

Edlington School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106787
Local Authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	309232
Inspection dates	30 April –1 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Joan McKenna

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1124
6th form	157
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ernest Hardy
Headteacher	Mrs Mary McCorry
Date of previous school inspection	29 November 2004
School address	Tait Avenue Edlington Doncaster South Yorkshire DN12 1HH
Telephone number	01709 864100
Fax number	01709 770026

Age group	11-18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average school and the vast majority of its students are of White British heritage. Students come from areas with varied socio-economic circumstances, but the majority are from areas that are less advantaged than typical. An average proportion is eligible for free school meals. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, although the proportion with a statement of special educational need is below average. The school has business and enterprise specialist status. It holds Sportsmark, Artsmark, Excellence in Enterprise and Investors in People awards.

The school has faced considerable instability in leadership and staffing over the past few years, including several changes of headteacher. Some of these issues are now resolved but there remain several staff absences due to long-term illness. Following a 16-month period when a deputy acted as headteacher, a new headteacher took up post three weeks ago.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all circumstances it could be reasonably expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to students' achievement, attendance and to the quality of teaching.

The school has been through a difficult time over the past few years due to issues relating to senior leadership and this has had a negative impact on staffing and the quality of provision. As a result, the effectiveness of the school is now inadequate because students are not achieving well enough. The acting headteacher during the latter part of this period, however, has ensured that development work has taken place. Although this has not resulted in the school being fully effective, it has brought about some improvements. This demonstrates that the school has the capacity to improve further, especially as there is now a stable senior leadership team in place.

The school is strongest in its pastoral areas. Systems for providing all students with personal care and support are effective and are particularly so for students who have additional needs or who are vulnerable in any way. The school works well with outside agencies to help meet students' needs. As a result, students feel secure and well supported. Their personal development is satisfactory overall. They have positive relationships with each other and with staff. Most behave satisfactorily. They follow school rules and do as their teachers ask them in lessons. They say they like school, citing performing arts and sporting activities as things they particularly enjoy. They understand how to lead safe and healthy lives. However, too many students do not attend regularly enough, especially in Years 9 to 13.

The school has weaknesses in the quality and consistency of its academic provision resulting in students' achievement being inadequate. The curriculum is satisfactory overall. It has some good features such as the widening range of courses available for students aged 14 to 19 and its arts and sporting activities. However, the quality of teaching is inadequate. Although much of the teaching is satisfactory, some is not and there is not enough good teaching to ensure that students are progressing at a fast enough rate. There is also too much variation in the quality of teaching across subjects. Too often students are not enabled to take responsibility for or be actively involved in their own learning. Not enough use is made of information about individual students' progress when teachers plan their lessons, either to ensure that work is well matched to students' different needs, or to give them specific feedback on how to improve it. As a result, students do not achieve well enough. After entering the school with broadly average standards, the standards they reach by the age of 16 are significantly below the national average. The specialism is not contributing sufficiently to raising standards. The impact of the specialist status is strongest in business, but there is less impact on standards in mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT), subjects which are also part of the specialism. Achievement has been particularly poor at Key Stage 3. Although students underachieved, there was some improvement in results at Key Stage 4 in 2007. There is evidence of the improvement continuing. A wider range of courses and types of accreditation for students in Key Stage 4, as well as some specifically targeted support for students identified as underachieving, especially in Years 9 and 11, are contributing to this. However, students' achievement is still not securely satisfactory across the school and there is too much variation across subjects.

