

City of Norwich School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121172
Local Authority	NORFOLK LA
Inspection number	313906
Inspection date	4 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Brian Sharples HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1704
6th form	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Lucinda Poliakoff
Headteacher	Mr Gordon Boyd
Date of previous school inspection	11 October 2004
School address	Eaton Road Norwich Norfolk NR4 6PP
Telephone number	01603454015
Fax number	01603274035

Age group	11–18
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Introduction

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

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, students' personal development and well being, teaching and learning, curriculum, care, guidance and support, leadership and management and the effectiveness of the sixth form. Evidence was gathered from a range of school documentation; assessment data; observation of the school at work; parents' questionnaires and discussions with staff, students and members of the governing body.

Description of the school

City of Norwich is an above average sized school. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below national averages as is the percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including statements of special educational need. The percentage of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and those whose first language is believed not to be English is below the national average. A large number of students come from areas with low levels of social and economic disadvantage.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

City of Norwich School is a good school with a clear vision for raising standards and ensuring that all students achieve to their full ability. The school's specialist status in technology and in the arts has contributed significantly to the improvements which have taken place recently.

Standards and rates of progress are good. Students enter the school with slightly above average levels of attainment and leave with standards which are above average. Since the previous inspection, students have consistently made good progress every year up to 2006. However, in 2007 the overall progress dipped to satisfactory. This was the result of weaker progress in Key Stage 4 for that year. Progress at Key Stage 4 has fluctuated since the previous inspection. Progress at Key Stage 3 has been consistently good since the previous inspection and remains so. Standards at Key Stage 3 are above average and have remained so since the previous inspection. They are well above average in mathematics and science. In 2007 the percentage of students achieving 5 or more A*-C at GCSE's and 5 or more A*-C including En + Ma was above the national average at 61% and 48% respectively.

The dip in progress and weaker performance in mathematics at Key Stage 4 in 2007 has prompted the school to work hard at ensuring that standards and achievement return to those of previous years. Tracking individual students progress has continued and intervention strategies have been provided to support students as required. Rigorous assessment systems are in place and students are provided with regular updates and progress towards their challenging targets. Internal data, students' work and observation of lessons show that students in Key Stage 4 are making good progress. School projections suggest that Key Stage 4 targets at GCSE will be surpassed in 2008. The school continues to set challenging targets and the majority of statutory targets for 2007 were exceeded. The exceptions were information communication technology at Key Stage 3 and the percentage of students gaining one or more grades A*-G at GCSE. The school has rightly identified the progress made by lower ability girls and middle ability boys during Key Stage 4 as an area for continued focus and improvement. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are appropriately supported and make progress similar to their peers.

Students' personal development and well being is good. The students' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well through planned programmes for citizenship, personal, social and health education and themed assemblies. Behaviour in lessons and around school is good overall. However, the behaviour of a small number of students can be challenging. The school has introduced a new behaviour policy and ways to manage behaviour which are making a recognisable impact. Students are supported well and discussions with them point to the positive ways the school enables them to change their behaviour. They understand well how to remain safe in school. They say that they feel safe there and that instances of bullying or racist abuse are not common around school. Students believe there is a strong community and they have developed a good sense of social responsibility. They understand clearly what is right or wrong, and mix well together. They praise the school for the personal support and approachability of staff. Their attitudes prepare them well for their broader role in life as citizens, just as the outstanding school curriculum does for the world of work, or for their next stage of education. In 2007 the rates of attendance fell well below national averages. The school has worked hard to improve this and attendance rates for the current academic year are average. The school rightly realises that attendance needs to improve further and has new systems, raising the awareness of parents and students about absences which can be authorised.

Teaching and learning are good and contribute well to students' enjoyment and their good progress. Since the previous inspection, the school has worked well at addressing those areas for improvement relating to teaching and learning. Staff are consistently monitoring the academic progress made by students. All students are set targets which are reviewed on a regular basis. Teachers provide them with comments and advice to help them achieve target grades. In most cases these are helpful, though students interviewed said that the comments were sometimes too vague or lacked clarity and were not helpful. Aspects of good teaching are common across the school and are seen through good planning, shared learning objectives, regular assessments and a range of teaching and learning styles. Assessments are now used to improve teaching and learning and these are generally embedded in lessons, as is a common marking framework. The survey of students' work shows that, while marking is generally carried out consistently and constructively, there are still instances where marking is simply a tick with one word comments.

Teachers know their subjects well and are confident in them. However, a significant minority of students and parents expressed concern about the lack of specific subject teaching, caused by the need to use supply teachers during longer periods of teacher absence.

A key feature of the school's outstanding curriculum is the breadth of opportunities provided for the students. The school is using its curriculum well to improve further both standards and teaching styles and strategies. This is because there is a strong commitment to inclusion and the provision of individual pathways. Consequently, students know that their programmes of study are suited well to their individual abilities and needs.

