

Heanor Gate Science College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112993
Local Authority	DERBYSHIRE LA
Inspection number	311081
Inspection date	4 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Andrew Cook HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1337
6th form	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Andrew Collington
Headteacher	Mr Robert Howard
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2003
School address	Kirkley Drive Heanor Derbyshire DE75 7RA
Telephone number	01773 716396
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Age group	11-18
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Introduction

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

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following: how effective the school's actions are to reverse the downward trend in English standards at the end of Key Stage 3; the quality of the curriculum; how effective the school's provision is for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Evidence was gathered from observations of lessons, scrutiny of students' work, analysis of students' performance data, and interviews with students, the school's leaders and managers and the chair of governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

Description of the school

The number of students that attend the school make it a larger than average secondary school. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average. The proportions of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with a statement of special educational needs are lower than the national average. There are just fewer than 3% of students whose first language is believed not to be English, which is much lower than the national average. The standards achieved by students who join in the school in Year 7 are broadly average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Heanor Gate Science College is a good school. The curriculum is outstanding as is the way students are prepared for their future education and employment. The school is very well led by the headteacher and a good senior leadership team. The school has good capacity to improve further.

The progress students make in the main school is good. Standards at the end of Year 11 have risen over the last three years and are above average. Many students take their GCSE exams a year early, which ensures a high level of challenge. Standards as measured by GCSE results are well above the national average in French, history, information and communication technology (ICT), religious studies and Spanish. Science results have risen sharply reflecting the school's emphasis on science as a specialist science college. Although students make good progress overall, there were far fewer compared to the national average who achieved the above average National Curriculum Levels 6 and 7 in English in Year 9. English standards at the end of Year 9 have fallen over the last three years and the school has identified this as one of their key priorities for action.

Students' behaviour is good. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also good. The school is effectively encouraging students to understand and appreciate the benefits of living in a diverse racial and cultural community. Students feel safe in school and know that if there is any bullying or racism it is quickly dealt with by staff. They are also pleased with the new closed circuit television cameras that have been installed around the school premises being reassured that this adds to making the school a safe place to be in. Students' attendance is satisfactory. The school has been successful in improving students' punctuality. There are good opportunities for students to learn about healthy lifestyles. A good range of sports clubs, a drop in clinic and reasonably healthy lunch menus all contribute to students keeping healthy. There are good opportunities for students to contribute to both the school community and the wider community. For example, students get involved in the appointment of new staff and have recently designed the school badge. Influencing on a wider scale the school has had student representatives on the National Youth Parliament at Westminster.

The school is rightly proud of the outstanding way it prepares students for further education and employment. Students benefit from the school's full time career and personal development advisor and the overall support they receive has led the school to achieving the Career Mark award. The programmes for personal, social, and health education, religious education and citizenship also help students personally develop and prepare for life after Heanor Gate. As a result of this very effective provision, the proportion of students that have left the school to move onto further education or employment has increased significantly over the last three years.

Teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and organised. Relationships between staff and students are good which creates a positive learning environment where students are keen to have a go. Students' attitudes in lessons are good. In the best lessons, teachers effectively use assessment so that work given to students is suitably challenging. Throughout good lessons teachers keep checking how well students are learning and encourage them to self assess their own progress. When teaching is satisfactory there is not always enough emphasis on ensuring the pace of the lesson, or the work students are given, sufficiently moves them on in their learning. In these lessons, the rate of progress students make is satisfactory.

The specialist status of the school in both science and in vocational subjects has been used creatively to enrich the learning of students and encourage them to take greater ownership about their study. The wide range of academic and vocational subjects helps students to maintain their motivation and to achieve their potential. All students receive an entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum. In Year 7, students get a rich experience in the expressive arts. In Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form students can take more applied and innovative options, for example geology and electronics. Students also benefit from a rich programme of residential visits, extra curricular activities and links with schools internationally extend learning further.

The outstanding strength of the curriculum from Year 7 to Year 11 is the individual learning programme negotiated with each student and his or her parents. High attaining students are able to select extra lessons in preferred subjects and to fast track to examination courses ahead of the rest of the cohort. More vulnerable and lower attaining students take courses better matched to their aptitude and capabilities and which further support their basic skills.

