

Harry Carlton Comprehensive School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122868
Local Authority	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE LA
Inspection number	314429
Inspection dates	14–15 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Elaine Taylor 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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1151
6th form	196
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Prof Marion Shaw
Headteacher	Mr G A Legg
Date of previous school inspection	24 November 2003
School address	Lantern Lane East Leake Loughborough LE12 6QN
Telephone number	01509 852424
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Age group	11–19
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The Harry Carlton Comprehensive School is of average size and serves a semi-rural area south of Nottingham. The school has specialist status in mathematics and computing. There are fewer than average students from minority ethnic groups or whose first language is not English. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is less than average as is the proportion entitled to free school meals. Since July 2007 the school has been designated as an Extended Services school. The school moved to new buildings in September 2003 under a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Harry Carlton is a satisfactory and improving school. Following a dip in performance when the school relocated to its new site, there has been a gradual improvement in test results at all levels. The impact of the school's specialist status in mathematics and computing is most evident in the greatly improved use of the technology to support teaching and learning across the school and the raised standards in information and communication technology (ICT).

Pupils' personal development is good. The standards pupils achieve in their work are above average, though the progress they make is satisfactory when measured against their starting points. Improved systems for gathering information on the progress of individual students have enabled the school to tackle successfully the underachievement of some groups. However, this information is not yet used sufficiently well to guide students or their parents on how to improve further. The school cares well for the students resulting in a well-organised, supportive environment where most pupils are happy, confident and enjoy school. Good supervision ensures pupils feel safe and that the school runs as an orderly community. Both behaviour and attendance are satisfactory, and pupils know how to lead healthy lifestyles with many taking advantage of the leisure centre, which is attached to the school. A minority of parents expressed concerns about behaviour, but behaviour is mostly satisfactory, because the systems for managing poor behaviour are used well and disruption is minimal. Attendance has improved as a result of the actions taken by the school and is satisfactory. Pupils develop good literacy, numeracy and computing skills. Many pupils, particularly in the sixth form, make a good contribution to the community, for example through fund-raising for charities and by helping and supporting others within the school. Pupils are well prepared for further or higher education and future employment.

The curriculum is satisfactory and is being developed further, to increase opportunities for students to study vocational subjects. Many students take advantage of the good range of extra-curricular activities and educational visits. The school works hard to provide courses, which meet the needs of individual students. More able students have access to some additional activities outside the main curriculum, but the school has correctly identified the need to improve provision for these students in lessons.

Overall, teaching is satisfactory but there are still inconsistencies in its quality across the school. The leaders of the school have a clear understanding of where these are and are working hard to remove them. However, there is not enough good and outstanding teaching to ensure the rate of progress in lessons is good overall. In many lessons work is not provided for different levels of ability and students commented that they find the tasks too easy.

Leadership and management are satisfactory and the school provides satisfactory value for money. Middle leaders are becoming increasingly effective and governors provide good support and challenge. The school has developed a thorough and rigorous process for monitoring the work of subject departments. The senior leaders in the school have clearly identified the reasons for pupils' progress being only satisfactory and not better. As a result, they have introduced well-considered strategies to bring about the necessary improvement. For example, the underachievement of a small group of disaffected students is being tackled by the introduction of the Nurture Group. They have modified the curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 so that it caters better for their broad range of interests and allows more time for the study of some subjects. These changes are slowly having an impact. Standards are beginning to rise further

and pupils are beginning to make better progress. Issues from the previous inspection have been successfully dealt with, which demonstrates that the school has good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are satisfactory. Standards in 2006 were average and achievement was satisfactory. School data indicate a rising trend with attainment improved further in 2007. Students' personal development is very good. They receive good guidance on how to prepare for their future education and they speak highly of the support they receive. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and some is good or outstanding. Some lessons, however, are too teacher directed resulting in few opportunities for independent learning. The curriculum is satisfactory and generally meets the needs and aspirations of students. Attendance is monitored carefully and is good. Students are aware of their learning goals and the school monitors their progress against targets. Leadership and management of the sixth form are a shared responsibility and are satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that more is good or better.
- Ensure teachers provide opportunities in lessons for all students to have work that matches their ability.
- Develop consistent monitoring systems to enable the school to provide thorough guidance for individual students and their parents on how to improve their work.

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

Grade for sixth form: 3

When students start in Year 7 they have above average levels of knowledge, skills and understanding. By the end of Year 9 the standards reached in national tests are consistently above average showing they have made satisfactory progress. Higher ability students made the best progress and exceeded their targets in English, mathematics and science in 2007. This progress is maintained in Years 10 and 11 and results in GCSE examinations have been above average and rising over the last four years. In 2007 the proportion gaining five or more grades A* to C (including English and mathematics) was greater than the national average and above the target set for the school. When measured against their starting points, this represents satisfactory progress for most students. However, there is a small group of students whose achievement is less good and the school has in place a range of strategies to tackle the issue. They have been successful in tackling the underachievement of girls in 2006 which was not repeated in 2007. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress and no groups make inadequate progress. Students' achievements in the sixth form, when compared with their average standards on entry, are satisfactory. However, progress is variable being weaker in some subject areas and very good in others.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good overall and very good in the sixth form. Students in the sixth form set a good example because they are mature, confident and keen to take responsibility. Sixth form volunteers play an active part in the daily life of the school, running clubs and organising charity events. They also act as 'buddies' for younger students, contributing to helping them feel safe.

