

Nailsea School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109310
Local Authority	North Somerset
Inspection number	324944
Inspection dates	29–30 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Peter Sanderson 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 (total)	1282
Sixth form	196
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Walker
Headteacher	David New
Date of previous school inspection	9 November 2005
School address	Mizzymead Road Nailsea Bristol BS48 2HN
Telephone number	01275 852251
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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

Nailsea School is a larger than average comprehensive school that has decreased in size since the last inspection due to a fall in student numbers in its catchment area. It has been a specialist technology and media arts college since September 2004. Most students are from a White British background and the number of students whose first language is not English is low for a school of this size. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is well below the national average but has risen in recent years. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The most commonly identified of these needs relate to emotional and behavioural difficulties. A complete school rebuilding project has taken place over the past three years with the construction phase starting in May 2008. The school will move into these new buildings in September 2009.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Nailsea School is a satisfactory and improving school with a good sixth form. The school has an inclusive ethos and is successful in promoting students' personal development. As one parent, reflecting the views of a number, commented, 'I feel Nailsea School has a good child centred ethos and my son has always been happy to attend.'

Standards at the end of Year 11 are above the national average. They improved in 2008 and the school's tracking data indicate that they are due to rise again this year. Given that students enter Year 7 with above average standards, achievement through the school is satisfactory. Rising standards in the school do, however, provide evidence that achievement is improving, although there remains some variation in the progress made by students between different subjects. Teaching and learning are satisfactory because although there are examples of good and sometimes outstanding practice, it is not consistently good enough across the school to ensure students make good progress.

The personal development of students is good. There are many excellent opportunities for them to take responsibility through acting as school ambassadors or presidents or through becoming involved in the active school council. Students appreciate the fact that staff place an emphasis on listening to and responding to their views. The school has achieved the national Active Citizenship award in recognition of its work in this area. Students have a good understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle. They enjoy school and report that relationships with staff are positive. Behaviour is good both in lessons and around the school site. The care, guidance and support provided for students are good. Child protection procedures are fully in place and the school works very well with a wide range of professionals to support students. Checks on staff are robust and meet government requirements.

The headteacher provides the school with effective leadership. His senior colleagues share his commitment and support him well. There has been a clear focus on improving teaching and learning and students' achievement. Improved monitoring of teaching and learning and better use of data to set challenging targets and monitor students' progress are beginning to have a positive impact on students' achievement. It is notable that these improvements have been made alongside the heavy workload that comes from planning for new school buildings. The leadership team recognise that these improvements have not been equally effective in all areas of the school. This is leading to some inconsistencies of practice and variation in students' achievement between subjects.

The senior team has a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for further development. Good plans are in place to address those areas in need of improvement. The quality of these plans, combined with rising standards, indicates that the school has good capacity for further improvement. Specialist school status initiatives are being well led and are playing an important role in raising standards and promoting good personal development. Improved information and communication technology (ICT) resources are having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Specialist status has also led to strengthened links with primary schools and business and industry through effective outreach work.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form provides a good quality of education. Standards are generally above average and students' progress is good. Recruitment into the sixth form is strong and the percentage of students continuing from Year 12 into Year 13 is high. Students have good opportunities to study a wide variety of academic subjects, and the range of vocational courses offered has increased significantly in recent years.

Students' personal development is outstanding. Sixth formers are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles and to make a positive contribution to the health of others by, for example, leading and coaching sports groups involving younger students. They speak enthusiastically about their school and how much they enjoy their education. Students take leadership of many school activities; for example, they participate in an extensive mentoring programme for younger students, and have been exemplary in developing 'Student Voice' across the school. They serve the wider community admirably in such areas as charity work, assisting in nearby schools and developing local media arts provision. As a result, students develop impressive confidence and personal skills.

Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good. A new and more helpful monitoring and target setting system has recently been put in place to provide challenging targets and to ensure that students are motivated to keep on track and make better progress. Students speak highly of the guidance and support offered to them by the personal tutoring programme and the extensive careers and higher education guidance. Leadership of the sixth form is good and strongly focused on supporting students and helping them to fulfil their potential.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the percentage of good and better lessons in the main school by effectively sharing good and outstanding practice.
- Reduce the variation in students' achievement between subjects by ensuring greater consistency in the way that teaching and students' progress are monitored and evaluated, and effective action taken to raise standards.

