

Northgate High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124840
Local Authority	SUFFOLK LA
Inspection number	315079
Inspection date	5 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Anthony Knight 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	1705
6th form	556
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Kate Helleur
Headteacher	Mr Neil Watts
Date of previous school inspection	22 November 2004
School address	Sidegate Lane West Ipswich Suffolk IP4 3DL
Telephone number	01473 210123
Fax number	01473 281084

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. The visit focussed on confirming the school's judgements for achievement and standards and investigated the aspects the school considered as being outstanding.

Description of the school

Northgate High School is a large, oversubscribed comprehensive school that draws pupils from a mixed catchment area. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is about half the national average. There are fewer pupils from minority ethnic groups than the national average and relatively few pupils who do not have English as their first language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly below the national average. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational need is about half the national average. The school has combined specialist status for languages and science. Strong links have been developed with other schools and with the community. The school has achieved Leading Edge status and the Investors 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: 1

Northgate High School provides excellent educational opportunities for all its pupils. Outstanding care, guidance and support ensure all feel valued and supported. For example, excellent focussed support for pupils has increased attendance and dramatically reduced exclusions. This is a very happy school where everyone is encouraged to contribute. As a result, pupils enjoy learning and demonstrate impressive personal development, taking responsibility and responding with maturity and sensitivity. Pupils feel safe and recognise the importance of making the most of their time in school.

Good curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities ensure pupils are aware of the need for healthy lifestyles, as shown in their involvement in physical education activities and understanding of the need to eat healthily. Pupils are prepared excellently for each stage in their schooling and for life beyond school.

Outstanding leadership and management, at all levels, is enabling pupils to make increased progress since the last inspection. Standards are consistently high in comparison with the national averages and the school recognises that the higher than average ability of pupils joining the school means that there is a need for constant vigilance to ensure that all continue to make rapid progress. This has rightly become the school's main area of development and there has been impressive improvement in pupils' achievement in Key Stage 3 over the last three years. Progress seen in lessons and the tracking of pupils' achievement show that this improvement is now being taken into Key Stage 4. Many of the school's attainment targets were exceeded in 2007 and good action is being taken to raise standards further.

The outstanding progress in Key Stage 3 and the improving good progress in Key Stage 4 are a direct result of effective teaching and rigorous monitoring of pupils' work. The best teaching uses exemplary planning. It actively engages all pupils, builds clearly on their earlier learning and uses excellent resources, including the effective use of white boards. Pupils really enjoy these lessons. They do say however, that a few lessons are not as good. They also ask for more discussion between subjects to ensure homework is planned consistently and work is always marked regularly.

Parents express overwhelming praise for the school, although a small minority has some concerns, mainly about the extent to which the school takes into account their views and the views of their children. The school and good Governing Body are aware of these concerns and are doing their utmost to ensure all feel involved. The inspection found good practice in the way the school is involving parents and pupils. For example, the school is deeply committed to increasing the involvement of pupils and students through the developing work of the good school councils.

The school's self-evaluation is accurate and the inspection confirms the judgements made by the school. Good progress has been made since the last inspection and there is excellent capacity for further improvement.

The school has excellent plans to develop provision even further, for example through the ongoing development of the effective contribution of the specialist subjects.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Provision and performance in the sixth form are outstanding. There is an excellent staying on rate to complete the courses offered and most students progress to further study at university. Students give high praise for the quality of teaching and support they receive. They are very appreciative of the way they are prepared for university and for life beyond school.

Students demonstrate excellent personal development. They make a significant contribution to the rest of the school by taking on a wide range of responsibilities and through their positive attitudes towards the school and towards work.

Senior leaders show an impressive commitment to the ongoing development of the sixth form. For example, the school is giving appropriate attention to ensuring courses continue to meet the needs of all students. New courses have been added and the school is monitoring these carefully.

What the school should do to improve further

- Maintain the emphasis on increasing the progress made by pupils in Key Stage 4.
- Continue to build on excellent practice by ensuring all lessons increasingly match the best.
- Increase consistency in the way homework is planned and work is marked.

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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?	1	1
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	1	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
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	1	
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	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

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?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
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	1	
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

6 February 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Northgate High School, Ipswich, Suffolk IP4 3DL

We enjoyed coming to your school and would like to thank you for welcoming us and talking to us so openly. We were very pleased to see the many excellent learning opportunities open to you and agree that Northgate is an excellent school.

We were very impressed by the way you support each other which enables you to feel safe and make better progress.

We saw some excellent teaching and know your headteacher and subject leaders are working hard to make sure that all teaching increasingly matches the best. In response to some of your comments, we have also asked your teachers to make sure that, in the main school, homework is planned more consistently and your work is always marked regularly.

Your parents express overwhelming praise for the school although some feel that their views and your views are not always taken into account. We would like you to reassure your parents that we found good practice in both respects. The school is deeply committed to increasing your involvement, for example through the developing work of the good school councils. We know that these councils are keen to hear your views. Make sure that you tell your class representative about ways in which you think the school could be even better.

It is clear that your school knows what you need and what to do to improve the school even further. For example, everyone is making sure that you are helped to make excellent progress throughout your time in the school.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Knight

Her Majesty's Inspector