are enhanced by the provision of a free 'late bus' to enable students to get home after attending these activities. The holiday time community volunteering scheme run with the police is well regarded by students. Effective links with the local sixth form and further education colleges ensure a good continuity of education across the 14 to 19 age range. Students in Year 10, having recently visited these colleges, spoke knowledgeably about their further and higher education plans.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Students receive care, guidance and support, which is good overall and excellent in places. The increasing number of opportunities for students to take responsibility and develop their personal effectiveness has contributed strongly to students becoming mature and mutually supportive young people. These characteristics are exemplified by the group of trained pupil mentors. Pastoral support is good because detailed and well-thought-out systems are in place to protect and safeguard students. Well-managed arrangements for transfer from primary schools ensure that students settle quickly into their new surroundings. Younger students especially feel safe and are confident about approaching staff with their concerns, although some older students say they are more hesitant about this. Appropriate health and safety practices are in place. This includes good child protection procedures, which all staff know and understand.

A top class range of measures is in place to support students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those at risk of exclusion and others who are vulnerable. The efficient pastoral meetings and the work of the special educational needs team are excellent examples of this. Learning mentors liaise very effectively with external agencies and families, maximizing support from all possible sources. Detailed information about students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is carefully compiled and conveyed to Year 7 form tutors. Individual education plans are properly maintained and regularly reviewed, and many examples were seen of lessons where teachers and assistants met individual needs well.

The system of setting students' targets is working satisfactorily and enabling teachers to identify underachievement. The work of the pastoral team ensures useful links between the students' academic standards and their personal and emotional needs. The school has developed efficient systems for communicating about progress with students and parents. Staff at all levels monitor students' work closely and act swiftly to help any who fall short of their targets. The revised assessment policy and marking guidelines are enabling students to improve their self-assessment skills but need to be applied more consistently by all departments and all teachers in order to raise standards. Most students know their target level or grade but not always what they need to do next to reach it.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher and the small leadership team provide good leadership and management. They have a resolute focus on high quality care and education and communicate high aspirations and a clear sense of direction to all concerned. Staff are keenly aware that the expected level of achievement is that reached in the nation's top performing schools. The leadership's high expectations for teaching quality are increasingly well understood. The senior team has a good

mix of skills. School self-evaluation, the analysis and use of data and external evaluation, research into best practice, consultation on policy change, professional development for all staff, and the monitoring and review of teaching and learning have all been undertaken thoroughly. These exercises have resulted in some palpable improvements in outcomes for all students.

Middle management is one of many aspects of the school that has improved since the previous inspection. Middle leaders are increasingly involved in moving the school towards higher achievement. Self-evaluation and monitoring have become more rigorous at this level, but further improvement is needed, particularly where teaching quality and outcomes are not good enough. For this reason, the effectiveness of the leadership and management of improvement and of monitoring and evaluation is no better than adequate at present.

Other aspects are all good: at all levels, leaders and managers are effective in tackling inequality, which prevents students from achieving as well as they can, as improving outcomes for all groups show. Resources are well deployed. The investment in new facilities, equipment and professional development is well managed and the training and management for support staff lead to high quality work, which is recognised by students and parents. Governors are very well informed so that they undertake their responsibilities to support and challenge with great confidence. The school is well-placed to make further improvements.



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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	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
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

6 July 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of North Axholme School, Crowle, DN17 4HU

Thank you for your warm welcome and helpful contributions to the inspection of your school. We enjoyed our conversations with you. I am also grateful to all the parents who contributed their views.

We concluded that your school is satisfactory and has several good features, including the teaching and the widening range of courses, qualifications and other activities it offers. Many of you told us about how the staff care for and support you, and we agree with what you said. It seems to us that you develop into mature individuals who respect and help each other, and that many of you contribute well to the school and the community. Your attendance is good and you behave considerately. We saw for ourselves how the school helps people when they fall behind with their work or find learning difficult, and this is something it does exceptionally well.

The school wants to provide the very best education for you, and it is moving in the right direction under good leadership. Recently, students older than you have made satisfactory progress by the time they leave school, but there are promising signs that you will do even better. Standards need to rise, especially in mathematics and science. To make sure every lesson helps you learn well, your teachers have to learn some new things to keep up with changes, with the help of their subject leaders. We noticed how seriously you discuss questions and solve problems in some lessons; how sometimes you read or investigate to find out things for yourselves; and present your ideas to the class and thoughtfully assess your own work. We have asked your teachers to help you understand what you have to do to make good progress. It's essential for you to play your part too, by being ambitious and independent students, whether in lessons or doing homework.

With best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Susan Bowles

Her Majesty's Inspector