

# Houghton Kepier Sports College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	108868
<b>Local Authority</b>	Sunderland
<b>Inspection number</b>	324852
<b>Inspection dates</b>	21–22 January 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Simon Richards

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	1231
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Dr Peter Collins
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Sue Hyland
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 April 2006
<b>School address</b>	Dairy Lane Houghton le Spring Tyne and Wear DH4 5BH
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 5536528
<b>Fax number</b>	0191 5536533

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Houghton Kepier Sports College is a larger than average sized secondary school located in Houghton-le-Spring. It became a Trust School in December 2008 and has held specialist college status for sport since 2003. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is above average as is the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is below average. The school population is very stable. The school has received a number of awards including as a Food for Life Flagship School. The school's facilities are used by a wide range of community groups, particularly for sport.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Houghton Kepier Sports College is a good school. The school's specialist sports status has a positive effect on the personal development and well-being of students and particularly their awareness of the importance of healthy living. One Year 10 student stated that 'it is difficult not to be healthy in this school'. Students respond enthusiastically to the wide range of physical and other activities provided by the school and its partners both during and after the end of the school day. Their involvement in these activities enables them to build positive relationships with people from their own community and from different backgrounds. The collaborative work of the school and its students is outstanding, and benefits partner schools and the wider community. The school's specialist sports college status has improved achievement in physical education. The successful practice of using junior leaders to support provision and enhance achievement within sport and physical education is now being adopted in many other subject areas.

Students make good progress during their time in school, given that many enter the school with below average standards. School leaders have taken effective action to increase students' rate of progress and raise standards. The biggest impact since the last inspection has been a trend of improvement in Key Stage 4, despite a dip in 2008. The school recognises that further improvement in students' progress is necessary in Years 7, 8 and 9.

Teaching and learning are good. In the best lessons, teachers make sure that all students are challenged by their work and the pace is brisk. Progress is slower when tasks are not matched to students' abilities and they are not allowed enough time to work independently at a level that suits them. Information and communication technology (ICT), especially interactive whiteboards, is used effectively in many lessons to enhance teaching. The curriculum is good: it ensures that most students enjoy their education and achieve well. The school has been relatively slow to adjust the curriculum to the range of courses now available and then to guide students to the most effective choices. Care, support and guidance are good and this contributes to the progress made by all groups. The majority of parents and carers expressed satisfaction with the quality of education provided by the school.

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher provides the school with strong leadership and clear direction; she conveys to her staff a passion for improvements in standards and increased success for her students. As a result, staff clearly understand and share the school's emphasis on the need to continue to raise achievement and standards. Senior staff are aware of the subjects where achievement and standards are not as good as others and have made these areas a key focus for future improvement. Observation and evaluation of teaching and learning by senior managers provide a generally accurate overview of the quality of teaching. The school's track record proves it has a good capacity to improve. The response to the last inspection report has been good: the achievement of students has improved. The school has sound finances and provides good value for money. It is looking forward to using its newly acquired Trust status to improve the school further. Governors are very knowledgeable and supportive of the school and have provided appropriate support and challenge to the leadership team.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, especially in the core subjects.

- Improve teaching so that work is more closely matched to the needs and abilities of all students.
- Develop the curriculum to better meet the differing needs and abilities of students and provide more opportunities for future progression.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

The achievement of learners is good. Students enter the school with standards that range from well below average to broadly average; and there is a smaller proportion of students than nationally who enter the school with the highest levels of prior attainment. The school's data also indicate a significant number arrive with poor literacy skills, in particular with reading.

Although standards at the end of Key Stage 3 have remained below the national average, this represents good progress, given students' starting points on entry to the school. More recently, unvalidated results from the 2008 examinations reveal an improvement in all three core subjects with standards moving closer to the national averages. At the end of Key Stage 4, the proportion gaining five or more higher level GCSE grades including English and mathematics has been below the national average. Nonetheless, given students' starting points, this has represented good progress. In 2008, however, standards declined, but set against that particular year group's starting points this indicates good progress. An increasing number are succeeding in gaining literacy and numeracy qualifications, and there has been a significant increase in those gaining higher level Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) sporting awards. Results from GCSEs taken early in Year 10 indicate that standards are rising. Overall standards are satisfactory.

Progress made by students, both boys and girls, during their time at the school is good. By the end of Key Stage 4, targeted support ensures students make good progress. Progress in mathematics is consistently below that of other subjects but the school has now taken appropriate action designed to bring about improvement. Progress during Key Stage 3 has been slower than in Key Stage 4, although evidence from lesson observations and from the 2008 results indicates improving rates of progress in all core subjects. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress, in line with their peers.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Students' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Students enjoy coming to school and participate with enthusiasm in the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities on offer, many of which include physical activity. They have an excellent understanding of what makes a healthy lifestyle.

Students' behaviour in and around the school and attitudes in lessons are both good and contribute to effective learning. The majority of parents are happy with the school, although a small minority feel that poor behaviour has a negative impact on some lessons. The majority of students feel safe because they say that there are few incidents of bullying and any that do occur are dealt with immediately. Students' views are listened to carefully by senior leaders. However, students identified that they would welcome further opportunities to contribute to school planning and review.

