

Attleborough High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121167
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	313903
Inspection date	25 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Lynne Blakelock

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	968
6th form	116
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Andrew Butcher
Headteacher	Mr Stuart Bailey
Date of previous school inspection	6 December 2004
School address	Norwich Road Attleborough Norfolk NR17 2AJ
Telephone number	01953 452335
Fax number	01953 456817

Age group	11-18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the progress that students make, particularly in English at Key Stage 3, through the quality of teaching and learning and the use of targets; the effectiveness of the school's promotion of students' spiritual and cultural development; and the impact of leadership and management, including middle leaders, on the progress and standards of students. Evidence was gathered from observing work in classrooms, scrutinising school documentation and records of students' achievement and progress, parental questionnaires and discussions with senior and middle leaders in the school and with students. 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 the report.

Description of the school

This is a popular, average sized school. It mainly serves four primary schools, three of which are in nearby villages. Attainment on entry to Year 7 is broadly in line with the national average. A below average percentage of pupils has learning difficulties and/or disabilities, although this is increasing. An above average percentage of pupils has a statement of special educational needs. Fewer pupils than seen nationally are eligible for free school meals. The numbers of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language are lower than those found nationally. The school was awarded specialist school status for mathematics and computing in September 2004. It was awarded Investors in People status for the third time in March 2008. It achieved the National Challenge Award in 2006 for its work with gifted and talented pupils and both the National Healthy Schools Award and Sportsmark in 2007. It has gained accreditation as a Partnership Promotion School.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Inspectors confirm the school's evaluation that Attleborough High School is providing a good quality education. Through the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, and the shared vision of the senior leadership team, the school has made good progress since the last inspection. In particular, specialist school status has become a major catalyst for improvements that extend beyond the curriculum and the school, increasingly benefiting other schools and the wider community. The vast majority of parents express their appreciation of the education the school provides.

The school has a number of strengths. The care, guidance and support of students are outstanding features, encouraging students' very positive attitudes towards school and learning, and promoting a healthy, safe and secure environment. A major strength is the individual help extended to all students who require academic or pastoral support. Prompt identification and a good understanding of the needs of students, coupled with exceptionally well planned strategies, are helping students to achieve well in their learning and have also brought about a significant fall in exclusions. Both gifted and talented students and those who find learning difficult have individual learning plans that are effective because of their specific focus. Students are benefiting from regular monitoring of their progress and constant feedback about how to move forward in their learning. Excellent examples of this were seen in English 'benchmarking,' which focuses very specifically on telling students what they have achieved.

Students' excellent enjoyment of school and their positive attitudes and good attendance are strengthened by their knowledge that they are partners in the school's development. They value greatly, for example, their involvement in school improvement initiatives, which contribute strongly to their outstanding personal development. Their self-esteem and growing confidence are strongly encouraged from the time that they start school through the provision of a variety of opportunities to be leaders and team players. These lead to personal qualities and skills that prepare them well for the roles and responsibilities of adulthood. A comprehensive programme of personal and social education, which is reinforced in the daily life of the school, ensures students' excellent knowledge of how to live healthily and stay safe. Mixed-age tutor groups encourage a family atmosphere throughout the school and support students' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They facilitate the care of older students for the younger ones and the support they give them in their learning. Students of all ages support the local and wider community well through charity fund raising events, and as part of their curriculum programme. The vast majority of parents are very supportive and the school is keen to ensure that every parent is content with all aspects of its work.

Students of all abilities respond to good quality teaching and an increasingly interesting curriculum so that they achieve well. They attain above average standards in their work by the end of Year 11, consolidating the progress they have made by the end of Year 9. Results in design technology are exceptionally high at all levels, reflecting the excellent guidance and achievements of students. Specialist school targets are met at both key stages and exceeded at most levels. Students make good progress through the school from their starting points and outstanding progress in mathematics. Standards in English at Key Stage 3 have improved from 2007, when staffing absences impacted negatively, particularly on the results of more able students. They pulled down Key Stage 3 standards to average compared to national standards. The school's data and inspection evidence indicate that the standards in English, mathematics and science national tests are on track to be above average in 2008, although fewer students

are reaching higher levels in English than in mathematics and science. Improving results are due to consistently good teaching. Excellent working relationships between staff and students are based on a healthy mutual respect and provide a very firm foundation for learning. These are reinforced by teachers' good subject knowledge and their understanding of how students learn. Information and communication technology (ICT) is a good additional tool for learning that is used well. Students say that the knowledge they are given about their levels and how to make further progress, focus them very well on raising their standards. Whilst teachers' planning shows a clear structure to lessons and makes clear the purpose of learning, it does not consistently give a clear enough focus on ensuring that tasks help students to make the progress of which they are capable.

