

Egglescliffe School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111727
Local Authority	Stockton-on-Tees
Inspection number	325445
Inspection date	17 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Wendy Ripley HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1464
Sixth form	302
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr G Davies
Headteacher	Mrs A Darnell
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2005
School address	Urlay Nook Road Eaglescliffe Stockton-on-Tees TS16 0LA
Telephone number	01642 352570
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards; the curriculum; personal development and well-being; care, guidance and support and leadership and management. The inspectors gathered evidence from documents, lesson observations, examination of students' work, assessment data, interviews with staff and meetings with students. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Eggescliffe School is a larger than average mixed secondary school. The school serves a socially and economically advantaged area. Attainment on entry in Year 7 is above national and local averages. The percentage of students entitled to a free school meal is very low. Most of the students are White British and the proportion for whom English is not their first language is very low. Fewer than average students exhibit learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has held specialist arts status since 1999 and is nationally well known for music and orchestral work. Eggescliffe was designated as a High Performing Specialist School (HPSS) in July 2007 with funding for additional specialisms in science and mathematics confirmed in April 2008. The school also holds accreditations for Artsmark Gold, Sportsmark Extension Award, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Quality Mark, Healthy Schools Gold Award, and Investors in People.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Eggescliffe is an outstanding school which has an excellent reputation with parents. It is held in high regard and with great affection by students who have extremely positive attitudes to school and each other. This is because, as parents explain, their offspring 'achieve standards of excellence in a happy and caring environment... receiving invaluable support from subject teachers and personal tutors and tremendous benefits from the extensive range of extra curricular activities and the time so freely given by staff.' At the heart of this success is the rigour with which strategic leadership and management are conducted throughout the school. This, coupled with specialist schools status for the arts and more recently mathematics and science, moves the school from strength to strength. As a result, academic standards throughout the school and sixth form are very high and continue to improve. Students' achievement is excellent.

GCSE results in 2007 were significantly above average and represented excellent progress from above average starting points. Close on one third of all students gained A* or A grades and over 80% gained five or more GCSE passes at A* to C grades. Provisional results for 2008 indicate a further rise in results and represent the school's best ever performance in GCSE examinations. Five GCSE drama students received letters from the examining board stating that their achievement was in the top 10 of over 60,000 candidates. All targets, including those for specialist arts status, were met or exceeded.

Although there is as yet no reliable information about the outcomes of tests for Key Stage 3 students in 2008, due to the difficulties with national marking systems, indications are that results are similarly high. There are, however, marked differences between subjects in the standards reached and in the progress made by students. In 2007, mathematics and science results were significantly better than those in English, particularly at the higher levels. Provisional results for the 2008 tests show another rise in results in mathematics, science and English and a further increase in the proportion reaching the higher levels. Whilst English results have improved at the higher levels, results are still not in line with the other two core subjects. The school attributes this relatively weaker performance in English in part to some unavoidable staff absence over the last two years. However, teaching and learning in English is not as well matched to students' needs and interests as it is in the other core subjects.

Students' very good and sometimes excellent progress, is based upon the outstanding teaching and learning apparent in many departments. Since the last inspection, the school has developed the range of teaching styles and learning resources, as well as teachers' use of assessment, to set challenging targets for learning. In most cases this is very effective in helping students to know what exactly they need to do to improve. Lessons that are based on a sure knowledge of students' learning move at a cracking pace because the teacher pitches the level of challenge exactly right. Students rise to the demands of this teaching with enthusiasm, confidence and evident enjoyment. The desire to succeed is obvious and prompts students to work together to solve problems, exchange ideas and impress teachers with the speed of their progress. Where the pitch of the lesson is less accurate and tasks are not well adapted to suit the different needs of students, then the pace slows and enthusiasm wanes. In these lessons, learning is satisfactory rather than good or better. During inspection it was clear that students learn best when given the opportunity to learn independently through doing, rather than through prolonged listening. A strength in all lessons is the high quality relationships and rapport between teachers and

students. This gives students the confidence to take risks and develop their ideas because they are sure they will be taken seriously by staff and fellow students.

Students of all ages say their curriculum is excellent and inspectors agree. Students in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form feel they have been extremely well supported to make the right curricular choices and report that this helps them to achieve as well as they do. The enrichment of the curriculum through the school's specialist status has helped to improve the quality of learning across the school through the adoption of creative resources and learning methods. Extra-curricular provision is outstanding and the uptake of high quality activities at lunchtime and before and after school is very high. Through these activities students have had the opportunity to take part in many community arts activities and a range of sports at both local and national level.

