

Durham Johnston Comprehensive School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114312
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	311560
Inspection date	4 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Brian Dower

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	1460
6th form	300
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Bill Worth
Headteacher	Mrs Carolyn Roberts
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2004
School address	Crossgate Moor Durham County Durham DH1 4SU
Telephone number	0191 3843887
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Age group	11-18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. They evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the quality of self-evaluation and strategic planning, students' progress and achievement in mathematics and science in the main school, and how well prepared sixth form students are for independent study. Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, the scrutiny of students' work, assessment data and school records and conversations with students and teachers. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the 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 this report.

Description of the school

Durham Johnston is a larger than average school. It is over subscribed. The majority of students are of White British heritage and are from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. Attainment on entry to the school is slightly above average and the proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school achieved language college status in 2005. It is a split-site school, with Years 7 and 8 housed in buildings two miles from the main campus. An extensive building programme is underway to put the school on a single site in 2009. About 60% of Year 11 students elect to stay on into the sixth form and most Year 13 students go on to university.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Durham Johnston is a good school. This is because students progress well, standards are above average and achievement by the end of Year 11 is good. When measured against their individual targets, all students are doing as well as they can, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has rightly been concerned about students' past progress in mathematics and science. Staffing difficulties in the subjects have been largely addressed and standards rose significantly in 2007. Work seen during the inspection confirms that the good progress is being maintained. The school met its statutory and specialist language college targets in 2007.

Aspects of the school's work are exemplary. Students are well prepared for the next stage of their education and for future employment. They have excellent basic skills and the personal qualities to succeed in their ambitions. They are confident and articulate young people, sensitive to the needs of others and ready to shoulder responsibility. Attendance rates are above average. Students enjoy their work and the opportunities to learn and develop socially through a wide range of extracurricular activities. These involve charitable work in the local community and international links and visits resulting from the language college status. The school is a harmonious and safe community and students know right from wrong. They are aware of the importance of keeping fit and well and eat healthy lunches. They make the most of the restricted opportunities for physical education. The limited sporting facilities will be improved significantly when the current building programme is completed. Students' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding.

Parents are supportive of the school and appreciate the quality of education it provides. A small number of parents feel that resources for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are insufficient. The inspection found that the school is making appropriate use of money delegated for such students and is ensuring that they achieve as well as their peers.

Many of the teaching rooms are in a poor state because the buildings are old, the fabric is worn and space restricted. This limits teachers' ability to create a stimulating learning environment, to celebrate students' achievements through displays of their work and to use space flexibly for practical learning activities. There cannot be continuity in tutorial support for all students from Year 7 to Year 11 because of the split site. A priority in the school's forward planning is to improve these aspects of provision.

Teaching and learning are good and at times outstanding. The school's own rigorous monitoring confirms this. Students are taught by subject specialists. Good use is made of individual learning targets to raise standards and students are guided well on how to improve their work. They respond by working hard and concentrating for extended periods of time. Learning activities are as varied as possible and cater for a wide range of learning styles. Teachers have high expectations and have developed excellent working relationships with their students. Rare instances of poor behaviour are dealt with quickly and effectively. Exemplary teaching was seen in a mathematics lesson where the teachers' enthusiasm for the subject stimulated Year 11 students to think through problems for themselves. They found the work enjoyable and exciting. The school rightly has a development priority to improve the use of information and communication technology (ICT) as a teaching and learning aid.

The quality of the curriculum is good, it provides opportunities for all students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to progress and develop well. Statutory requirements

are met. Recent improvements have been made in the provision for students' personal, health and social education and in the teaching of citizenship. There is an excellent range of extracurricular activities. The participation rates are high, particularly for sport, music and drama. Public speaking competitions and formal presentations are held to increase students' self-confidence. The school's language college status has broadened the curriculum and provided extensive opportunities for students to travel and experience other cultures.

Care, guidance and support are good and contribute significantly to students' progress, enjoyment of their work and their well-being. Parents agree that students are looked after very well. The school pays rigorous attention to health and safety issues and risk assessments are undertaken for all activities, particularly for visits out of school and for trips abroad. Appropriate child protection measures are in place. Year 7 students and the small number of students who join the school part way through an academic year have excellent induction procedures to help them settle into new routines. There are very effective links with parents and a range of local agencies that safeguard the needs of the most vulnerable students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The very strong pastoral team, that includes counsellors and careers advisers, gives high quality care to all students. The school is working to monitor students' progress over time more effectively to ensure that the improvements in students' achievements, particularly in mathematics and science, are sustained and built upon.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides strong leadership and she is well supported by an able and committed senior team. There have been significant improvements since the previous inspection in the rigour of self-evaluation and in strategic planning. The school has in place appropriate and challenging development priorities. Good use is made of challenging targets to raise standards. The staffing difficulties of the past have been largely resolved and morale is good. Teachers and teaching assistants are committed to equality of opportunity for all students and to ensuring that any barriers to learning are dismantled. Governance is good. Governors know the school well and support and encourage as well as ensuring that students are getting the education they deserve. They, and particularly the chair of governors, have assisted the school in developing its monitoring systems. Improvements in the quality of teaching and in students' achievement show that the school's capacity to improve further is very good.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Durham Johnston has an outstanding Sixth Form. Standards are above average, progress is excellent and levels of achievement are high. This is because the excellent teaching students receive prepares them well for the next stage of their education and for future employment. They are mature and independent young people who are clear about their ambitions and capable of organising their own learning to achieve them. They have excellent basic skills and the ability to use them flexibly in all areas of learning. The excellent curriculum is tailored to meet the needs of these high attaining students in terms of the breadth of courses on offer. The school's good links with other institutions and its effective guidance systems ensure that students receive appropriate advice about post-16 pathways. Excellent support and preparation is given for the transition to university and for work and training placements. Leadership and management are outstanding. Aspirations are high and students' progress is closely monitored to ensure that challenging targets are met. Students speak highly of the education they receive and are at pains to stress how much they enjoy their work and value the support and help they receive from their teachers.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards by improving the learning environment and the provision for information and communication technology.
- Further improve achievement by monitoring students' progress closely.

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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	1
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?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	1

Achievement and standards

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	1

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	1
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	1
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 October 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Durham Johnston Comprehensive School

Thank you for the warm welcome we received when we visited your school. This was a short inspection of one day. I was able to read a lot of information about your school prior to my arrival, particularly the self-evaluation documents. This enabled me, when I spoke to your headteacher on the telephone, to agree provisionally where the school's strengths lay and what areas needed looking at.

There have been significant improvements in the rate of progress in mathematics and science over the last year. The school's analysis of what it does well and what

needs to be improved is accurate and effective plans and development priorities are in place. Sixth Form students receive an excellent education and their levels of achievement are high.

Personal development is excellent across the school and you are very well prepared for the next stage of your education and for future employment. You impressed us with your capacity for hard work and your ability to work independently without constant direction. You also have the ability to work well with others. Many of you spoke us about the wide range of activities available outside of lessons, including visits in this country and abroad. You are also appreciative of the support and guidance you receive from staff and the very good working relationships in the school.

The school has recently introduced a system to track your progress over time to spot and address any underachievement. This needs to be implemented consistently and rigorously to ensure that the improvements in achievement are maintained and built upon. You will be only to well aware of the limitations imposed by the old and worn rooms in many parts of the school. A second priority for development is for the school to take advantage of the handover of the new buildings to improve the learning environment.

We wish you every success in your education and in your future careers.

Yours sincerely

Brian Dower

Lead inspector