

# Newent Community School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115762
<b>Local Authority</b>	Gloucestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	312059
<b>Inspection date</b>	12 December 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Anthony Shield

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1061
6th form	232
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Lionel Carter
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jane Steele
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 January 0001
<b>School address</b>	Watery Lane Newent GL18 1QF
<b>Telephone number</b>	01531 820550
<b>Fax number</b>	01531 820707

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<b>Age group</b>	11-18
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. Inspectors evaluated students' progress through the school including the gains they make in the sixth form; the quality of students' personal development and well-being; the influence of provision on students' progress and personal development; and, the effectiveness of leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from an analysis of national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records, scrutiny of policies and other school documentation, observation of the school at work, interviews with teachers and students, and from parents' responses to a questionnaire. 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 its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

Newent Community School serves the town of Newent and surrounding villages. Most students are from a White British background, with small numbers from other ethnic heritages. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is lower than average. On entry in Year 7, the school loses some able students to grammar schools in the area and the proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. The school has had arts college status for several years and, since September 2007, has added science as an additional specialism. In addition, the school has been awarded Sportsmark Silver, Artsmark Gold and Healthy School. The headteacher has been in post for just under one year.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Newent Community is a good school with some outstanding features. A belief in every student is at the heart of its work. Students achieve well in a climate which encourages outstanding personal and social development. Leadership and management have been invigorated by the vision and approach of the new headteacher. A shared determination to strengthen provision still further is part of the fabric of the school. Dedicated and hardworking teachers are ambitious for themselves and their students. Their professional approach is the hallmark of the school's success.

Students are mature and responsible, showing a sensible concern for one another. The school's family spirit, encouraged by the house structure and mixed aged tutor groups, is at the heart of the students' outstanding personal development. Within this framework, students learn to care for each other. The buddy system encourages them to look after each other and as one Year 7 student remarked, 'We keep an eye on the older students!' The students' enthusiasm for school is reflected in above average rates of attendance and their high levels of participation in the wide range of extra-curricular clubs. Students behave sensibly toward each other and incidents of disruptive behaviour in class are rare. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Students are encouraged to reflect on the needs of others and they fund raise extensively for charitable causes. Links with a Kenyan school have done much to foster international awareness and understanding of global inequalities. Students show concern for their own and each other's safety in lessons, such as design and technology. House councils and the school council offer good opportunities for student views to be heard. Students' understanding of healthy lifestyle choices is very good. The exceptionally well planned work related dimension to the curriculum, alongside tutorial and personal, social and health education programmes, ensures students develop the personal skills necessary for their future adult working lives. Sixth formers' mature and responsible attitudes are an excellent role model for younger students.

Students attain above average standards and, given their attainment on entry, this represents good achievement. In 2007, GCSE results were significantly better than average, as they have been for several years. Students' performance in biology, business studies, geography, mathematics, design and technology, English and physics was particularly good, but no subject does badly. However, the proportion of students attaining A\* and A grades was lower than in previous years. Progress accelerates through Years 10 and 11 as GCSE approaches. In Years 7 to 9, progress is good but not consistently so. Whilst students achieve well in mathematics and science, progress in English is less secure. In addition, fewer students reach the higher Level 6 in English than might be expected. In the sixth form, standards vary from subject to subject, but overall students' achievement is good. The school has developed strong partnerships with local schools and the community, particularly through its specialist college status.

Good teaching ensures that students make good progress. Lessons are characterised by a focused climate for learning. Typically, there is a purposeful hum in lessons. Most students are keen to do well and take pride in what they achieve. Teaching is assured and there is a strong sense of partnership between teacher and student. Clear instructions and explanations enable students to work confidently at tasks. Most lessons are planned carefully to ensure challenge for all abilities. Questions are well used to probe and deepen understanding. Students say that they learn most when they are active participants and where their ideas and contributions are valued. They especially like work which is relevant to everyday life. Whilst students often know

their targets, this is not always the case. Assessment and feedback on progress are not consistently well used to plan challenging work or to ensure students know how to improve.

Students' enjoyment and good achievement are in part due to the outstanding curriculum. In Years 10 and 11, programmes are driven by a personalised response to individual students' preferences and potential. Students choose from an open choice of GCSE options, including triple science and two languages. A developing range of applied and vocational courses is offered, and there is good provision for those students who find academic study more taxing. Extension and additional activities offer challenge and stimulus for gifted and talented students. Alongside a commitment to providing a curriculum which is relevant and meaningful in the workplace, students are very well prepared for further study and future employment. The school offers a wide range of enrichment activities, visitors and visits. Residential visits are particularly popular. The school's specialist visual art status makes a significant contribution. This is evident in the striking visual images and art works around the school, but also in terms of encouraging an independent and creative approach to learning across all subjects. There is a good choice of advanced level courses in the sixth form, alongside some GCSE resits and a one year course designed to develop work related skills.

