

Heworth Grange Comprehensive School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108407
Local Authority	Gateshead
Inspection number	309683
Inspection dates	6–7 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Paul Lowery

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1355
6th form	155
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr David Napier
Headteacher	Mr Brian Huddart
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2003
School address	High Lanes Felling Gateshead Tyne and Wear NE10 0PT
Telephone number	0191 4212244
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector seconded to Ofsted and four other Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Heworth Grange is an 11–18 Specialist Arts College in Gateshead. The school, which has a stable population, is larger than average. The majority of students are from a White British background and there are a small number of refugees. The students come from wards with relatively high social deprivation and the proportion eligible for free school meals is above the national average, particularly at Key Stage 3. The school has an average number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but a smaller proportion with a statement of special educational need than seen nationally. The school has an Artsmark gold award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Heworth Grange provides its students with a satisfactory education. It is a caring, effective school with a good range of opportunities for its students. The school has many strengths, including the good quality of pastoral support provided to young people. Whilst students make satisfactory progress in their academic studies, insufficient priority is placed on raising standards and ensuring all students perform to the best of their ability.

The school's arts specialism is a particular strength. It is increasing opportunities for young people and providing new courses; for example, in dance, drama and music technology, which students report they find motivating. Through the specialism the school is also providing outstanding community support. In particular, by offering arts-based courses the school is increasingly becoming the hub for local community activities. Provision for extra-curricular activities is good and students warmly comment on the broad range of sporting and arts activities. Overall care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Good pastoral care is offset by weaker aspects of academic guidance, in particular the systematic monitoring of students' progress.

Staff know their students well and relationships are strong. As a consequence, students' behaviour is good in lessons and around the school and exclusion rates are low. Students' personal development and well-being are good. An increasing number of students make healthy lifestyle choices, and participation rates in sport for both boys and girls are good. The very few incidents of bullying are dealt with swiftly and effectively. This was reflected in the comments of a majority of parents, who wrote positively about their child's experience at the school.

Overall standards reached by students are broadly average and the progress made at each key stage is satisfactory. However, school systems for improving academic results through target setting and tracking are underdeveloped. Where middle leadership is increasingly effective, for example in science, results are improving, in particular at Key Stage 4. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, although for a minority in some lessons the pace of learning is slow. Procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching across departments are inconsistent. Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory. Several key middle managers are making good progress in developing their departments and improving standards. Systems for departmental reviews are in place and are increasingly effective in focusing on the key issue of improving attainment. Whole school self-evaluation is poor, limiting the impact of leadership on improving the quality of learning.

The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection; the marking of work and the use of homework has been strengthened, but in each area there remains inconsistency in implementation. Attendance rates continue to improve as a result of effective strategies and overall attendance is now close to national average. However the poor attendance of some students adversely affects their progress. The school's capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The school's sixth form is smaller than average and principally offers a range of academic courses. Some students pursue a one-year programme through to a GCE Advanced Subsidiary

level or take courses from a limited range of vocational studies. Whilst the overall range of courses available is satisfactory, the provision for alternative work-related options is limited.

Achievement is satisfactory, given the students' below-average starting points. After the first year of study, pass rates are below average; however for those who go on to complete their full two years of study, standards are broadly average, but inconsistent across subjects. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and students value the high level of personal support from their teachers. As in the main school the quality of academic guidance is variable due to a lack of consistency in target-setting, tracking and monitoring progress. Personal development is good. Students said that they enjoy being part of the sixth form and welcome the mature and adult atmosphere it provides. Students readily accept responsibility and make a good contribution to the life of the school by supporting younger students, and organising fund raising activities and community events. Leadership overall is satisfactory; however there is insufficient focus on monitoring in order to ensure sufficient emphasis is placed on raising attainment.

What the school should do to improve further

- Leadership and management to focus on raising standards and boosting achievement at all key stages.
- Strengthen whole school planning with the effective use of self-evaluation and review.
- Ensure the effective use of whole school tracking and target setting systems.

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

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students enter the school with broadly average attainment. While a minority have above average skills and knowledge, a larger proportion has low literacy skills. Tackling this is a priority for the school and it has been increasingly effective in improving standards in English. Standards are broadly average at Key Stages 3 and 4. At Key Stage 4 there is a steady trend of improvement in the proportion of students gaining five or more good passes at GCSE; however when passes in the core subjects of English and mathematics are taken into account, standards are below the national average. Provisional Key Stage 3 results for 2007 in mathematics and science show a small decline over the previous year.

Students make satisfactory progress overall at both key stages. Students' progress in lessons seen during the inspection was never less than satisfactory and in some cases good. The work in books also showed that the majority of students are making satisfactory progress. Some students make good progress, such as in mathematics where students responded well to challenging tasks and to the high expectations of staff. Nevertheless, progress at Key Stage 4 is variable between different subjects and between groups of learners. For example, progress is stronger in science, but weaker in modern foreign languages. Little has been done to close this gap as the school has inconsistent systems in place to monitor and track progress over time. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress, with these students receiving good support in lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good and there is a strong caring ethos throughout the school. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. They say they enjoy school, find most lessons interesting and enjoy taking part in the wide range of extra-curricular activities. Relationships between staff and students are extremely positive, leading to good behaviour in lessons and around the school. Attendance is just below average but is improving due to effective strategies used by the school.

