

New Mills School Business and Enterprise College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112936
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	325721
Inspection dates	18–19 March 2009
Reporting inspector	David Simpson 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)	736
Sixth form	163
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs B Tier
Headteacher	Mr J Elms
Date of previous school inspection	8 February 2006
School address	Church Lane New Mills High Peak Derbyshire SK22 4NR
Telephone number	01663 743284
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Age group	11–18
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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

New Mills is a smaller than average secondary school. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average. The percentage of students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average, the highest proportion of whom are those with behavioural, emotional and social needs. New Mills attained specialist business and enterprise status in 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

New Mills provides a satisfactory education with many strengths. The school benefits greatly from its specialist status which contributes to the improvement of standards in the school, supports work in other schools and promotes effectively business and enterprise skills in the local community. This builds upon a good tradition of partnerships which promote learners' well-being effectively and enables students to act responsibly and take up leadership opportunities within the area. Students' personal development is good: they like to learn, have the self-confidence to be courteous and welcoming, and interact with one another and adults positively and supportively. The school's care, guidance and support are effective; staff are attentive to the needs of individuals and action is quick where there are concerns. The curriculum is good and developments for 14 to 19 year olds have been particularly effective in addressing the needs of students.

Students make satisfactory progress and attain standards in line with national averages. The school acknowledges that achievement in mathematics needs to improve to meet challenging targets. Teaching is satisfactory. At their best, lessons are well paced, teachers have high expectations and check students' understanding regularly, and are well resourced. However, the majority of planning observed during the inspection lacked a focus on what progress the students were expected to make during the lesson. In weaker lessons, students were generally kept busy with tasks but questioning and activities did not encourage them to apply skills and knowledge to new situations. These lessons made few references to how the students would be assessed and the specific skills they needed to develop in order to improve their work.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has a good knowledge of his school and he is well supported by his senior leadership team. However, aspects of the school's monitoring procedures are not analysed rigorously enough to inform planning for the school as a whole which results in considerable variability in the quality of lessons and overall attainment. The school's work on community cohesion is satisfactory but the school recognises that this aspect needs more systematic planning and evaluation. The school has worked soundly to address the issues from the last inspection, some of which persist. Capacity to improve is satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The sixth form provides a satisfactory education for its students. Students make satisfactory progress in their studies and standards are in line with national expectations in A-level examinations. Most students study A levels. In order to offer a continuity of education to all that seek it, the school also offers alternative courses which are taken up by around a fifth of students in Year 12. The large majority of students complete the courses they start and almost all of those that study A levels go onto higher education. Students enjoy their time in the sixth form and they make a good contribution to school life, through opportunities such as the student council and house teams. Students help younger children by, for instance, assisting them with reading or acting as a language assistant in class. Students have a good capacity for independent learning and develop good skills for their future economic well-being. Students' relationships with teachers are very good and they receive individual support when this is required. During the inspection, the best lessons engaged learners with pace and a focus upon challenging learning objectives. The weaker lessons lacked pace and students made no more

than satisfactory progress. The broad curriculum and the positive reputation of the sixth form attract students from other schools. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Sound systems for self-evaluation are in place but target setting is not as well developed as in the main school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve attainment in mathematics.
- Increase the focus in lesson planning and in teaching on: the different abilities and needs of students; the subject specific skills, knowledge and criteria which enable the students and teachers to measure how much progress is being made.
- Strengthen leadership so that monitoring and evaluation are more consistently rigorous.