Teachers know their students well and the quality of care, guidance and support is good. The quality of pastoral care in particular is excellent. Students are well known to staff and problems are swiftly dealt with. 'Our child has thrived since joining the school...teachers are aware of the children as individuals' was a typical comment from a parent. Others comment how effectively the house system and pastoral procedures in general ensure that their children are well looked after. Students are confident that adults care about them and will help them in fulfilling their potential. They value the time that teachers are prepared to give to help and support them. The work of the student support officers is very effective in ensuring good attendance, behaviour and communication with home. Vulnerable students are very well supported and excellent use is made, when appropriate, of external agencies. Academic guidance is good. Students' progress is carefully tracked, but the role of tutors and house staff in monitoring and planning intervention for students at risk of underachievement is underdeveloped.

Leadership shown by the headteacher and her senior staff is principled and determined. A recent restructuring of management roles has ensured greater consistency and clarity. There is a strong dynamic for change and leadership and management at all levels are good. Monitoring is robust and self-evaluation accurate and realistic. Governors and managers at all levels play a key role in ensuring self-review and improvement. Regular subject reviews enable all staff to contribute to school self-evaluation, and there is a strong commitment to honest and self-critical review. As a result, the school knows itself well. As yet, many of the initiatives introduced have yet to make an impact although, increasingly, provision is more consistent and good practice more widely shared. The school's analysis of performance data to set targets has resulted in realistic, but conservative, targets. This is now changing and the school is pursuing more challenging targets as expectations rise. Hardworking governors offer good support and challenge to the school. Parents are very supportive of the school and their views are regularly surveyed.

The school looks forward with ambition. Its commitment to further improvement stands out. It has a good capacity to achieve its goals.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

The sixth form builds successfully on the work of the main school. There are some outstanding features, not least in the mature and responsible attitudes shown by students to their work and the school. The students enjoy very good relationships with teachers and take a leading role in many activities in school. They are good role models for younger students. They relish using their initiative, for example, in arranging blood donor sessions and in charity fund raising events. Students are confident learners and they respond well to the good teaching which prompts them to be both resourceful and independent learners. Lessons typically feature challenging questions and a variety of interesting activities. Students respond enthusiastically and clearly enjoy working in this stimulating environment. Although standards are broadly average, given the range of prior attainment on entry to the sixth form, students achieve well. They enjoy a well planned curriculum and an extensive range of enrichment activities. The quality of academic and pastoral support and guidance is good. The sixth form is well led and increasingly effective self-evaluation has led to clear plans for future development. Recent improvements in the analysis of performance data is leading to more precise intervention for individual students when needed.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve progress in Years 7 to 9, particularly in English and for the more able students.
- Use assessment and feedback in lessons to plan more consistently challenging work and inform the students how they can help themselves to improve.

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

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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?	1	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	1
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	1	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	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

13 December 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Newent Community School, Newent GL18 1QF

Thank you very much for being so welcoming when we recently visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and were particularly impressed by the courteous way in which you greeted us and the maturity you showed in answering our questions. It is clear that you enjoy being at the school and take part in everything it offers with energy and enthusiasm. Yours is a good school with some outstanding features.

- Here are some of the main findings from our report.
- ?
- You make good progress through the school because of good teaching, which offers interest and challenge. ?
- Teachers take considerable care to look after you and ensure that you are well supported through school. ?
- Many of you develop confident personal and social skills, which help prepare you very well for your future beyond school. ?
- The sixth form offers you good opportunities to flourish. ?
- The curriculum is excellent and there is a superb range of clubs and enrichment activities ?
- The headteacher, her senior team and all other managers carry out their responsibilities very well.

In order to make things even better, we have asked the school to do two things.

- ?
- Improve your rate of progress in Years 7 to 9, particularly in English and for those of you capable of achieving higher standards. ?
- Keep you informed of how well you are doing and use this information to plan suitable work for you and let you know what you need to do to get better.

Thank you once again for your help during our visit. Good luck with your work in the future!

Yours sincerely

Tony Shield Lead Inspector