

Heritage Mathematics and Computing Specialist School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112964
Local Authority	DERBYSHIRE
Inspection number	302339
Inspection dates	19–20 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Tony Beaver

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1066
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Roger Jones
Headteacher	Mr Donovan Spencer
Date of previous school inspection	6 October 2003
School address	Boughton Lane Clowne Chesterfield Derbyshire S43 4QG
Telephone number	01246 810259
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Heritage Mathematics and Computing Specialist School (formerly known as Heritage Community School) is slightly larger than the average secondary school, and student numbers have increased considerably in the last three years. Students come from a wide range of backgrounds, many from low income families and more than usual are entitled to free school meals. The vast majority of students have White British backgrounds and all use English as their first language. The numbers of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well above average. Most students join the school in Year 7 with standards that are below average. The school has specialist status in mathematics and computing and is a member of the Institute for Mathematics and its Application. It holds the Careers Mark, a Sport England Award, The Princess Diana Memorial Award and Derbyshire ABC Anti-Bullying Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school believes its overall effectiveness as satisfactory and inspectors agree. Improvement has accelerated since the last inspection and there is good capacity for further improvement.

Leadership and management are good. They have enabled the school to win the confidence of the community. Leaders give the school clear direction and the drive to maintain its good rate of improvement. The headteacher's leadership is excellent. He is tireless and tenacious in his determination to move the school forward and it continues to improve significantly under his leadership. Staff and students respond well to the expectation that all should reach their highest possible standards of conduct and academic work. The senior leadership team is strong and works very well with the headteacher and middle managers. Consequently, the school is held in high esteem by parents, and many more students attend it now than in 2003. Morale is high among staff and students and there is a powerful sense of purpose that further improvement must, and will, be achieved. Middle leaders and managers have adapted their management practice, but the monitoring of subject performance is not yet consistently good. Governors are well informed and very supportive. Links with partners in education and support services are strong.

Students from all social and ethnic backgrounds make satisfactory progress throughout the school. Attainment on entry is below average and the 2006 results of the national tests and in GCSE examinations were also below average. However, significant improvement has been achieved. In 2006, Year 9 national test results improved considerably, especially in mathematics and English. Similarly, the school achieved its best ever performance, 41% of students gained five or more higher GCSE grades. Almost all students gained GCSE graded results, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. However, the school is right to make further improvement in GCSE results a priority.

Students' personal development is good. The vast majority have a strong commitment to the school and hold it in high esteem. They behave well, and enjoy the experience of school and of learning. Attendance is satisfactory. Relationships are good and students are right to feel safe and well cared for. They are increasingly aware of the importance of eating a healthy diet and of the value of sport and physical exercise.

The quality of education has improved considerably since the last inspection. Teaching and learning are generally satisfactory, and many lessons are well taught. However, not all teaching gives students the skills and encouragement to take enough responsibility for their own learning. The good curriculum and arrangements for care, guidance and support ensure a valuable educational experience for every student.

Since the last inspection, the school has gained specialist status in mathematics and computing. Although the new status was not achieved until late last year, it is already adding further impetus to the rate of improvement. The school gives good value for money, because it is ensuring improvement in students' achievement, while maintaining their good personal development and conduct.

What the school should do to improve further

- Sustain and extend the improvements in GCSE examination results.
- Help students to develop the skills to learn more for themselves, and be less dependent on teachers to gain subject knowledge and understanding.

- Ensure that best practice in monitoring and evaluating teaching and students' work is consistently developed across all subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory and improving because of the drive for improvement led by the headteacher and leaders at all levels.

When students enter the school, their attainment is below average, and many have weak literacy skills. At the end of Year 9, their national test results were below average in 2004 and 2005. Results improved considerably in 2006. Students performed at the national average in English and mathematics, but below this in science, where there were staffing difficulties. In Years 10 and 11, 2006 results were, overall, below average. However, there has been an upward trend in the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C GCSE grades since the last inspection. In 2006, 41% reached this standard, the school's best ever performance, and close to its own challenging target. Almost all students gain GCSE pass grades. Results in mathematics, one of the school's subject specialisms, are impressive and reach the national average. However, the school is right to make further improvement in GCSE results a high priority.

