

Haughton Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114320
Local Authority	Darlington
Inspection number	311567
Inspection dates	3–4 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Katrina Gueli 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 (total)	900
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Miss Sarah Robinson
Headteacher	Dame Dela Smith
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2004
School address	Salters Lane South Darlington County Durham DL1 2AN
Telephone number	01325 254000
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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 and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Haughton Community School is an average sized secondary school. In 2005 it became part of a hard federation incorporating a primary school and an all age special school. Although the three schools retain their separate status, they have a shared budget, a federated governing body and shared leadership and management. The school occupies a new building opened in April 2006 as part of an 'Education Village'. In September 2001, Haughton School was awarded Arts Specialist status and was re-designated in 2005 as an associate college with Beaumont Hill Technology & Vocational College. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average and the school draws students from an area which includes areas of considerable disadvantage. The number of students from a minority ethnic group is low compared to national averages but the proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Haughton Community school provides a satisfactory standard of education. The school is emerging from turbulent times during which it has become part of a federation with a new leadership structure, moved to a new site and high numbers of staff have left and joined the school. This extended period of change and staffing difficulty had a significantly negative impact on students' progress in recent years. However, the school leadership team working in partnership with the local authority have worked relentlessly to raise standards and ensure that achievement is now satisfactory. Monitoring to check how well the school is doing is robust but some information and data from other sources are not evaluated sharply enough to make sure improvement activities effectively address all aspects of underperformance. The good care, support and guidance that students receive and the good curriculum have made a strong contribution to increasing the proportion of students who gain 5 or more A* - C grades at GCSE and created a positive climate for learning within the school. The quality of teaching and learning has also been improved through effective recruitment and good support to help individual colleagues improve their practice. Assessment information is being used more effectively to ensure the degree of challenge and support for students is well matched to their individual needs but in some lessons more 'fine tuning' is required so that all students can achieve well. The tracking of pupil progress is very rigorous and more accurate assessment is ensuring underachievement is identified quickly. The mentoring of all students in Year 11 and targeted students in Year 9 combined with a broad range of other intervention strategies has proved effective in getting individuals at risk of underachievement back on track. Standards in English, mathematics and science have improved to be broadly average but the school recognises that attainment in the core subjects still needs to rise further to ensure all students achieve well.

Students' personal development and well being are satisfactory and their attendance, behaviour and attitudes to learning have improved. Community targets for Haughton's specialist subjects have largely been met. As part of this work a theatre group involving students from across the federation has been established and this is successfully developing links both within and beyond the school community and providing a good context to develop students' understanding of diversity. However, the school's effectiveness in promoting community cohesion is satisfactory overall as wider opportunities to ensure students have the chance to work alongside others from a diverse range ethnic and religious groups are currently less well developed.

What the school should do to improve further

- To raise standards in the core subjects at both key stages to ensure all students achieve well.
- To ensure that the tasks and activities in lessons fully meet the needs of all students.
- To sharply evaluate all the available data and information from the school's own monitoring to take more effective action to eliminate underachievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students join the school with broadly average attainment but the number of students who demonstrate below average competence in their reading is higher than typically seen. In previous years, all groups of students including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities underachieved. Recently, however, standards have improved considerably, especially in Years 10 and 11. Between 2005 and 2007, results in national tests in Year 9 and GCSE examinations

