

Haydon Bridge Community High School and Sports College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122328
Local Authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	314267
Inspection date	4 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Ann Wallis

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	13–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	765
6th form	248
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Pat Hirst
Headteacher	Mr John Dowler
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2003
School address	Haydon Bridge Hexham Northumberland NE47 6LR
Telephone number	01434 684422
Fax number	01434 684226

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspection evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school, the sixth form and boarding provision. It also investigated the following issues: standards and achievement (particularly in the sixth form), students' personal development, care, guidance and support, the curriculum and how effective the school is in developing best practice in all subject areas. Evidence was gathered from discussions with the headteacher, senior staff, students and the chair of governors. Lessons were observed and school documents and parents' questionnaires were scrutinised. Inspectors spent an evening at the boarding accommodation during which they toured the building, observed recreational activities and study sessions and had discussions with staff and 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 form, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Haydon Bridge is a smaller than average sized high school which serves a very large, rural catchment area in West Northumberland. Boarding accommodation is provided for 54 students who live too far away from school to travel daily. Almost a third of students are in the sixth form with some of these joining from other schools. The proportion of students eligible for a free school meal is low. Almost all students are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is around average. The school has had specialist Sports College Status since 1999 and has Artsmark Gold and an Investor In People Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Haydon Bridge High School is a good and improving school. It responds very well to the particular needs of its huge rural catchment area and has been very proactive in seeking partnerships with other schools and agencies to enrich the education of its students. The outstanding curriculum with a wide range of both academic and vocational courses, including land-based studies, childcare and business, provides particularly well for students. Sports College status has further enriched the curriculum. Students speak with great enthusiasm of the outstanding range of trips and visits to places as close as Kielder and as far afield as Serbia and Trinidad that they have taken part in. Late buses are provided which enable many students to take part in after school clubs and those who stay in the boarding house benefit from an exceptional range of evening activities.

Standards are above average and students' achieve well. Students reach average standards in national tests taken in Year 6. After two further years in middle schools they join the high school and achieve well to reach above average standards at the end of Year 9. Standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science have been consistently above average in recent years. However, challenging targets in Key Stage 3 English and science were not quite met this year. Good teaching enables all students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to continue to make good progress as they move through the school. They reach above average standards in GCSE examinations. The proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades has risen steadily over recent years with above average numbers of students gaining higher level passes in English and mathematics. Students also achieve well in art, physical education, religious education, Russian and textiles. They achieve least well in drama, graphics, history and resistant materials.

Students achieve well because teaching and learning are good. The school's self-evaluation correctly indicates that there is some satisfactory teaching but most is good and there are examples of outstanding practice. In a Russian lesson, students made outstanding progress because they were highly challenged and had excellent relationships with their teacher who gave them the confidence to succeed.

Students' personal development is good and in some areas it is outstanding. Students' behaviour is excellent and they have very positive attitudes to learning. Attendance is broadly average. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. During an excellent assembly the attention of Year 11 students was riveted to a very moving yet un sentimental presentation about work with African children who have HIV/Aids. Students know how to stay safe. They speak confidently about their work and about important issues in their lives. They are given good opportunities to take responsibility and to contribute to the community. Good development of students' basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) combined with successful work experience and careers education ensures they are well prepared for the world of work.

Care, guidance and support are good. In this close knit school community teachers know their students extremely well and are totally committed to providing the best care for each student, including the most vulnerable. Child protection, risk assessment and safeguarding procedures are all robust. Year 9 students speak highly of the excellent induction procedures which have helped them to settle well into the high school. Careful monitoring of students' progress and regular marking of work ensures that most students know how well they are doing but some

are not sure about how to improve in order to reach the next level. Most parents speak well of the care and guidance their children receive; one parent summing up the views of many by commenting that, 'children are treated as individuals and their strengths are celebrated'.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school and has been instrumental in creating a climate of improvement in recent years. The school is setting increasingly challenging targets for students, which is leading to rising standards in both the main school and the sixth form. The headteacher is ably supported by a recently restructured senior team. The role of middle managers is being developed but there are still too many variations in the quality of leadership of subjects. The school's view of its strengths and weaknesses is accurate. There is a firm focus on raising achievement further, particularly in the sixth form, and in spreading best practice across all subject areas. Governance is good. Governors have a wide range of experience and skills which are put to good use in supporting school development. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good and the school is very well placed to improve further.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving sixth form. It has many good features. Retention rates are good. Standards are now average and students' achievement is satisfactory. In 2006, the school's results were below national averages but in 2007 they continued the upward trend of recent years and standards were broadly average. Currently, students are making satisfactory progress and are on track to reach their targets. However, there is too much variability in standards and achievement between subject areas. This is because the quality of teaching and learning, as the school's self-evaluation identifies, also varies between subjects. Students achieve well in art, chemistry, English literature, physics, physical education, and in vocational courses, such as business and child care, where there are some examples of good and outstanding teaching and learning. However, students achieve less well in drama, French, history and law. Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving. Leaders are identifying the right priorities for improvement and making strenuous efforts to reduce variations in achievement between subjects. Improved lesson planning, better monitoring and sharper use of data are all beginning to have an impact on raising standards across all subject areas.

Sixth form students speak very warmly of the good personal support and guidance they receive which helps them to develop well into confident and caring adults. They are given good opportunities to take responsibility such as in organising the school charity day and in helping younger students. They appreciate the good curriculum which is well suited to the needs of those who want to study both academic and vocational subjects and is enriched by excellent partnerships with other schools, colleges and organisations. Students at Haydon Bridge enjoy their sixth form education and leave school as well balanced and mature individuals who are well prepared for future life.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in the sixth form.
- Use the leading departments in the school more systematically to share good practice and ensure consistency between subject areas.

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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	3
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	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
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	1	
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	IE 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

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.

² IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	3
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	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

5 October 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Haydon Bridge Community High School and Sports College, Northumberland, NE47 6LR

We visited your school and Ridley Hall to find out how well you are achieving and how well your school is supporting you. We really appreciated the friendly welcome you gave us and would particularly like to thank those of you who gave up your time to speak with us. We were very impressed with your positive attitudes and really enjoyed our discussions with you.

What we have found out about the main school in the inspection report:

- yours is a good and improving school
- you reach standards in your work which are above average and you achieve well
- teaching and learning are good
- your school gives you good care, guidance and support and provides good personal development
- your behaviour is excellent
- the leadership and management of the school are good.

What we have found out about the sixth form in the report:

- this is a satisfactory and improving sixth form: it has many good features
- students really enjoy their time in the sixth form and their personal development, care, guidance and support and the curriculum are all good
- standards are average and achievement is satisfactory.

What we have found out about Ridley Hall (boarding provision) in the report:

- boarding provision is good
- students say they feel safe, value the good relationships that prevail amongst staff and fellow students and enjoy the strong sense of community they experience
- there is an exceptional range of extra-curricular activities.

What we have suggested your school do now:

- raise standards and achievement in the sixth form
- use the leading departments in the school more systematically to share good practice across all subject areas.

You can continue to help your school improve by working with your teachers to achieve the very best you can.

Best wishes

Ann Wallis

Lead inspector