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 the next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

On entry to the school in Year 7, students' standards are above average. The percentage of students attaining five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics at the end of Year 11 has been above average for a number of years. The percentage of students attaining this measure declined in 2006 and 2007 but improved in 2008. However, despite this overall rise in students' attainment there was variation in the standards reached in different subjects. For example, standards were significantly above average in mathematics and science but only average in English. This variation was also evident in the school's specialist subjects. Specialist school targets were achieved in media studies and some technology subjects, but not in ICT. The leadership team have taken effective action to improve students' progress in the current Years 10 and 11 and tracking data indicate that standards are continuing to rise. Current Year

11 students are on track to attain higher standards again this summer. However, despite rising standards the current progress made by students through the school is satisfactory, although better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. The progress made by all groups of students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is at a similar level.

Standards at the end of Year 13 have varied slightly from year to year but are generally above average. Given the attainment of students on entry to the sixth form, they make good progress in their learning. Progress in the small number of vocational courses taken by students is very good. There is, however, some variation in progress between different A-level subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students enjoy school and opportunities for them to take responsibility are varied and they are ready volunteers. The school currently boasts the highest number of trained 'buddies' in the North Somerset Buddy Scheme, which was established to support other students for whom school is a real challenge. Equally, members of the school council are keen to make a difference. They are a thriving team, well led by sixth form presidents, and they have been instrumental in both long-term projects and one-off events. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good with many benefiting from being involved in fundraising activities. Behaviour both in lessons and around the school is good. However, occasionally lessons can be disrupted by the silly behaviour of a few students if activities do not sufficiently engage them.

Students report that they feel secure in school and demonstrate a good awareness of safety procedures in practical lessons. Although a few students reported instances of bullying, a robust policy means these are swiftly dealt with. Good levels of attendance have been sustained, and in its efforts to address some late arrivals, the school has amended registration arrangements to inform appropriate action. Students make well-informed judgments concerning their health. Since the introduction of the Chill Café, they have begun to make more nutritious meal choices and a relatively large number of students are committed to extra-curricular sporting activities. Committed members of Year 10 have trained to deliver a powerful anti-drugs programme to younger students, which is also one of the ways in which students are encouraged to reflect about exacting issues. Students are well prepared for life beyond school through an effective personal and careers guidance programme and there are good links with external agencies to support this.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Inspectors saw a number of good and outstanding lessons. However, there are not currently enough of these in the main school to ensure that all students make good progress. Although there is good practice in the school, such practice is not as yet sufficiently shared. Typically, lessons are planned well using a common proforma and learning objectives are shared with students. Digital projectors are used well by staff to engage students and help maintain pace to the lesson. The majority of students behave well in lessons and show a positive attitude to their work, leading to the creation of a constructive climate for learning. However, in too many lessons, students are not stretched fully or provided with opportunities for them to be active learners rather than passive listeners. In the best lessons brisk, varied and energetic teaching

keeps students interested and involved. In the less successful lessons the pace is slower, teachers' questions lack challenge and tasks do not always match individual students' needs sufficiently closely. Where lessons fail to engage them, some students lose interest and behaviour deteriorates. In some subjects teachers' marking and assessment are helpful and give good advice to students about how to improve, but this is not always the case.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The leadership team are continually seeking ways to improve the curriculum so that it better meets the needs of students. For example, recent changes made to the courses offered in English and ICT are beginning to have a positive impact on students' progress. Flexibility and choice within the curriculum allow it to be responsive to students' different abilities and interests. For example, there is the opportunity for more able students to start GCSE courses in Year 9. In Years 10 and 11, there is a wide range of both academic and vocational courses, some of which reflect the school's specialism in technology and media. To extend the offer available to students there are good links with other local providers. The provision of AS mathematics in Year 11 and a twilight course in Latin are indicative of how the school has responded to the needs of gifted and talented students. The sixth form offers a wide range of academic courses and has recently broadened its provision to include a greater range of vocational courses.