The quality of care, guidance and support is good in main school and the sixth form. Statutory requirements for safeguarding the health and well-being of students are fully met. The school provides a well-organised and purposeful environment where students are well known as individuals and where there are high expectations for behaviour and attainment. There are clear guidelines and procedures for dealing with students who misbehave including remedial programmes and the use of the inclusion centre. If any student spends some time in the inclusion centre, they are then carefully integrated back into the classroom and supported to develop improved attitudes to their work. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well provided for both in the learning support centre, within classrooms and by specialist input, enabling most to make good progress academically and all to develop the skills and attitudes necessary for working life. Form tutors regularly monitor students' academic progress, so that individuals are well informed about their current achievement. All students are given targets and generally, these are used effectively to give students something to aim for.

Leadership and management are good. The relatively new headteacher and deputy headteacher are very effectively building on the school's strengths. Effective leadership has seen the school designated a high performing specialist school in 2006. Leadership has also secured the introduction of a new diploma course in information and communication technology, the only school in Derbyshire to do so.

The school's evaluation of its effectiveness is accurate. A good feature of the school's self-evaluation is that it takes into account the views of students and all teaching staff. Students' evaluations have identified that they would like to use information and communication technology much more as a learning tool in lessons. The senior leadership team are aware of the school's strengths and have good plans in place to further improve and develop provision. For example, recently Learning Directors have been appointed to lead and manage different areas in the school with a focus to improve teaching and learning. All subject leaders monitor and evaluate their departments and robust line management systems ensure there are questions asked to check progress being made. The quality of subject leadership ranges from outstanding to satisfactory. Where it is satisfactory more could be done to increase the drive to improve standards even further by ensuring teaching always effectively accelerates learning.

Governors are effective and are confident that the school is improving. The information they receive puts them in a good position to ask questions and hold the school to account.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is a popular choice for students and they enjoy the wide range of courses on offer. This range includes a good number of science options as part of the school's science specialism. Most students make good progress although this is not the case in all subjects. The school has recently introduced new assessment measures that have highlighted where expectations could be even higher. Teaching and learning are good overall. As in the main school, lessons are planned well and students make good progress when lively teaching challenges them to do well. Teaching in some subjects is not ensuring students consistently make good progress.

Student's personal development in the sixth form is good. Their behaviour and attitudes are good, reflecting the good level of care and guidance they receive. There are good opportunities for students to give something back, including supporting younger students with their work to helping out at local primary schools on a healthy eating project. The curriculum in the sixth form is good. Leadership and management are good and working hard to improve areas where provision is more satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that in all subject areas middle leadership focuses on robustly evaluating provision and taking effective action to accelerate students' learning.
- Develop the use of information and communication technology as a tool for enhancing learning.

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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?	2	2
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?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

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	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
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	2	
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?	1	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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	2	
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

5 March 2008

Dear Students,

Inspection of Heanor Gate Science College, Heanor, DE75 7RA

I am writing to inform you that we judged Heanor Gate Science College to be a good school. We ended up agreeing completely with the senior leadership team's judgements about what your school does well and where things could improve even further. In the main school and in the sixth form you benefit from good teaching. In the main school, the curriculum is outstanding and your independent learning profiles ensure you have real choices in what you learn.

We were impressed with your good behaviour and attitudes. The care and support you receive are good. Members of the school council were keen to tell us about how things are improving; the chairperson of the council said 'they listen to us because we have seen things change'.

All schools can improve and we have left the senior leadership team two key areas to work on. First, we have said those staff with responsibilities for leading subjects should make sure that teachers focus on how to help you learn as quickly as possible. You could help here by talking with your teachers about what helps you most in lessons. Secondly, we noticed that many of you would like to use more information and communication technology equipment in your lessons. The school has started to improve this area and should carry on with the plans they have to make it even better.

Finally, another outstanding feature of your school is the way it prepares you for what to do next after leaving Heanor Gate. The advice and support you get means that you have very good chances to do well in the future.

Best wishes,

Yours sincerely

Andrew Cook

H M Inspector