

Hurworth School: A Mathematics and Computing College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114316
Local Authority	Darlington
Inspection number	311563
Inspection date	2 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Tanya Harber Stuart HMI

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	653
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sam Jameson
Headteacher	Mr Dean Judson
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2004
School address	Croft Road Hurworth-on-Tees Darlington County Durham DL2 2JG
Telephone number	01325 720424
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, student's personal development and well-being, the quality of teaching and learning, care, guidance and support, curriculum and the effectiveness of managers in improving education and care for the students.

Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation form (SEF); national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records; a range of school documentation; observations of the school at work; joint lesson observations; discussions with staff, students, the chair of governors and the parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but there is no evidence to suggest that the school's own evaluations, as given in its SEF, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Hurworth School is a smaller than average comprehensive school serving Hurworth and the south east of Darlington. There are very few students who are from minority ethnic groups and who speak English as an additional language. The percentage of students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average but the percentage of students with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The percentage of students entitled to a free school meal is below average. The school has a centre for autistic students.

Hurworth School holds the Basic Skills Quality Mark. The school has specialist status in mathematics and computing and is a foundation school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Hurworth School provides its students with an outstanding education. The school's mission statement of 'achieving excellence with care' is at the heart of everything that happens. The outstanding care, guidance and support for the students mirrors the relentless focus on improving the quality of the students' lives, not only through academic success, but also success in sport, the performing arts and business projects. This is a school in which every student matters and each and every student is known. Parents are very happy with the education provided for their children. However, the limited space, especially with respect to the sports facilities, restricts the range of activities which can take place.

Students enter the school aged 11 with standards which are either average or just above. At the end of Key Stage 3, students consistently reach standards which are well above the national average. In 2007, in mathematics, a significant proportion of students attained Level 6, the level above that expected for their age. At the end of Key Stage 4, standards are consistently well above the national average. In 2007, 96% of students left the school with five good GCSE grades and 81% left with five good GCSE grades including mathematics and English. All the students who left in 2007 achieved five GCSE passes, which can be attributed to outstanding teaching and learning and to the outstanding level of academic and pastoral care, guidance and support. The innovative and well embedded, assertive mentoring system means that each student's progress is meticulously tracked and fed back to students and parents. Well thought through intervention strategies are frequently monitored to ensure the vast majority of students make exceptional progress. Excellent provision is made for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, especially those students with autism. This is appreciated by parents who say that their children make very good progress in meeting their personal targets and often reach the level expected for their age.

The personal development and well-being of the students are outstanding. The extremely good relationships between staff and students contribute to the students feeling very safe at the school and this was noted by parents. Students are polite, happy, articulate young people who are very proud to be at the school and this is shown through their excellent attendance. Students comment that the very few incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively. All required safeguarding procedures are in place. The learning zone, a room for students to use at break and lunch, provides a safe place for vulnerable students. 'The Base', the room for the autistic unit, is welcoming and makes a positive contribution to the students' development, especially their social development. The senior leadership team and the staff insist on very high standards of behaviour. In the past, this has led to a high number of exclusions but the number has substantially fallen since the school introduced an effective system to support students in the school in September 2007.

The students are fully involved in steps to improve what the school offers. For example, the school council helped plan the updating of the toilets and to extend the range of healthy food available. There are many opportunities for the students to experience the world of work through, for example, careers days. Also excellent links with colleges ensure that students who start Advanced level courses at Hurworth continue them when they leave. These very good opportunities and links and the outstanding achievement made by the students at the school means that they are extremely well prepared for life after Hurworth.

Teaching and learning are outstanding. The staff cater very well for the needs and interests of the students through a variety of activities. For example, the use of the film 'Grease' to develop dance skills meant that male and female students were interested and prepared to participate. Dance is also used creatively in mathematics to explain different types of graphs. Students' excellent behaviour and the positive relationships between the staff and students mean lessons can be exciting and innovative. Teaching assistants are well used and provide considerable support. The students know and understand their target grades and what they have to do to improve. The school's specialist status in mathematics and computing has significantly contributed to the development of teaching and learning. Improved information communication technology resources mean students have more opportunities to work independently. Many staff use interactive whiteboards and online voting systems to assess students' progress throughout the lessons and then alter the work to ensure students are constantly challenged. The virtual learning environment allows the students to access learning resources at home, but it is not used by all departments.

The curriculum is outstanding. It is flexible and regularly reviewed to provide the best learning opportunities. More able students have the chance to take a range of Advanced Supplementary and Advanced level courses and the opportunity to take GCSEs early. This is particularly effective in art and mathematics where students achieve well. The school also provides a very good range of vocational courses and entry level courses.

The highly successful and very effective partnership of the head and chief executive, ably backed by the senior leadership team, has an extremely clear vision which fully embodies the mission statement of 'achieving excellence with care'. This outstanding and proactive leadership has ensured that the students are happy, confident young people who make excellent progress. The thorough and analytical whole school evaluation links to a detailed action plan with outcomes clearly linked to the achievement of the students. This drive for improvement is mirrored in the departmental action plans although departmental self-evaluations are not always similarly focused on outcomes for students. The governors challenge and support extremely well the leadership and management of the school. They know what the school does well and where it needs to improve because of detailed reports from the headteacher. All of these factors, and the significant improvement in standards, with the percentage of students achieving five good GCSE grades including mathematics and English rising from 57% in 2005 to 81% in 2007, mean capacity to improve is outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Refine the departmental self-review system so that it focuses even more on outcomes for students.
- Extend the virtual learning environment to enable students to access more resources at home.
- Update the sports facilities.

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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
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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?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

3 April 2008

Dear Students,

Inspection of Hurworth School: A Mathematics and Computing College, Darlington, DL2 2JG

Thank you for welcoming me to your school during the Ofsted inspection. I really appreciated hearing your views, both formally in meetings and informally in classrooms and around the school. Many of your parents completed a questionnaire which allowed me to take their views into account.

Hurworth School is outstanding. The standards you achieve at the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are well above average and you make excellent progress during your time at the school. I can see why you are extremely proud of your school and why you enjoy being at Hurworth. The staff work with you to make sure that you achieve exceptionally well, giving up time after school and at lunch time, and you appreciate this. Your school is safe and there is someone to talk to if you need to. The mentoring in Year 9 and Year 11 is a key factor in your success and you believe it makes you achieve as well as you can. I can see why you believe this is your school and that you feel involved in improving it. For example, your school council has helped to extend the range of healthy food offered at lunchtime and update the toilets.

I have asked the governors, Mr Judson and the staff, to make Hurworth even better in three ways:

- make sure that the reviews staff complete are more focused on outcomes for you
- extend the virtual learning environment to enable you to access more resources outside school
- improve the sports facilities.

You can contribute by continuing to attend school and contributing to improvements through the school council.

I wish you all the best for the future,

Tanya Harber Stuart

Her Majesty's Inspector