

Frederick Gough School - A Specialist Language College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118097
Local Authority	North Lincolnshire
Inspection number	312811
Inspection dates	1–2 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Judith Straw

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	1200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mike Galey
Headteacher	Mr Ben Lawrance
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2004
School address	Grange Lane South Bottesford Scunthorpe DN16 3NG
Telephone number	01724 860151
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Age group	11-16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a much larger than average secondary school situated in an urban area. The majority of students come from White British families and very few are from minority ethnic groups or at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of students entitled to claim a free school meal is below average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average and the school has twice the national average of students with a statement of special educational need. Very few students join or leave school other than at the usual times.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Frederick Gough judges itself to be a satisfactory school. The results of inspection confirm the school's evaluation. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been slow. Most issues have been addressed but progress in English still remains an issue, despite the school's best efforts. However, the school is now moving forward with much greater urgency. The majority of parents praise many aspects of the school's work, including the positive approach to discipline, the support offered to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the splendid range of extra-curricular activities and the commitment and enthusiasm of most teachers and senior leaders. Other parents expressed concerns about the behaviour of some students, the lack of homework and the fact that some students' books are very rarely marked.

Students are generally courteous and well mannered. Relationships between students and teachers are good. Most students enjoy school and their attendance is satisfactory. Positive behaviour management is having an impact and the behaviour of the great majority of students is good. Students feel safe and secure and praise the school's innovative approach to bullying. They have a growing awareness of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. Students contribute to school life in a number of ways, for example, by being peer mediators and prefects. They say the school listens to their views and they believe their opinions matter. The preparation of students for the next stage of learning, training or employment is satisfactory.

Standards in Key Stage 3 have improved and are now broadly average. Students' progress is good in mathematics and satisfactory in science given their starting points. In 2007, standards in English in Key Stage 3 were below average and progress was unsatisfactory for too many pupils. GCSE results have improved in the last two years. The rate of improvement in standards at Key Stage 4 is accelerating. Recent changes to the curriculum are playing an important part in providing courses better suited to the needs of learners which allow them to achieve considerable success. The school's specialist status is not yet making a full contribution to raising standards and achievement. Innovative plans have been made to improve its impact further but these will not be in place until September 2008. Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory and standards are broadly average.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory with some good teaching across a range of subjects. The best subject departments use targets effectively to help students achieve well. In other departments, where middle management is not as strong, these targets are not always specific and overall students do not receive enough advice on how to improve their work.

The school systems for monitoring and using information on students' progress are inconsistent. The measures are accurate and reliable but are not carried out often enough. A new unified system, clear and easy to understand, is ready to be rolled out very shortly.

The governors, headteacher, and senior staff have a secure grasp of how things stand and ambitious plans for improvement. There is still inconsistency in the way middle leaders evaluate the work of the school and take responsibility for raising standards. Day-to-day management is effective and the school runs smoothly. The school provides satisfactory value for money and is securely placed to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement across the school, particularly in English.

- Improve the rigour of marking and written feedback of students' work so that they know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- Further improve the quality of teaching so that more of it is good.
- Develop the skills of some middle leaders so that they take greater responsibility for raising standards and there is more consistency in evaluating the work of the school.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards overall are average when students enter and leave the school. Achievement is satisfactory. Standards at the end of Year 9 in 2007 were average in mathematics and science. Students achieved very well in mathematics which is a consistent strength at Key Stage 3. Standards in English for Year 9 students have been consistently below average for the last 3 years and too many students did not achieve the standards of which they are capable.