Most students are committed to leading a healthy lifestyle. They take regular exercise by participating in school sporting activities and understand the importance of a healthy diet. Through personal, social, health and citizenship education lessons, they gain a good insight into the skills and personal qualities that will enable them to achieve further economic well-being. High standards in literacy, numeracy and increasingly in ICT skills contribute further to this.

Most students enjoy their education. Attendance is average and improving. About two-thirds of students continue in the sixth form and the majority then progress to further or higher education. The attitudes and behaviour of most students are satisfactory both in lessons and around the school. The majority are interested in their work and involve themselves well in lessons. The attitude of a small number of students in lessons is unsatisfactory and the school is working hard to address this. Participation in extra-curricular activities is good and especially strong in sport, drama and music activities. Involvement in charitable activities is good. The school recognises that more needs to be done to enable students from all year groups to contribute to school developments. The school's aim to promote spiritual, cultural, moral and social education is achieved well, but making students aware of multicultural issues is under developed.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall. It is often good and sometimes outstanding, especially in the sixth form. However, good teaching and learning are not yet consistent. In most lessons, relationships between teachers and students are conducive to effective and enjoyable learning. Lessons are clearly planned and teachers generally share the aims of the lesson fully with students. The most effective lessons observed proceeded at a good pace and teachers used their specialist skills and knowledge well. However, not enough teachers plan their lessons to ensure all students have work that will challenge them to reach their full potential. In some lessons, the behaviour of a minority of students, who are not sufficiently engaged in learning, is allowed to disrupt the lesson. Additionally, students are not always encouraged to work as independently as they could. The quality of marking is similarly inconsistent and while feedback is often encouraging, sometimes it is not precise enough to help students understand what they have achieved or how to move forward in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and now meets statutory requirements including provision for religious education, which was an issue at the previous inspection. In Years 10 and 11 there is a satisfactory range of options that now includes some vocational subjects as well as work-based learning opportunities. There is a wide range of A level subjects and some vocational options to choose from in the sixth form. However, the school recognizes that it needs to ensure better continuity for some students by providing vocational subjects at a higher level. Opportunities for students to develop their particular talents and interests are satisfactory, including for those identified as being gifted and talented.

All students benefit from work experience and some undertake a vocational course at college for part of their week. Since the previous inspection, all students study ICT, although this has only recently been developed in the sixth form. Extra-curricular opportunities are good with many students participating in sports, drama, music and other activities. The curriculum is enriched well through good use of visitors and the local community. Personal and social skills are developed very well through residential visits, and school-community links.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory overall and good in the sixth form. Procedures for ensuring pupils' safety and welfare, including child protection, are in place. Thorough risk assessments are undertaken as appropriate. Of particular interest is the use of sixth form mentors who have helped to reduce the incidence of negative behaviour on the school buses.

An induction programme for vulnerable pupils in Year 7 is proving to be effective and transfer arrangements from the feeder schools are good. This view is confirmed by parents, one of whom wrote that she was: 'very pleased with the whole process from induction, to feedback on settling in'. At the end of each key stage, students and parents receive good information and advice on options and choices. Sixth form students highly value the support they receive on university entrance requirements. The school draws on outside providers for extra support and guidance on revision and study skills.

The guidance of students' academic work is improving. Data about pupils' performance is collected so that underachievement can be identified and corrected. The school recognises that the systems guiding individual students on how to improve their work need to be developed. Parents told us that they would appreciate more detailed information on their children's progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall. The headteacher and his senior team are committed to improving the achievement of students. The headteacher

ensures good relations with a range of partners by taking an active role in local initiatives, for example the development of diplomas. Effective self-evaluation has enabled senior leaders to focus on areas for development with some success. There has been a steady rising trend in standards, and achievement is slowly improving. The recently established system for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning is improving their consistency. Recent appointments have strengthened middle leadership. The school is better placed to link departmental and school development planning, which it has identified as an area for improvement. Day-to-day financial planning and monitoring are good. Expenditure on resources has improved since the previous inspection particularly that for ICT. The school is a popular choice for parents and the benefits to the local community of the school's recently acquired specialist status are starting to be appreciated. Governors provide the school with good challenge and support and bring a useful range of skills and expertise.

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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?	3	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?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	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?	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	3	
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?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	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?	3	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	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	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	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

16 November 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Harry Carlton Comprehensive School, East Leake, LE12 6QN

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we have made about your school.

We recognise that the progress you make is improving each year and that more of you are achieving high standards in tests. The school is rightly proud of the fact that above average numbers of you gain five or more GCSE passes at grade C or above, especially when that includes mathematics and English. This will help you prepare well for your future working life, as will the increasing number of vocational subjects that you can choose to study. We are pleased that the school has recognised that it needs to make sure you can carry on with those subjects at higher levels in the sixth form should you wish.

We were impressed by your friendly and confident attitudes. We thought you behaved well around the school, but we want your teachers to make sure you are given work, which really challenges and engages you in lessons. This will help those of you whose behaviour in lessons can be disruptive to concentrate on the learning. You have an obvious part to play in this. We think that your school can improve further by making sure you benefit from more lessons that are as good as the best. We want your teachers to give you clearer advice on how to improve your work.

Your attendance is satisfactory and many of you said that you enjoyed school. It is impressive to see the ways in which you help the community. The sixth form students in particular do a lot of work of this sort. For example, many of you help to run clubs, as well as helping younger pupils in your own school. You also raise a good amount of money for charities.

Thank you for your help in the inspection, for welcoming us into your school and talking to us so sensibly about the things you like and what you would like to see improved. I hope many of you will also read the full report which has more details.

My colleagues and I wish you every success in the future

Elaine Taylor Her Majesty's Inspector