were below average because students' progress was inadequate. In 2008 however, the proportion of students gaining 5 or more A* - C grades at GCSE almost doubled compared to 2007. In addition, the school's own assessment information and work seen in lessons confirms that standards are now broadly in line with national averages and students are making adequate progress in all years. For example, current standards in Year 11 are much better than in previous years, particularly in mathematics, and this represents adequate progress for these students over five years. Satisfactory outcomes for all students including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are now being achieved because attendance and behaviour are better, teaching is improving and the academic tracking system is accurately measuring standards of students' work and rates of progress. When slower progress is identified, this triggers interventions that are increasingly effective in closing the gap between actual performance and students' targets. However, the number of students gaining five higher GCSE grades including English and mathematics and attainment at Key Stage 3 declined further in 2008, due in part to students' significant past underachievement and the impact of staffing instability in the core subjects. Nevertheless, several of the school's own and federation specialist subjects, for example art, leisure and tourism, and textiles performed well and the vocational courses taken at a local college also generated good results.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students enjoy coming to school, and say they feel safe around the site and well supported by staff. Despite concerns about behaviour raised by a small minority of parents, strategies to improve behaviour and a more consistent application of the new behaviour policy have had a positive impact and most students display good attitudes and behave well, both in lessons and around school. Fixed term exclusions, have been reduced significantly although they remain high and behaviour is therefore satisfactory overall. The majority of students are aware of the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles and the school encourages students to choose healthy eating options in the dining areas. Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. They are confident that bullying will be treated seriously and dealt with swiftly and fairly. Many students make a good positive contribution to the community through taking on responsibilities and leadership roles. For example, the Student Nutritional Action Group, Committee membership, and the School Council all ensure that students are able to communicate their views and ideas to school leaders to further improve the school. Relationships between the federated schools are good and student involvement with local resident focus groups is contributing to their understanding of local needs and concerns. Attendance has improved to be broadly average and the number of students with high levels of absence has fallen significantly as a result of the school's monitoring and intervention. The punctuality of a small minority of students to lessons however remains a concern. Students' satisfactory key skills and their good knowledge of enterprise and personal financial management ensure they are well prepared for their future economic well-being. Students make good progress in acquiring work related skills because links with employers are well developed and work based learning is effectively supported through the federation's vocational specialist status. As a result the number of post-16 students who do not progress into education, employment or training is lower than the national average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The proportion of good or better teaching has increased and most lessons are characterised by planning which ensures progression in learning through indicating links to previous and future work. Students are aware of what is expected because learning objectives are carefully explained often with the effective use of the interactive whiteboard. Tasks and activities are varied and students with additional learning needs receive well targeted and effective help from well briefed support staff. Good relationships ensure the classroom atmosphere is conducive to learning. In the most effective lessons the pace is brisk, work is more demanding and teachers make frequent checks on learning. There is a good balance of teacher and student activity with plenty of opportunities for students to think for themselves and assess their own progress. The school has a clear idea of what constitutes good teaching. However, planning is not standardised and the best practice which undoubtedly exists has not yet been sufficiently well shared and embedded within and across all subjects. As a consequence not all teachers are preparing and delivering lessons that consistently promote good progress. In some lessons, teachers talk too much and questioning does not allow sufficient opportunities for students to develop, explain and justify their ideas and opinions. There is also variation in the effectiveness with which teachers use assessment information to meet students' individual learning needs. Too many lessons reflect a 'one size fits all' format, and work is not tailored precisely enough to fully extend higher attaining students or support those of lower attainment. As a result, the level of challenge is not always appropriate for every student in the class.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad, balanced and meets the needs of most groups of students. At Key Stage 4, a very good range of academic, applied and vocational courses enables students to choose a combination of subjects that are well matched to their needs and aspirations. A number of art and applied courses arising from specialist status contribute well to students' enjoyment and achievement. A combination of college-based provision and work placements has a positive impact on the motivation and attendance of a small number of students at risk of disaffection with mainstream schooling. No opportunity is missed to accredit students' achievement, so very few leave without a qualification. In Years 7 and 8 the 'Opening Minds' course is an innovative way of delivering a block of subjects through stimulating cross-curricular themes and dimensions. Working with tutors for blocks of time, these lessons successfully develop students' transferable personal, learning and thinking skills, particularly in literacy. In all years students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well served by a personalised timetable, comprising a combination of in-class support, withdrawal lessons and access to a learning mentor. Those who need support for behaviour benefit from time spent in the school's specialist unit. Students are very appreciative of the quality and range of additional and enrichment activities on offer. Most popular are those which are sports related or based on the performing arts and these make a good contribution to students' personal development and well-being. The school is aware that further curriculum development is needed to widen the range and increase the uptake of modern foreign languages and to develop students understanding of living in a diverse community more effectively.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff and outside agencies work well together to ensure that care and well being of every student is central to its work and of good quality. Child protection procedures are in place and are effective. Rigorous training ensures that staff have an up-to-date knowledge and understanding of child protection issues. The school has been very effective in working with outside agencies, students and their parents/carers to improve attendance and reduce the number of students who have high levels of absence. Exclusions have also been significantly reduced as behaviour has improved and the curriculum has been developed to more effectively meet individual needs. Academic guidance is good. The system for monitoring and tracking students' progress is well developed and intervention and high quality mentoring is available for those who appear to be under-achieving. Students know and are working towards challenging targets in all subjects. Where marking is good student progress is well supported because the steps they need to make in order to improve are clearly highlighted. However, marking quality is not consistent so some students are less clear what they need to do to reach their targets. The school has good arrangements for identifying and supporting vulnerable students and those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Provision such as the Carnell Centre, multi-agency partnerships and the effective use of the skills and expertise of staff across the federation ensures there is good support for students who have specific needs or who are most vulnerable to underachievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leaders and managers have a clear vision for improving the school. The unstable staffing situation of the last few years has been successfully redressed in most departments and a number of subject leader appointments have improved the quality of leadership. Self evaluation is providing an accurate overview of the school's strengths and areas for development but data and information collected are not always evaluated sharply enough to judge the impact of actions and ensure that all underachievement is eliminated. Some actions to bring about improvement have been successful and as a result standards are rising, behaviour and attendance have improved, exclusions have been reduced significantly and the curriculum has been broadened to more closely match students' individual needs. Middle leaders are becoming increasingly involved in contributing to school improvement and external support is being used effectively to develop teaching and learning and improve achievement. The school has a satisfactory capacity to improve further. Targets are being set with an increasing degree of challenge and rigorous tracking, underpinned by more accurate assessment is ensuring that teachers and subject leaders are more accountable for student progress. Governors are very knowledgeable about the schools' performance and the skills and expertise across the governing body ensures it is effective in holding the school to account with a good balance between the challenge and support provided. Links within the Education Village and activities in the local community are ensuring students can participate and develop an understanding of their school and locality. Parents are becoming more involved in their child's learning and the school is working effectively with external partners to ensure the school and the 'Education Village' as a whole play a key role in supporting the community.