The school's pursuit of academic excellence is not at the expense of students' personal development and well-being. Students' spiritual, moral and cultural development is very strong. A good range of tutorial activities contributes significantly to this as well as to their personal, health and social education. Students make a good contribution to the local community through the wealth of music and drama performances they provide. Students' relationships with each other and the staff are warm, positive and respectful. The overwhelming majority of students enjoy their education. This is reflected in the very high levels of attendance, exemplary behaviour in lessons and around the school and students' high self-esteem. Students told inspectors they feel safe and well cared for and that very rare incidents of bullying or harassment are dealt with swiftly and appropriately. Students know how to lead healthy lives, participating in a very wide range of sporting activities. Over 70% regularly have a school lunch. This is a very high proportion, achieved as a result of the high quality of the meals and because the students had a significant role in shaping the catering arrangements. Students appreciate the opportunities they are given to take responsibility and make decisions, such as having a say in the layout and facilities in each of the 'house' bases, helping to draw up the school travel plan, and writing the school's anti-bullying protocol. All of these factors bode well for the students' economic well-being and prepare them exceptionally well to be citizens of the future.

The quality of care, guidance and support provided for all students including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding. Child protection procedures are firmly in place and meet statutory requirements. Since the last inspection, the school has strengthened arrangements for monitoring academic progress, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Effective links are made between the pastoral support form tutors and heads of year provide and their role in tracking academic progress. The school has plans in place to maximise the impact of tutorial time even further. Transition arrangements are outstanding. Separate house bases for Years 7 to 9, 10 and 11 and the sixth form, enable students to feel secure. Parental involvement in the school is encouraged. There is frequent contact with parents especially in Year 9 and Year 11 when the school takes excellent steps to ensure that parents are well informed about the choices and options available to their offspring.

The headteacher provides strong direction and a clear sense of purpose. This is shared by the senior leadership team and governors and is effectively communicated throughout the school. The senior leadership team and middle managers know the school well and this is reflected in the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation. A wealth of data and highly effective tracking systems are used to drive up standards and ensure that challenging targets – many linked to the specialist school status – are set and often exceeded. As a result of astute and effective deployment of funding and resources, particularly to refurbish accommodation and provide

additional specialist support, the school provides excellent value for money. There is an outstanding capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

GCE A level results are outstanding. An improving trend has been maintained since 2003 with particularly high standards achieved in geography, mathematics and chemistry over the last three years. Provisional results for 2008 indicate a 100% pass rate at A level for the second consecutive year, and an impressive 58% of students gaining A or B grades. The vast majority of students successfully complete their courses and progress to higher education or employment.

Students speak very positively about the school. It is a popular choice attracting students from outside its immediate catchment area because of its excellent reputation and the exceptional opportunities it affords, particularly in music. Students told inspectors that they thoroughly enjoy their time in the sixth form where the care and support they receive are second to none and staff motivate and inspire them to achieve. Students are well advised in selecting appropriate courses, which are closely matched to their needs and aspirations.

The curriculum is excellent providing a full range of A level courses and access to a wide variety of enrichment opportunities. Gifted and talented students are well catered for.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Information technology is used very effectively in lessons. Academic monitoring and assessment are rigorous. Students are confident learners and apply themselves exceptionally well to their studies. Leadership and management are excellent, providing a strong sense of direction and purpose which ensures the quality of provision and standards achieved remain exceptionally high.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment in English, particularly at Key Stage 3, so that students' progress is accelerated and attainment raised.

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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?	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?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

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

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?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	1
The attendance of learners	1	1
The behaviour of learners	1	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	1

The quality of provision

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

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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	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	

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

18 September 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Eggescliffe School, Stockton-on-Tees, TS16 0LA

Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome when we came to carry out the inspection of your school earlier this week. It was a pleasure to talk to you about your learning and aspects of your life at school. We agree with you that Eggescliffe is an outstanding school. During our visit we were very impressed by your positive attitudes and exemplary behaviour as well as the respect and support you give to each other and the great care you take of the school buildings. Here are some of the things that make your school stand out from the rest.

- Standards are very high and continue to improve in both the main school and the sixth form.
- You are well taught and make very good progress in the majority of subjects, although we have asked the school to improve teaching in English so that you learn at a faster rate and make more progress particularly at Key Stage 3.
- The curriculum and the range of additional activities are outstanding because they meet your needs and interests well and ensure you enjoy your time at school.
- You benefit from the high performing specialist status your school has achieved for the arts, mathematics and science as well as the school's national reputation for music and orchestral work.
- The care, guidance and support you receive are excellent. As a result, you feel safe and happy at school and develop into mature, confident individuals.
- You know how to keep healthy. Many of you take part in sporting activities and you are very proud of the school's catering facilities. You helped to set these up and this means that over 70% of you regularly have a school lunch, which is fantastic!
- The leadership and management of your school is first rate. Everybody knows what they need to do to improve things for you and they work closely together to achieve this. They consult you and include you in decision making whenever they can to make sure they get things right.

You and your parents are rightly proud of your school and your achievements. We know that you will find ways to help the staff make the school even better. We wish you all very happy and successful futures.

Best wishes

Wendy Ripley HMI

Lead inspector