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 their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students' attainment on entry is in line with national averages. Students' progress satisfactorily through the school and attain standards in line with national averages at the end of Years 9 and 11 and the sixth form. Girls often attain higher standards than boys, although their rates of progress are the same. The students' performance in mathematics at the end of Year 11 in the last few years has been a weakness. The school is increasingly using challenging targets and entering students for examinations throughout Key Stage 4 so that the school already has clear evidence indicating that this year's results will be an improvement. The school also has tough targets related to specialist status. Last year's underperformance in geography has been addressed so that recruitment and attainment specialist targets are being met for this year.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They show consideration for one another, are courteous and friendly to adults and are sensitive in their consideration of social issues. Behaviour is generally good around the school and in lessons. However, when lessons are not sufficiently stimulating, a minority becomes inattentive, wasting time by inconsequential chat. Attendance has improved steadily and is now above average. The students say that they feel safe. Incidences of bullying and racism are rare and dealt with rapidly. Their contributions to the school and to the wider community are good. The school council has had a beneficial impact on school life, for example by improving outdoor facilities for games and by installing benches to promote relaxation and socialising at lunchtime. Older students support younger ones and, in turn, younger students help effectively when pupils transfer from primary schools. The recently established house system encourages students to take a pride in their own and others' achievements. The school's links with schools internationally enable students to develop an awareness of other cultures. Students understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle. They are enthusiastic about school meals, although recent price increases cause concern for some. Significant numbers take part in a good range of sporting and other extra-curricular activities. As a result of many initiatives linking local businesses with the school as a business and enterprise college, students gain insights into the world of work and develop skills that support their preparation for their future working lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers' subject knowledge is good and lessons are conducted in a friendly, relaxed atmosphere. Where teachers explain the purpose of the lesson and then check understanding by skilful questioning, students are able to increase their knowledge and understanding rapidly. As a result, they enjoy learning and undertake tasks with confidence and enthusiasm. In turn, this leads to a sense of pride in their achievements. Students themselves say they learn better when lessons include opportunities for discussion and for working in pairs or small groups. However, in some lessons, teachers' expectations are too low and consequently they tend to do much of the explaining themselves, allowing too few opportunities for students to clarify points and be confident that they have understood properly. There is not enough provision for students' different abilities and learning styles. There is a well-established system for assessing students' progress, which identifies and subsequently supports students who may otherwise underachieve. Students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported to enable them to access all subjects fully. The quality of marking is inconsistent. In most instances, teachers mark work regularly, often with encouraging comment and analysis of attainment, but there is not sufficient clear guidance to direct students towards further improvement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good curriculum is a strength of the school. Since the previous inspection, the Key Stage 4 curriculum has improved considerably. It now embraces a range of vocational and diploma courses, which match the full range of learners' needs, aspirations and capabilities. This widened choice is appreciated by students. These innovations initially centred around the school's specialism of business and enterprise. Since then, they have broadened out into other areas to include a range of Business and Technology Education Council subjects, Diplomas and Young Apprenticeship programmes. Through these programmes, the school has been successfully proactive in seeking external partners, including other local schools. In Year 7, the curriculum has been modified to allow the form tutor to deliver a broad course encompassing the humanities and English. This has aided the transition process by offering to the younger students greater continuity with a single teacher, resulting in improvements in behaviour. In addition, the school has energetically supported the introduction of language teaching in their feeder primary schools to further strengthen transition. The curricular provision is enhanced by out of school enrichment and extra-curricular activities, which are well attended and contribute to learners' enjoyment and achievement. Students expressed their appreciation for the use of the 'centre', which supports more vulnerable learners and offers a withdrawal facility. Students feel that teachers in this centre are particularly helpful and sympathetic to their needs. The school's curricular provision makes a significant contribution to improvements in learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, as well as their future economic well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support for students is good. Pastoral and academic staff share information about students effectively. Parents and students comment favourably on the high levels of commitment shown by all staff to ensure their well-being. Procedures for safeguarding

and child protection are in place, and requirements for all aspects of health and safety are met. The school continues to work very hard with parents, students and support staff, including outside agencies, to reduce levels of unauthorised absence. However, there remains a small number of persistent absentees, particularly amongst girls in Year 11. Students whose personal difficulties create barriers to progress receive individual mentoring and, where necessary, support from a range of outside agencies. A small number of students whose first language is not English benefit from individual or small group language sessions and make good progress. Extra-curricular activities and visits provide effective stimulation for gifted, talented and more able students.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher, who is very experienced, committed and industrious, has an in-depth knowledge of the school. The school's self-evaluation of its successes and of the challenges it faces is an accurate and honest reflection. The development plan provides strategies for school improvement and represents an ambitious programme. School leaders have overseen tangible improvements since the last inspection and this has resulted in a rising trend in examination results, which has been broadly in line with figures nationally. Governors meet on a very regular basis and receive detailed reports from school leaders. Governors discharge their statutory functions correctly and are involved in significant decisions related to the running of the school. Challenging targets are set each year but, at present, school leaders at all levels are not being sufficiently rigorous in their pursuit of higher standards by improving teaching and learning. The school engages with other partners through a learning federation of 11 other schools. The school has proactively sought to improve its profile and involvement within the local community and this has assisted with student recruitment in Year 7 and at post-16. New Mills school provides satisfactory value for money. Despite budgetary pressures which were present at the time of the last inspection, the school's accommodation has been improved with an obvious positive impact upon curricular provision, most noticeably the centre for teaching construction skills. The school site is very well maintained and the display of students' art work is impressive.

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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	3
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	3	3

Achievement and standards

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

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	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	2	
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?	3	3
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	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3	
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**

20 March 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of New Mills School Business and Enterprise College, High Peak, SK22 4NR

Thank you for helping us with our inspection of your school. From the moment we arrived, you made us feel very welcome and readily spoke to us as you were going around the school or when we saw you in lessons. We had some meetings with groups of you too and were very impressed that you were not only good ambassadors for your school but you also wanted to tell us where you thought it could be made better. Your views and the views of your parents have informed our inspection. Thank you.

We could see that you enjoy learning and that the new courses the school has been introducing are very motivating and meet your needs well. You behave well in lessons and around the school. You have good relationships with one another and the adults who look after you. We were impressed by how well you organised yourself at lunchtime and your relationships with the staff who work in the dining room are excellent. It is good that so many of you participate in the wide range of enrichment activities the school provides. Just as we were concluding the inspection, your French exchange partners were arriving and these opportunities are a clear strength, as are those, for example, to help to run companies and support other students in their learning.

Like you, we want your school to be even better. We have asked the school to consider three things it could now work on:

- make sure you do well in mathematics
- make lessons more demanding for all of you
- check that your lessons and progress are consistently challenging across the school.

Thank you again for being so helpful and we look forward to learning of your successes in the future.

Yours faithfully

David Simpson

Her Majesty's Inspector