The proportion of students at Key Stage 4 gaining five or more A* to C grades improved from 44% to 52% in 2007. The proportion including English and mathematics was 45% which is in line with the national average. Students' achievement in English in Years 10 and 11 is much better than in Years 7 to 9 and GCSE results in English language in 2007 were a little above average. The best GCSE results were gained in food technology, art, music, design technology (textiles) and physical education and the pupils made good progress in these subjects. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. The quality of the work seen during the course of the inspection, as well as the school's own tracking data, shows that standards are rising in many subject areas and the rate of progress is accelerating. However, there is still some underachievement in the work of average attaining students in modern foreign languages and in the achievement of middle and lower attaining boys.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Most students enjoy school and attendance is satisfactory. The majority of students behave well and appreciate the school's reward systems. The number of exclusions is falling, not least because of the support and positive experiences of school provided by the inclusion unit. Most students have positive attitudes to their work. They relate well to each other and are keen to make a positive contribution to the life of the school. Students say that they feel safe. The small number of instances of bullying are dealt with quickly and fairly. Peer mediators help younger students to overcome any worries they may have in settling into secondary school. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are satisfactory. Students' cultural awareness is enhanced through international links resulting from specialist language college status. However, their understanding of what it means to live in a culturally diverse society is limited. Students have sensible eating habits. They enjoy participating in physical activities and many take part in the wide range of activities provided. Many students participate in work related learning activities and the development of their basic skills by the time they leave school gives them a satisfactory preparation for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons are planned to a common whole school format and the large majority of lessons are characterised by good relationships between students and teachers. The best lessons move forward at a good pace, with a range of interesting and demanding tasks which give students the opportunity to work independently. Students enjoy meeting the challenges set and in these lessons they make good progress. In other lessons, where students are set by ability, some teachers feel that a single task will meet the needs of all students. This is not always the case because some find the work too easy and some find it too hard. This causes progress in these lessons to be slow. The marking of students' work ranges from cursory acknowledgement in some instances, to recognition of good effort elsewhere. It does not give students a clear enough understanding of what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. New pathways are improving the choices for students. An innovative new course called Learning to Learn is helping to develop students' study skills and is contributing to the rise in standards overall. Students studying vocational subjects have recently achieved results that enhance their employment prospects. The business enterprise coordinator has a positive focus on enterprise education as a part of the school's work related learning programme. Adult literacy and numeracy courses help to motivate students unlikely to achieve GCSE success. Provision for the teaching of religious education has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Specialist College status has led to effective links with other providers and makes a good contribution to the local community but has not yet contributed to raising standards sufficiently. Many students participate in and enjoy the extensive range of extra-curricular activities available at lunch time and after school. Provision for careers education and work related learning are good.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The quality of care, guidance and support that students receive is satisfactory. Safeguarding procedures are in place. Vulnerable students are well supported, particularly through the good partnerships that exist with outside agencies. Students are confident that they can confide in staff and receive support and guidance when they need it. Good transition arrangements help younger students to settle well. The quality of academic guidance and support students receive is inconsistent. In the best examples, subject targets are set and regularly referred to, for example, in religious education and personal, social and health education. In other subjects these targets are not always specific and students do not receive enough advice on how to improve their work. Additional support is provided for those who do not find learning easy, including a range of support groups outside of classes some of which are run by the peer mentors. An effective programme supports gifted and talented students.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher is leading the school well. With the active support of a recently constituted senior leadership team he has accurately identified the strengths and weaknesses of the school, whilst substantially reducing its deficit budget. Some of the accommodation is shabby and over-crowded and the school does well to provide a calm learning environment. A valid agenda for improvement has been put in place and staff are responding positively to increased levels of accountability. The leadership team acknowledge that performance should be better. They are taking appropriate action to tackle this, for example, through improved curriculum, better tracking systems for students' progress, closer monitoring of the work of subjects and setting more challenging targets. The school improvement plan establishes clear responsibilities and success criteria across a wide range of priority areas. There is an appropriate focus on raising standards and ensuring that students reach their full potential. However, the plan does not give enough emphasis to improving the quality of teaching and its one-year timescale constrains longer term strategic planning. Subject management is variable and inconsistent. Training, support and professional development opportunities are strengthening self-evaluation and subject review.

Governors know their school well. They are aware of what needs to be done to improve further and have a clear appreciation of their role in checking on the school's progress. They are hardworking, committed, and supportive, and carry out their responsibilities effectively.

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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 disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is 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
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

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

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?	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 tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

3 April 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Frederick Gough School - A Specialist Language College, North Lincolnshire, DN16 3NG

Thank you for the courteous welcome you gave us when we visited your school this week. We enjoyed meeting and talking to so many of you.

We found that you are making satisfactory progress in your work. You have the personal qualities which will enable you to succeed in life. You are well cared for, feel safe from intimidation and bullying and most of you know that it is important to adopt a healthy life style. You usually enjoy school and take part in many activities outside of lesson time. The recent school production was obviously a great success. Most of you work hard and show respect for each other, your teachers and other adults in school. The changes to the curriculum are helping you to have better choices and leading to greater success. Teachers work hard to promote your education.

We have suggested some ways in which the school can improve further.

- Raise standards and accelerate the rate of progress overall, especially in English.
- Develop the ways in which your work is marked so that you receive more guidance on how to improve it.
- Increase the amount of good and outstanding teaching.
- Make sure that all departments are monitoring your work and helping you to do the best you can.

You can play your part by taking the many opportunities that school offers you to be successful, attending regularly and putting as much effort as you can into all your work. We are confident your school is improving and we wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Judith Straw

Lead inspector