Students benefit from the effective support provided by the drugs awareness and sex education teaching and through the smoking prevention clinic run by the school nurse. Students say that they feel safe in school and that there is always an adult they can talk to if problems arise or if they have concerns.

Students make an outstanding contribution to the local community and beyond. Their experiences are enriched through participation in an extensive range of community activities including supporting a school in Gambia, and more locally through the school's position as a centre for local arts projects and community learning. Students work hard on fund raising projects for organisations such as Age Concern. They are well prepared for their future lives through the development of key skills, good careers guidance and enterprise education

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The quality of teaching and learning in the school is satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge and the positive relationships between students and teachers help to ensure that progress is at least satisfactory. Typically lessons are well structured, adequately resourced and have clear learning objectives. In many lessons where regular marking of work takes place, it reassures students that teachers value the efforts they have made. In one outstanding science lesson the school's specialism in the arts was highly evident. 'Saving Snow White from being poisoned', linked to the school's Christmas production, was used very effectively to promote higher order thinking skills about the science involved. With its crime scenario approach, it engaged and excited the students. Good progress was made because teaching was challenging. Where teaching is less effective, lessons are characterised by teachers' low expectations and a lack of detailed planning. Here activities are not sufficiently varied to extend the most able students. Students' progress and interest in these lessons is less secure, although their positive attitudes mean that behaviour is still good.

The school has organised its classes so that students with learning difficulties receive targeted support. Here teaching is good and these students' learning needs are well catered for.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. There is a clear emphasis in Key Stage 3 on teaching basic skills. Information and communication technology (ICT) is taught across the school although it is not fully embedded in all subjects. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are well catered for and the curriculum is adapted to support the needs of students who need extra help to develop their literacy skills. Specialist arts status has a significant impact on the curriculum and all students study aspects of the creative and expressive arts. The strong academic curriculum benefits those students wishing to enter further or higher education but there are too few vocational courses taught in school. The limited provision of which has a detrimental impact on the motivation of some students. The recent establishment of 'fast track' courses, including GCSE music in Year 9, is a good example of where the school is providing greater challenge for students.

Specialist status has helped to extend the impressive range of additional activities which supports students' learning. There is also a strong programme of extra-curricular activities in sports, arts and academic subjects which is enthusiastically supported by students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school places care at the heart of its work and this is reflected in students' good personal development and well-being. Statutory requirements for child protection are in place, site and visit risk assessments are robust and the school is a safe and friendly place in which to learn. Those students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because of the carefully targeted support they receive from teachers. Overall, pastoral care is a strength of the school. Students' progress is tracked but the evaluation of this information and subsequent action to develop the curriculum and teaching and learning is not sufficiently robust. More able learners are identified but provision and expectations are not always sufficiently challenging to meet their needs. Systems for academic guidance are underdeveloped. Target setting as a means of raising aspirations is not yet impacting sufficiently upon practice in the classroom. Some subjects have developed effective methods for assessing students' work, including in mathematics where a 'traffic lights' system is used successfully to highlight the performance of students. However, across the school, assessment is highly variable in its frequency and in its use by staff to guide students on how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher has effectively managed the school's development as a specialist arts college. The school's leadership has also been central to the establishment of a positive school ethos where students enjoy learning and feel safe. Although there are clear priorities for improvement, senior leadership does not

systematically use data to inform whole school planning. Systems for self-evaluation are not consistently used as a tool to inform whole school decision making. In addition a significant number of parents commented in the parental questionnaire that their views are not sufficiently taken into account by the school. All departments are now completing annual reviews with a focus on improving attainment. However some subject areas, including science, are better at analysing their performance, which is then used to effectively to inform their planning. Overall inconsistencies in school review, planning systems and the monitoring of teaching and learning have restricted the leadership's ability to improve the quality of learning.

The leadership has continued to make good progress in developing the school's accommodation in order to improve opportunities for students and the local community. This includes the establishment on site of the well resourced and well used City Learning Centre. The governing body is loyal to the school and is contributing to the effective development of the school's specialist status, community outreach work and accommodation. However the governors' role in holding the school to account is limited.

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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?	3	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
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	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	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	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	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	3

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	4	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4	4
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	3	
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?	No	

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

13 December 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Heworth Grange Comprehensive School, Gateshead,

NE10 0PT

I am writing to let you know the judgements we have made following our visit to your school. Thank you for telling us about your work and life at Heworth Grange. We found that your school is providing you with a satisfactory education, and it is doing a number of things well, in particular:

- the arts college status is providing you with new opportunities to study exciting courses and to take part in public performances within your local community
- your teachers care for you and provide a safe environment in which you can study
- your good behaviour is evident in lessons and around school
- you receive good quality personal support from staff
- there are a broad range of sports clubs for both boys and girls and is successfully encouraging many of you to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

It was clear that you are very proud of the school. There are however a number of key things which the school can do to make your learning even more effective. We have asked the headteacher, the governors and your teachers to focus even more strongly on improving learning in order to raise standards; place an increased emphasis on reviewing and monitoring work across the school; and ensure you are set and supported to meet challenging targets. You will need to continue to work cooperatively with teachers on this, ensuring good attendance, if you are all to get better results. This will help you to achieve greater success in your studies.

Thank you for welcoming us into your school.

Yours sincerely

Paul Lowery

Lead Inspector