Leadership and management of the school are good overall. The headteacher provides outstanding direction to the school's work, enabling it to evolve and improve. This is strengthened by a real team spirit among the staff. Very regular, focused meetings with staff and increasingly rigorous monitoring, ensure that the senior leadership team has a clear understanding of strengths and areas for improvement and confirm the school's good capacity to improve. Faculty self-evaluation is leading to greater ownership and accountability of subject improvement and leadership. The impact of staff's work on standards and progress is good, with inconsistencies in teaching practice being addressed methodically. The knowledgeable and well-informed governing body leads the school effectively.

The good, broad curriculum is planned well and promotes students' good achievement and their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. From Year 7, students are exposed to a wide range of learning experiences, which reflect their abilities. More able students, for example sit the GCSE German examination in Year 9. Students of all abilities are enthusiastic about the widening range of options available at Key Stage 4, including vocational courses and weekly work experience placements. These increasingly match their learning needs and aspirations. Strong management of the school's specialist status has led to improved resources through the school, and extensive provision of partnership work with other schools. This includes transition work, which is ensuring Year 7 students have a good foundation for secondary school learning. Students are delighted with the virtual learning environment, which is having an outstanding impact on the school's work. It has opened up state of the art learning for students as well as for parents and the wider community, has transformed the culture of the school and given a new slant and impetus to learning in its broadest sense. Popular after-school activities and visits support students' personal development well and enable students to refine their skills and discover new interests. Careers guidance builds through the school, so that students have a thorough understanding of their educational and work options.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The effectiveness of the sixth form is good. It is led well, with strengths in personal support and guidance, which promote very positive relationships between staff and students. For example, students value the support offered by their teachers, in particular, the good and rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating their progress.

The open access sixth form reflects the school's inclusive approach and results in a wide spread of ability. Students make good progress from their starting points because the sixth form provides well for them. Its partnership with a nearby school enables a wider choice of subjects, and retention rates are good, although the school recognises the importance of adding more vocational courses. It is starting to address this. Standards are satisfactory and improving

because teaching is good. Teaching also has a positive impact on students' good personal development. The best teaching encourages student debate, with open and often probing questioning.

Students make the most of life in the sixth form. They are articulate, friendly and self-confident and speak highly of the provision made for them. They feel that they can influence the future of the school, for example, as in the improved facilities in the school's 'Internet Cafe'. Students say that they have had some excellent preparation for the next phase in their education, with the majority seeking places in higher education.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to raise standards of more able students, particularly in English through Key Stage 3.
- Ensure that teachers' planning has a clear focus on meeting the individual learning needs of all students to help them make the progress of which they are capable.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
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	2
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	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
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	2	

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?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	2

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	2
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	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

28 April 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Attleborough High School, Attleborough, Norwich, NR17 2AJ

I am writing to thank you for the helpfulness and courtesy you showed towards Mr Stanton and me when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed the opportunities to meet you in lessons and around the school and to listen to your observations about the education that you receive there.

Your school is a good school, in which standards are above average by the end of Year 9 and 11. You are making good progress. Your progress in mathematics is outstanding. Sixth form students are achieving well, with standards in line with the national average. Teaching is good, both in the school and in the sixth form and is strengthened by the outstanding support you are given by the staff. You believe that the school has improved by being a specialist mathematics and computing school. We agree with you. The outstanding virtual learning environment, for example, is transforming learning and communication. The curriculum is good and developing well. It is offering you a growing number and range of courses at Key Stage 4 that you enjoy, and which suit your needs more.

You value your school and appreciate the help that members of staff give you in lots of ways. Several of you told us about the many chances you have to help the school improve and at the same time, help you to develop excellent leadership skills. This extends to you helping the community in a variety of ways, for which you deserve congratulations.

The school continues to improve due to the excellent leadership given by Mr Bailey. We have highlighted two ways that will help your school to be even better. Mr Bailey agrees that you need learning tasks that match your needs as closely as possible, to help to quicken your progress. We also want standards to rise further, especially for those of you who are more able students, and in English at Key Stage 3. We are sure that you will help this to happen, by working as hard as you can.

I send you our best wishes for the future.

Mrs Lynne Blakelock

Lead inspector