

Hetton School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 108862 |
| Local Authority | Sunderland |
| Inspection number | 324851 |
| Inspection dates | 15–16 January 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Brian Blake HMI |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 11–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 947 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Tony Wilkinson |
| Headteacher | Mr Steve Haigh |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1 September 2005 |
| School address | North Road Hetton-le-Hole Houghton le Spring Tyne and Wear DH5 9JZ |
| Telephone number | 0191 5536756 |
| Fax number | 0191 5536760 |

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|--------------------------|--------------------|
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Hetton School is an average sized secondary school, with specialist technology status. The number of students entitled to free school meals, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those with a statement of special educational needs are all in line with their respective national averages. The overwhelming majority of students are of White British heritage.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Hetton is a good school with a number of strengths, especially in the care, guidance and support it provides for its students; all of which are resulting in improved personal development outcomes in a number of important areas. The school takes all reasonable actions to ensure that its students are safe and secure at school, with an effective staff team guiding and caring for the students in and out of lessons. Students say they feel safe at school, with a trusting adult always available to talk to if the need arises. The school is quick to identify individuals or groups of students who need extra support and help. For example, there is a small but significant group of 'persistent absentees' who have been targeted for specialised support to help them attend school more regularly and participate more enthusiastically in the activities provided. The current initiatives are having an effect with the overall attendance rate improving and now coming very close to the national average.

There have been recent improvements in the monitoring of students' performance, resulting primarily from the school's detailed analyses of national tests and examination results. Achievement is satisfactory. Overall, students attain average standards and make satisfactory progress. A recent decline in English standards at both key stages has been quickly highlighted by the senior leadership team (SLT), and actions taken since September are beginning to bring about improvements. However, the school is aware that more work is needed to raise standards even further in English, including a more complete scheme of work that encompasses all aspects of teaching and learning in the subject. Standards in the school's specialist subjects are average and improving rapidly in engineering. The work to address the previously reported underperformance in modern foreign languages (MFL) is progressing well, with the very high number of students entered for at least one MFL GCSE impressive, and with standards rising.

The majority of teaching is good, with some that is satisfactory. Nevertheless, senior leaders are aware that the quality of teaching will need to improve if standards are to rise further. The quality of leadership and management is good. Priorities for action are clear, and the SLT is making effective headway supporting staff across the school in using performance data to set challenging targets and monitor students' progress more effectively than in the past. All these actions are helping to move the school forward, although governors have not yet developed fully a challenging yet supportive role so they might help shape the direction of the school. However, there is a shared sense of purpose among all who work in the school. Many successes have already been achieved, although there is more to do if all students are to achieve in line with their capabilities. Overall, the school has good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, generally but especially in English as an aid to improving students' overall levels of achievement across the school.
- Develop a more detailed English scheme of work that covers all aspects of the subject at both key stages.
- The governing body should provide challenge and support in order to help shape the direction of the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Overall, progress of the students during their time at school is satisfactory. The attainment of students in the school's three specialist subjects of science, technology and mathematics is generally average, and improving rapidly in engineering; overall progress in these subjects is satisfactory. The vast majority of students start school in Year 7 with average standards in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Overall, average standards are maintained through to the end of Key Stages 3 and 4, although since the previous inspection there has been some year-on-year variation in students' performance, with standards in English declining over the past two years. The school is alert to this issue, and actions taken since September are beginning to bring about improvements, with the latest school-generated data indicating that standards are rising and are now broadly average. In the previous inspection, the school was asked to improve the achievement and standards in MFL. The number of students studying languages is well above that seen nationally, and although the most recent results show that performance is below average, standards are rising. The progress of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also satisfactory relative to their capabilities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. The school promotes the students' physical well-being by encouraging them to eat healthily and participate regularly in physical education (PE) and sports activities, in and out of school hours. Many students attend the daily breakfast club, which sets them up well for the school day. Students say they feel safe in school and behaviour is mostly good or better. However, a few students and parents think that the behaviour of a small minority sometimes interrupts the learning of the majority. Attendance has improved since the previous inspection and is now very close to the national average. This has resulted from the rigorous monitoring and analysis of students' attendance, together with effective intervention strategies, which are beginning to bring about improvements for persistent absentees. Students are encouraged to participate in the school and local community, and many purposeful links have been established with other schools around the world, all of which are enabling the students to become active citizens. Some students also learn how to support and coach their peers within PE, developing a range of useful personal and communication skills. Students readily accept the responsibility of voicing their opinions through the student council, and are proud that they have been involved in discussing and bringing about a number of improvements to the school environment; for example, in introducing more litter bins and garden make-overs. However, the range of aspects that are currently discussed by the school council does not yet extend to their views about the school's quality of education, which includes teaching and learning. Students find their careers education and work experience relevant to their future education and employment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. The majority of teachers give clear explanations, set activities suitable to students' capabilities, and use effective questioning techniques that aid assessment and develop critical thinking; these techniques enable the students to make rapid progress in their learning. The technology department takes an effective lead in developing new approaches to teaching and learning, especially in developing student autonomy in managing their learning and in making links with the world of commerce. A number of students said that practical activities and working with peers also help to improve their understanding and accelerate their progress. Good relationships in nearly all classes create a secure and positive climate for learning, so that the vast majority of students are confident about seeking help and contributing ideas to class discussions. In lessons where teaching is satisfactory, teachers often talk for too long while the students are passive. This means that some students become restless, and the length of time for completing tasks is too short for effective consolidation of their learning. Senior staff are aware that there are inconsistencies in teaching methods and quality, which mean that in some lessons the students make satisfactory rather than good progress in acquiring new skills and knowledge, and deepening their understanding. Action taken this year to improve the quality of all teaching to at least a good standard is beginning to have an effect as more staff adopt strategies that promote active learning suitable to students' needs and interests.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The quality of the curriculum and other activities is satisfactory overall. There is an extensive range of GCSE and vocational courses to meet the aspirations, needs and interests of all ability groups. The needs of lower ability students, poor attendees, and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are especially well met through the specifically designed courses to develop secure workplace and key skills. The school's specialist status has enhanced provision in technology and related subjects through the involvement in local and national initiatives, and in the use of industrial standard machinery in a number of practical subjects. The curriculum for students in Key Stage 3 is generally providing a clear progression route for students' learning. However, the exception is in English, where the current scheme of work to guide teachers' lesson planning is inadequate. The lack of suitable detail in this scheme of work is leading to too little teaching of basic skills, especially speaking and listening, and uneven and even declining progress in students' standards and achievement in English.