Progress is satisfactory throughout the school, including that of students with learning difficulties and disabilities. Students' current rate of progress in lessons is improving and often good because the quality of teaching in many lessons is also good. Students of all abilities make consistently good progress in mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school is effective in promoting students' personal development and well-being. Attendance is satisfactory. It has improved to a level close to that in schools nationally. Students enjoy school, and say how much they like practical activities. They find some lessons fun and value recently introduced systems for rewarding good behaviour and achievement. Consequently, the vast majority of students behave well, show interest in their work and treat staff and each other with courtesy and respect. Students' adoption of a safe and healthy lifestyle is successfully supported by personal, social and health education. Many students participate in extra-curricular sport. They discuss sensibly issues affecting the lives of young adults and adopt a safe approach to practical activities, as in science. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They raise money for charity and for the school community. Class councils and the school council give students a voice on matters that affect them. They are confident that their voice is heard and influential in, for example, bringing forward plans to refurbish toilet facilities. Students also make a good contribution to the wider community by serving on the local youth council, visiting elderly residents and volunteering for community litter-picking duties. They have a good understanding of future opportunities for work or further education, and extend their work-place skills well, especially in numeracy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Many lessons are well taught, a few are outstanding and very few are inadequate. Teachers have good control of their classes because good relationships are a feature of most lessons and students enjoy learning. In good lessons, students are helped to solve problems, to work productively in groups and to answer confidently. Additional computers gained through specialist status are helping teachers to give students more flexibility and independence to learn for themselves and enhance work-place skills for the future. However, students are too often not given enough opportunity to learn independently. Much marking is helpful to learning, but some practice does not tell students what they need to do to improve and when it does, the advice is not always followed up. When teachers show how work matches assessed levels and grades, students make good progress, but this is not yet universal practice. Students are often encouraged to analyse and evaluate what they and their classmates have learned and this greatly improves their progress. For example, in an outstanding physical education lesson, the teacher competently demonstrated the shot putt, and then helped students to evaluate each other's performances and make outstanding progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and well adapted to the needs of each student. The foundation year gives Year 7 students' self-confidence, a broad learning experience and enhanced literacy skills. As students move through the school, the curriculum is differentiated to meet their needs and contributes to their enjoyment in learning. A good range of academic and vocational courses related to local employment opportunities is open to Years 10 and 11. This enables students to develop good work-place skills that they can use in the future. Specialist status has significantly extended the use of information and communication technology in school. It is also strengthening the school's links with partner schools, and video-conferencing is currently assisting learning in one of these. A good programme of personal, social and health education is followed by all students and covers all essential health and safety priorities. The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular activities, especially in sport and the performing arts, and additional examination courses are provided after school. These activities are taken up enthusiastically and students greatly appreciate teachers' commitment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Systems for providing care, guidance and support for students are good. Policies and practice relating to safeguarding are robust and fully meet current regulations. Consequently, students feel safe and enjoy the experience of school. Relationships among students and staff, especially the inclusion team, are trusting and strong. As a result, students know that there is always someone to turn to in times of trouble. Senior leaders have skilfully assembled and trained a committed team of teachers, learning mentors and support assistants. The team works effectively with other staff and outside agencies to provide high quality care and support for all aspects of students' personal and academic development. This prepares each individual well for future education and employment, and helps to ensure good behaviour and positive attitudes to

learning. Assessment is used effectively to inform students about how they are progressing and to set challenging targets for each student. In a small minority of lessons, targets are not reflected in work set for individual students. Well focused academic guidance and links with colleges and universities are helping to raise students' aspirations.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good and have taken the school forward very well since the 2003 inspection. The headteacher's leadership is excellent and is a key reason for the school's improvement. He and his senior leadership team give the school very clear direction. He is respected by parents, students, governors and staff for his energy, determination and commitment to raising standards. The senior team and governors worked hard to achieve specialist school status in 2006. This has already improved information and communication technology resources, and adds a new dimension to teaching and learning. Resources and the ageing accommodation are used well. Governance is good. Governors support and challenge the work of the school very effectively. Morale across the staff and among students is high. There is a united sense of purpose to accelerate the improving trend in achievement. The approach is unfailingly inclusive, and mindful of the needs of the individual. The school is increasingly popular and has a good reputation locally.

A new management structure has given subject leaders more responsibility for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and for raising standards. The skills and experience of subject leaders vary, however, and affect their impact on achievement. Self-evaluation is satisfactory and improving. The school now has robust and comprehensive systems for monitoring classroom practice. However, these systems are not yet consistently applied by all middle managers and do not yet make a full impact on teaching and standards.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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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?	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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ 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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	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**

20 April 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Heritage Mathematics and Computing Specialist School, Clowne, Derbyshire S43 4QG

Thank you all very much for your politeness and help during the recent inspection. You were keen to tell inspectors what you thought of your school and we took careful note of what you said. This letter tells you the result of the inspection.

Inspectors were very impressed with you, the students. The vast majority of you behave responsibly and want to learn. We observed your good relationships with teachers and with each other, and lots of you said you enjoyed school. Inspectors think your school has improved greatly in a short time and the pace of improvement is still brisk. We noted the much improved Year 9 test and GCSE results in 2006. More students achieved five or more GCSE A* to C grades than ever before. Your school's most important priority is to help you improve your GCSE results even more.

Teaching is satisfactory in general and many lessons are taught very well. However, inspectors think students should take more responsibility for their learning on themselves and be less dependent on teachers. The curriculum is good. Those of you in Year 7 gain confidence and skills from the foundation year. Those of you in Years 10 and 11 get a good choice of courses to help you reach the career of your choice. You are all well cared for, encouraged and supported to achieve your potential as learners.

Inspectors agree with you that your school is well led. We certainly agree with you that your headteacher is one of the best, and he is making your school better for all of you. The staff are working hard to bring about more improvement. Specialist status is helping your school gain more equipment to influence teaching and learning for the better. However, inspectors think some subject leaders should be more critical of their departments in order to make them more effective in helping you to make progress.

We wish you well and we think that if you work hard enough, you will achieve very well at Heritage.

Yours sincerely

Dr Tony Beaver

Lead inspector