These weaknesses and the reasons for them, many of which have been beyond the school's control, are fully recognised by senior managers. Over the past 16 months the acting headteacher has taken appropriate action to tackle them. Leadership responsibilities have been restructured, for example, and thorough procedures for monitoring the quality of the school's work have been established. Although the school's leaders have not managed to ensure that the school is fully effective yet, they are bringing about improvements. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, and with the new headteacher now in post the school is in a secure position to move forward.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The position in the sixth form is stronger than in the main school and provision in Years 12 and 13 is more effective. Crucially, students' achievement is satisfactory. Standards vary across subjects and courses but by the end of Year 13 average standards are reached in most. Sixth formers benefit from access to a wide range of academic AS- and A-level courses and a developing selection of vocational programmes, and this is meeting their needs and interests. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and improving as the school attempts to match teaching styles more closely to students' different learning needs. Students' independent learning skills are underdeveloped on entry to Year 12 and this impedes their progress. As a result, students lack confidence, although this improves as they mature. Students appreciate the way their progress is monitored closely and this is beginning to help them to improve their work. They value the good level of support and guidance that they receive about their future options and they respond well to the varied opportunities to take responsibility. However, too many students do not attend regularly enough and attendance is inadequate overall. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve students' achievement, especially at Key Stage 3, and ensure greater consistency across subjects.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching and provide students of all ages with more opportunities for them to be actively involved in their learning.
- Make more use of information about how students are progressing to plan work that meets their individual needs and to give them more specific guidance on how to improve it.
- Improve the attendance of students, especially those in Years 9 to 13.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Grade for sixth form: 3

Over the past few years the standards reached by students at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4 have been significantly lower than the national average and students have underachieved markedly at both key stages. Achievement at Key Stage 3 has been particularly weak with no trend of improvement, and in 2007 it was very poor in mathematics and English. There was some improvement at Key Stage 4 from 2006 to 2007 although achievement was still inadequate. Standards vary across subjects but are too low in most. The achievement of different groups also varies with no clear or consistent pattern. However, girls tend to achieve better than boys. The extremely small numbers from minority ethnic groups and those in care achieve better than their peers. In the sixth form standards at AS level are lower, relatively, than at A level, and

students on these courses achieve less well than those on most other courses. The school now sets challenging targets for students. Although not met last year, they are sharpening up teachers' and leaders' understanding of what they need to be aiming for and are promoting improvement. Achievement across the school remains inadequate, however. The school met some but not all of its specialist subject targets in Year 11 in 2007. The school's tracking data suggests that the school is more on course to meet its specialist targets for 2008.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Personal development and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are satisfactory for students of all ages. Students are generally polite and show consideration for others. They are happy to learn and follow instructions well, but their levels of independence and confidence are lacking, in part because of limited opportunities for them to take responsibility for their learning. Most students' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory. However, there is some misbehaviour on the part of a minority of students, especially when lessons do not engage their interest or involve them actively enough. When well taught they enjoy their lessons. Students feel safe in school, eat healthily and participate in a variety of extra-curricular and sporting activities. They make a positive contribution to the local community, organising seasonal events, collaborating with the residents' association on specific projects and raising funds for charities. Sixth formers are good role models as they act as mentors for younger students. Pupils become better prepared for the workplace through participating in the various opportunities to gain experience with the local business community, helped by this aspect of the school's specialism. However, their inadequate achievement and the inadequate attendance of many limit their preparation for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Grade for sixth form: 3

Teaching and learning are inadequate overall. While there is much satisfactory and some good teaching, it is not strong enough to improve achievement across all subjects in Key Stages 3 and 4. In better lessons, teachers provide a range of interesting and practical activities which engage students and involve them actively in their learning. In most lessons, relationships between teachers and students are generally positive. However, many lessons are too dominated by teachers talking, so that students have too few opportunities to work independently or with one another to enable them to develop their ideas or their group-work skills. Teachers ask questions but are too quick to offer answers and do not encourage students to extend their thinking. Students' behaviour and attitudes are satisfactory in the main, although there is some disruptive behaviour when students are not engaged by their learning. Lessons are not planned well enough: there is not a clear focus on what and how students will learn or on how they will be appropriately challenged by or supported with their work. The quality of marking is inconsistent and not enough tells students what they need to do to improve. Likewise, the setting of homework is inconsistent and it is not well enough used to extend students' learning. Teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory and is beginning to take more account of students' different learning styles and the need for independent learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Although satisfactory overall, the curriculum has several good features. At Key Stage 3 it is enhanced by the teaching of drama and dance as well as an option to study a second modern foreign language in Year 9. Options at Key Stage 4 reflect the school's specialist business and enterprise status. Year 10 and 11 students have opportunities to follow a widening range of vocational courses, some of which can be continued into the sixth form, which aids students' progression into post-compulsory education. A wide range of extra-curricular activities, residential activities and enrichment opportunities for gifted and talented students, such as 'Super-Learning Days', develop students' talents and interests outside the classroom. Performing arts and sporting opportunities are strengths. Partnerships with other education providers are also strong. However, the planning and delivery of the curriculum is not equally effective in all subjects. Specialist subjects currently play little part in helping to promote improvement in other subjects. The school uses its specialist funding to provide relevant courses for the wider community but has no direct involvement in them.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