The Key Stage 3 curriculum, strengthened by opportunities for students to take GCSE examinations early, challenges the more able well. The Key Stage 4 curriculum is enriched through vocational and other alternative courses, including young apprenticeships. Through effective partnerships with other local providers and colleges, preparations are well under way for the introduction of the new diplomas next September. This will enrich the school's curriculum even further.

Work related learning is promoted well, and students speak positively of their preparation for work experience. The provision and support for students who have additional learning needs means courses are suited well to their needs and consequently these students make good progress. There is a wide and appropriate range of extra-curricular opportunities and other extended provision, such as a breakfast club. The school's curriculum is successful in raising students' expectations and broadening their horizons.

The care and pastoral support provided for all groups of students is good. The school works well with its partners and other agencies to ensure good quality support for vulnerable students. During the inspection one Year 9 student with a disability made sure that he tracked down an inspector for a personal conversation. The student explained how, since joining the school, the caring and supportive attitude of staff and students had completely changed his confidence and outlook to learning in school for the better. Procedures for safeguarding students are robust and secure, and elements of the school's record keeping are exemplary. The leaders and staff place a high priority on ensuring all students are treated equally and are fully included in the life of the school. There is a genuinely caring attitude towards the students. Two students captured this when they said, 'staff are always there for help and advice' and 'this is not just a school - it's a community where you are helped with each next step.'

Academic guidance is good. New systems for tracking students' progress have been introduced over the past couple of years. There are ensuring the closer monitoring of individuals and

enabling the school to intervene and target additional support to prevent underachievement as appropriate.

Leadership and management are good across the school. There is a common vision which is focussed upon achieving the best standards for all students. This is a commonly shared approach which crosses all subjects and all levels of management. A good quality school development plan identifies well the priorities for moving the school forward. Curriculum and team leaders, in turn, produce good development plans which link well to the whole school plan. This all comes together through good consultation and inputs from senior leaders, staff and governors, to provide a joined up approach to school planning.

Systems and procedures for monitoring and evaluating performance by senior managers, governors and middle managers are well established and very effective. The staff and governors know their school well which is seen through the school's recent self-evaluation report. The school's judgments match equally with those of the inspection. Middle leaders are developing as a strong management tier within the school and play a crucial role in raising standards and moving the school forward.

The overwhelming majority of parental responses through the inspection questionnaire show that they are happy with the way the school is led and managed and believe that the school actively seeks their views and acts accordingly wherever possible. The governing body is very effective as a critical friend and offers rigorous challenge to the school as required. It is supportive of the school and monitors all aspects of school life well, ensuring that it offers good value for money. Performance management is well established for teachers, with line management roles clearly defined. The leadership of the school has made good progress in addressing the issues from the previous inspection. The capacity for the school to improve further is good.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Students enter the sixth form from a wide area and range of other local schools. Overall, the attainment on entry is broadly average. Standards in Year 13 in 2007 were average. Analysis of other school data shows that standards were broadly above average and students' achievement was good overall. Improved tracking and monitoring of the sixth form is now identifying progress even more tightly, and current students are making good progress with the majority either meeting their targets or exceeding them. Whilst these systems require further refinement, they show that standards have improved this academic year. This rise in standards is aided by good teaching, which shows good subject knowledge and supports students' learning well. However, whilst students are usually engaged well by their teaching, some opportunities are lost because of the instructional approach of some staff. The school's outstanding curriculum offers students a wide range of choices, which contributes to the good retention rates in sixth form courses. The majority of students continue in education or training when they leave. Students' personal development is good. They show good levels of maturity, respect and understanding both for and of each other. They work and cooperate well together. They know they are cared for well and are given good personal as well as academic advice. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. There is good teamwork amongst key sixth form staff, which is bringing about steady improvements in the quality of provision. Leaders have good capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Refine the student tracking systems in the sixth form.
- Raise the rates of attendance across the school.
- Continue to implement the principles of assessment for learning with particular focus on marking and assessment procedures.

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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	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?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	2	
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 the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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	1	
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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

5 February 2008

Dear Students,

Inspection of City of Norwich School, Norwich, Norfolk, NR4 6PP

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to talk with you about your work and to listen to your views about the school. We have decided that City of Norwich is a good school and recognise that you, along with the teachers, parents and other helpers, all help to make it the way it is.

What we liked most about your school.

- The good standards you achieve generally during your time at school and in public examinations.
- The good leadership of the school by the head teacher, senior leaders and governors.
- Your overall behaviour, manners and attitude towards school.
- The majority of the teaching is good and helps you to do your best.
- The good care, guidance and support available for you.
- The excellent curriculum opportunities available to you.
- The interest your parents show in the school and that most of them rightly believe it is a good school.

What we have asked your school to do now.

- Ensure that the attendance by students across the school improves.
- Continue to improve systems for marking and assessing your work.
- Improve further the student tracking systems in the sixth form.

The inspection team hope you are pleased with the things we have said about your school and that you are proud of what you, your staff, governors and parents have achieved. We found our day in the school to be a most enjoyable experience.

Best wishes for the future

Brian Sharples HMI