Health and social education, citizenship and work-related learning are particular strengths of the school. It is thorough in identifying where effective contributions can be made from subject lessons, assemblies and outside agencies. The use of students from Year 10 to lead lessons in health education for Year 7 is indicative of the clarity of thought and planning. A wide range of extra-curricular activities is on offer and these are well supported by students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The student support team demonstrate an impressive approach to inclusion and provide very good support to vulnerable students, sustaining a well-coordinated network that includes parents and carers. As one parent commented, 'I have been continually impressed with the high levels of care and support given to my child by the Learning Support Unit.' Partnership working with external agencies is excellent, and carefully planned and targeted opportunities arranged by the extended schools co-ordinator for vulnerable students are of admirable benefit.

Effective monitoring and recording systems are in place to ensure the safety and welfare of all members of the school community, including staff. Site safety is founded on the regular visits of committed members of the governors' health and safety committee and the rapid response approach of the Premises Team. Students' welfare is equally well served. Safeguarding procedures are secure and medical personnel receive regular training to meet the needs of students with a variety of medical conditions.

A new system for academic tutoring has been introduced to improve students' achievement. This is beginning to have an impact on students' progress and plans to increase the number of academic reviews should help to make its impact more consistent across the school. Transition into Year 7 is effected through a mixture of events and visits, and provides a valuable opportunity for senior students to present the school to prospective parents.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Across the school the quality of leadership has improved to the point where there is now a clear sense of direction which has, in its turn, produced a shared sense of purpose focused on raising standards and achievement. Structures for monitoring and evaluation are more effective than those seen during the last inspection. Improved systems for target setting, tracking progress and providing appropriate support to underachieving students are beginning to have a positive impact on standards. However, the school's leadership team has more to do to ensure consistently good teaching and assessment practice across the school. Governors have satisfactorily discharged their responsibilities during a period of budgetary constraint and been consistently supportive of the school. The leadership team has taken appropriate steps to ensure that proper financial controls are in place and the budget deficit is being reduced over an appropriate period.

The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion. There are well developed links with local schools, clubs and business and industry. Students participate in a wide range of activities within the local community and, through their curriculum, have a good understanding of the range of cultures and faiths found in this country and in the world.

The headteacher and senior team have done much to create a mood of optimism and excitement among the staff and students about the opportunities the new school buildings will provide to support an integrated learning environment and to enhance different learning styles.

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

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	1
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	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
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	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	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	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	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

1 May 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Nailsea School, Nailsea, BS48 2HN

On behalf of your inspection team, I would like to thank you for the warm welcome you extended to us during the recent inspection of your school. We very much enjoyed our discussions with you. Now that we have finished the inspection, we wanted to let you know our findings.

The main school provides you with a satisfactory standard of education, while the sixth form is good. The following points are the key strengths of the school.

- You enjoy school and attend well.
- You are well supported and cared for by staff in the school.
- You make the most of the many opportunities to take on roles of responsibility such as acting as school ambassadors or presidents or through becoming involved in the active school council.
- The majority of you behave well in lessons and around the school site.
- The standards you attain in most subjects at the end of Year 11 are above the national average.
- You are taught well and make good progress in the sixth form.
- A wide range of academic and vocational courses are available for you to choose from, both in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form.
- You have the opportunity to participate in a range of local community events and lessons are helping you develop a good understanding of the range of cultures and faiths found in this country and around the world.
- You have all benefited from the school's specialism in technology and media.

To make your school even better we have asked the leadership team to make a couple of important improvements. In a number of lessons you are taught well and make good or better progress, and we have asked them to ensure that in the main school more of your lessons are like this. At the moment you also make different progress in different subjects, and we have asked them to ensure that the progress you make in all your subjects is as good as the best. You can help by continuing to work hard in lessons and getting fully involved in the learning activities that are organised for you.

The move to your new buildings in September 2009 provides you all with an exciting opportunity, and I wish you all good luck for the future.

Yours faithfully,

Peter Sanderson

Her Majesty's Inspector