There are positive features to the pastoral care provided for students. Arrangements for protecting students and ensuring their safety are in place. Students are well known by staff. They know who to turn to for advice and guidance and say that they feel well supported and that their views are heard. Vulnerable students and those at risk are particularly well cared for through additional support and the involvement of specialised agencies. Specific support is targeted at these groups. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also receive effective pastoral and specialist support. Students receive helpful support and guidance when joining the school or when making decisions about the next stage of their education. Although strategies are in place to address poor attendance in Years 9 to 13, they have yet to have the necessary impact.

There are thorough systems for tracking students' academic progress. Some good use is made of the resulting information by leaders to identify students who are underachieving and to decide what additional support they require. However, assessment information is used insufficiently well to meet the learning needs of all students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in mainstream classes, to ensure that they make at least satisfactory progress in all lessons. Academic guidance is stronger in the sixth form.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Senior leadership is stable after significant turbulence. It is providing clear direction and is addressing the correct areas for improvement. Monitoring and evaluation are thorough. Good use has been made of external agencies to help with reviewing effectiveness and the school is

realistic about its strengths and weaknesses. The staffing structure has been changed so that leaders focus more on promoting better quality learning to bring about improvement. All leaders are now clearly accountable for their areas of responsibility. There is some variation in the effectiveness of individual leaders, especially at middle level, and the school is working hard to help improve the quality and consistency of their work. Governors are well informed about the school. They have a sound understanding of performance data and of what the school needs to do to improve. While resources are suitably deployed, the school does not provide satisfactory value for money because students are not achieving well enough. The sixth form is cost effective, however. The school has good systems to inform and consult parents. Those who made their views known to inspectors are supportive of the school, although over half also expressed some concerns, most relating to the quality of teaching. The strategies adopted to increase the school's effectiveness have yet to have the full impact required, especially in regard to teaching, attendance and achievement, but they are bringing about improvement.

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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	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?	4	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	4	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The attendance of learners	4	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	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?	3	3
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
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?	Yes	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Edlington School, Doncaster, DN12 1HH

As you know your school was inspected recently and this letter is to inform you about the results of the inspection. However, first I would like to thank you on behalf of the inspection team for talking with us during our visit.

Your school has some positive features. It provides you with effective pastoral care, especially those of you who need special support. You know there are staff you can go to for help when you need it. You enjoy the good range of activities provided for you outside of the classroom, especially those in the performing arts and sport. Most of you get on with your teachers, do what they ask you to in lessons and behave appropriately. The sixth form is satisfactory.

Overall, however, we judge that your school is not effective enough and so we have given it a 'Notice to Improve'. This is because you are not achieving as well as you should or reaching the standards you are capable of. This is the case at Key Stage 4 and even more so at Key Stage 3. Although some teaching is satisfactory or better, too much is not helping you learn well enough or ensuring that you are actively involved in your learning. Teaching also varies too much across subjects. Information about how you are each progressing is not used well enough to plan work that meets your different needs or to give you specific feedback on how to improve. Some of you, especially those of you in Years 9 to 13, do not attend regularly enough. We have asked the school to improve all of these areas.

Your school has gone through a difficult period recently with changes of headteacher and some other staff being absent. Even though it is not effective enough, it is starting to improve. Now your new headteacher is in post the situation is more stable. Senior leaders know what needs to be done to make the school better for you and are working hard to bring this about. We have judged that the school does have the capacity to improve further.

You can help the leaders and teachers in your school by attending regularly, becoming more actively involved in your learning and responding to the guidance they give you on how to improve your work.