Students' personal horizons are extended effectively through local and global programmes and visits to contrasting localities within this country. They are developing skills and attitudes that

will equip them for work or further learning through, for example, their involvement in effective business and enterprise programmes. They make particularly good progress in ICT. Attendance is in line with the national average.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Overall teaching and learning are good. The majority of students make good progress and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning both in lessons and over time. Teaching is most effective where teachers' subject knowledge is strong. This enables them to make learning relevant and interesting and to set challenging tasks that are matched carefully to students' differing abilities and previous experiences. Students respond particularly well when teachers have high expectations. The school has well known and understood behaviour management procedures and the majority of classes are managed effectively. Nevertheless a small minority of passive students lack engagement with some lessons and can occasionally cause a low level of disruption. Teaching assistants are deployed well and support effectively the learning of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In the minority of lessons judged satisfactory, there was insufficient matching of work to students' abilities and limited opportunities to complete independent tasks or collaborate with other learners.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of the curriculum is good. The great majority of students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, enjoy school and achieve well because they are well served by the opportunities on offer. Work is underway on broadening the curriculum to support and engage less academically inclined students. There are plans to introduce guided personalised curriculum pathways. These are intended to match more effectively students' capabilities to the courses in which they are most likely to succeed. Effective review and evaluation of the curriculum have led to increased time for English and mathematics with the aim of improving standards in literacy and numeracy. In addition, extra time has been allocated to improve students' skills in learning across all subjects. Many subjects have recently identified nurture groups in order to deliver personalised learning and raise the achievement of these students. A wide range of work-related learning experiences and a successful programme of enterprise education prepare students well for their future working lives. Furthermore, there are many visits outside school organised in a wide range of other subjects which contribute effectively to students' personal development and develop a sense of belonging to one community.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school provides good care, guidance and support. Staff have a strong commitment to ensuring the care and welfare of students and this contributes to the good progress made by all groups. There are secure arrangements to ensure the safety of students, including robust child protection systems. Managers have gone to great lengths to provide a secure environment for learning. Students settle into school quickly. The school has close links with its partner primary schools partly as a result of its specialist status, and these result in improved participation in sports by pupils at those schools. Academic guidance and tracking of students' progress have

improved: students are set challenging targets and are increasingly reaching these. However, practice is not yet consistent. Some short-term targets are not specific enough to ensure that students know what they have to do to improve their work. The guidance and tracking process is sometimes not used fully to assist students to make the most appropriate option choices in Key Stage 4. Students identified with particular difficulties are supported well. For example, a reading scheme for students with limited reading skills in Year 7 has led to increased confidence and achievement for these students.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The school has developed an effective team of senior and middle leaders. In particular, subject leaders have a clear understanding of their department's strengths and weaknesses and are focused on securing improvements in the quality of education provided and raising attainment. This has led to an improvement in standards at Key Stage 3 in 2008, a position confirmed by inspectors.

The school is setting itself and its students suitably challenging targets; recent improvements have meant these are increasingly being met. Good whole-school systems are in place to monitor the progress of learners and this information is increasingly being used to target additional support effectively. Robust systems are in place to review the whole school's strengths and weaknesses, and all staff contribute to this process. School leaders have ensured that all staff have a good awareness of the particular needs of the most vulnerable students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; as a result, these students are well cared for and are making good progress. The school is active in making a good contribution to community cohesion particularly within the school and in the local community; however, this is not yet a sufficiently rigorous part of whole-school planning and review.

The governing body is strongly committed to the school, which is reflected in its decision to adopt Trust Status. The governors are keen to secure continued improvements and therefore do provide suitable challenge to senior staff, although they are not always involved early enough in formal self-evaluation processes. Financial planning is good and the school has achieved the national financial management standards award. Resources are deployed carefully in line with the school's improvement priorities and it achieves good value for money.

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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
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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
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

**Achievement and standards**

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

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

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	2
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**

23 January 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Houghton Kepier Sports College, Sunderland, DH4 5BH

Thank you for your welcome when my colleagues and I inspected your school recently. We enjoyed meeting with you and seeing you at work.

We agree with you that Houghton Kepier Sports College is a good school. The specialist status in sports has had a strong influence on you and the area where you live. We were impressed with how many of you took part in sports after school and the various coaching activities provided for other schools and clubs.

The vast majority of you make good progress in your learning because of the good teaching you receive. Generally, you behave well in lessons and around the school although a few parents told us that they are concerned about the behaviour of a small group of students. Senior staff provide good leadership and everyone works hard to ensure you receive a good education. You told us that when you need extra support and help, it is there.

The school can improve further in some areas, and we have asked the school to concentrate on the following in order to help all of you achieve more and reach higher standards:

- raise standards especially in English, maths and science
- develop teaching so that work you receive is more closely matched to your different needs and abilities
- develop the curriculum to meet more effectively your differing needs and abilities, and so guide you to the courses in which you are most likely to do your best.

You can also help the school to improve further by attending school regularly and continuing to behave well.

Please accept our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Simon Richards

Lead inspector