The good quality provision for personal, social and health education ensures that students learn about personal safety and well-being, and are provided with many opportunities to contribute to the school and wider communities. Careers guidance, enterprise and work-related learning are well planned and ensure that the students are well informed about future education, employment or training opportunities when they leave the school. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including residential trips, which the students enjoy. Visits to local, national and international venues also make a valuable contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, as well as motivating the students' to attend school and achieve well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. The school undertakes correct risk assessments, and all health and safety procedures are carried out rigorously. The students say they are helped to be aware of safety issues at school, including their use of the internet, and when in the local community. An effective staff team collaborate well to care for and guide the students during their time at school. The adult learning mentors and the student peer mentors are key players in creating a climate where everyone is able to voice their concerns; this means that the students know who to talk with if any personal issues arise. There are good partnership links with local employers, who contribute well in helping prepare the students for adult life and the world of work. Some of the more vulnerable students, including those deemed 'persistent absentees', are well supported with alternative curricular experiences that help to motivate and encourage better school attendance. Strategies to support those students at risk of exclusion are working well; there have been no permanent exclusions over the past year, with the fixed-term exclusions in line with national averages. The school became aware during the last academic year that its monitoring of students' performance was underdeveloped. Priorities for improvement were identified and a programme of action implemented from September. This work is progressing well, especially in the identification of those students who are underachieving relative to their capabilities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, ably supported by the SLT, provides the school with good quality strategic planning and organisation. The SLT's commitment to school improvement and to the raising of standards is reflected well in the school improvement plan. A strong feature of this work is the leadership provided by middle managers, who lead and manage their subject and/or pastoral areas effectively. The school's self-evaluation, including its monitoring of both teacher and student performance, is effective overall; for example, the success of targeted actions to tackle student underperformance. The SLT supports staff very well in the use of performance data to raise students' standards, set challenging targets, and monitor progress more effectively. Particularly strong links have been established with partner schools and a local sixth form college, ensuring that the students' transition from one phase of education to another runs as smoothly as possible. Equality of opportunity is taken seriously and promoted strongly by the school. Gender, race and disability stereotyping is challenged in school assemblies and lessons. The school's approach to bullying is good, and is recognised in the award of the 'Anti-bullying Charter Mark'. There is a strong commitment to community cohesion. The school uses a number of different strategies to engage with the local community, including seeking and acting upon the views of parents. International links with schools from other continents enable the students to appreciate and understand better the cultural diversity of the United Kingdom as well as in other parts of the world; the school's work has been recognised in the award of the 'International School Award'. Financial planning and management are good. Although governors are supportive and knowledgeable about the school, they are not fully aware of its strengths and weaknesses because the process for challenging the work of the school is not yet sufficiently robust. The school is well placed to improve the quality of its provision further.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate | School Overall |
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Overall effectiveness

| | |
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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being? | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 3 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress | 3 |

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 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 |
| The extent to which 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 learners' needs? | 2 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 3 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 2 |

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 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 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated | 2 |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion? | 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 | 3 |
| Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements? | 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**

19 January 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Hetton School, Sunderland, DH5 9JZ

I recently spent two days in Hetton with three other inspectors to find out how well all of you are doing at school. I am sure you will be pleased to know that the inspectors have judged Hetton to be a good school.

We were very grateful for your contribution to the inspection, especially your willingness to talk openly with us about the things you like, and the aspects about school that you feel need to improve further. The inspection team was also very grateful to all those parents who took the time to return the pre-inspection questionnaire. A number raised important points that enabled the inspection team to say many positive things about the school, as well as helping to identify areas for future improvement.

We made a number of important judgements about the quality of education, which included:

- the vast majority of you achieve average standards and make satisfactory progress
- there has been a recent decline in the standards achieved and the progress made in English, which needs to improve to ensure that all of you reach your potential
- the school actively promotes your physical well-being, and encourages you to eat healthily and take regular exercise
- the vast majority of you feel safe at school, although some parents and students feel the behaviour of a small minority could be better
- your views about school are taken seriously
- the quality of teaching is mostly good, and where it is satisfactory, your teachers could use information about your progress to improve the quality of future lessons
- the curriculum is satisfactory overall, but needs to improve in English to ensure that your standards and rate of progress in this subject get better
- the school cares for you well, and makes sure there is always someone with whom you can talk, if you need to
- your headteacher and other senior staff know that the school should improve in some important areas, and work since September indicates that progress is being made
- the governors of the school need to develop their role to challenge the work of the school.

All of you have an important contribution to make in helping the school to improve. You need to attend regularly, listen carefully, behave well and ensure that you make the best possible progress in your work so that you achieve the standards of which you are capable.

We wish you all the very best for the future.

Brian Blake

Her Majesty's Inspector