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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?	3
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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	2
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**

Dear Students

Inspection of Haughton Community School, Darlington, DL1 2AN

You may remember that I recently visited your school with a team of inspectors. I would like to thank you for talking to us and sharing your views about the school as this is an important part of the inspection.

We found that overall Haughton School is satisfactory but that the care, guidance and support that you receive and the curriculum are good. Teaching and learning has been improved and most departments are now fully staffed. Your progress is regularly assessed and you are effectively helped to get back on track if you are identified as being at risk of underachieving. Improvements brought about by the leaders of the school mean that you are now making satisfactory progress and reaching the standards expected based on your attainment at the end of Key Stage 2. Your personal development and well being are satisfactory but many of you make a good contribution to the school and wider community. The school also works hard to ensure you are well prepared for your future economic well-being and as a result a high proportion of you go on to further education, training or employment after the end of Year 11. Many of you are now attending more regularly and you told us that student behaviour in lessons and around school is much better. You appreciate the high quality facilities of the Village and many of you participate in and enjoy the wide choice of extracurricular activities that are on offer.

There are few things that we have asked the school to do so that you can make even better progress. These are:

- to raise standards in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 3 and 4 to ensure that you all achieve well
- to ensure that the tasks and activities in all lessons fully meet your individual learning needs
- to check carefully how well the school is doing and take more effective action to make sure all underachievement is eliminated.

I am sure you will help the school to improve further by continuing to attend regularly and trying your best in all your lessons.

Yours sincerely

Katrina Gueli

Her Majesty's Inspector