

John Flamsteed Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112948
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	325725
Inspection date	11 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Dilip Kadodwala 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	601
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Robin Sibson
Headteacher	Mr Danny Holden
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2006
School address	Derby Road Denby Ripley Derbyshire DE5 8NP
Telephone number	01332 880260
Fax number	01332 880260

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the impact of leadership and management on students' progress
- strengths in students' personal development and well-being and the quality of care, guidance and support students receive
- strengths in the quality of the curriculum.

The inspector gathered evidence from the school's self-evaluation; achievement and attainment information; observation of the school at work, including a 'learning walk'; meetings with student members of the school council, staff, including the senior leadership team, some subject leaders and the chair of governors; discussions with students and an analysis of parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector 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

This school is smaller than most secondary schools. The great majority of students are from White British backgrounds. Very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, and those with a statement of special educational needs, is average. The proportion of students who are eligible for free school meals is below average. The school has had specialist mathematics and computing status since 2004 and science since April 2007. Attainment on entry is broadly average. The school has several awards including the Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

John Flamsteed is a good school. The response of the great majority of parents to the inspection questionnaire is fulsome in praise for the school. The care, guidance and support students receive are outstanding. One parent writes, 'It has never been too much trouble for the school to bend over backwards to try to accommodate us. The strong leadership permeates throughout all of the staff we have dealt with, without exception. This has enabled our children to develop their strengths and given them the confidence to overcome their weaknesses'. Another states, 'My child has changed dramatically since joining the school. He is keen to attend and dislikes being away from school when he is ill'. The school's approach to removing barriers to learning is exceptional, reflecting very effective partnership work with other agencies and parents. Staff work hard to meet students' different needs, as typified by the parent who writes, 'Despite my daughter's physical difficulties she has been recognised as gifted and talented, proving the support she receives is justifiable and much appreciated'. Consequently, students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good and sometimes outstanding progress.

Students are proud of their school and enjoy learning. Their attendance rate is above average and the proportion of students who are persistently absent is below that seen nationally and in similar schools. Students particularly enjoy the wide range of extracurricular activities offered at lunchtimes and after school. Participation rates are high and make a significant contribution to students' excellent health and well-being. Their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding because the school's expectations of students are very clear and students respond very positively. In the lessons observed, the promotion of students' social and moral development was very strong. Overall, students' behaviour is exemplary and they say that procedures for managing behaviour are firm and fair. Students say that they feel very safe. A typical comment from students is, 'There is always someone you can go to with confidence; things get sorted out straightaway'. Good community cohesion results from a very clear understanding of the context of the school and the community's needs. Students' contribution to the local community is exceptional, as seen for example in their involvement in organising and managing the autumn fair. This is hugely successful in engaging local people and raising funds to support national and international charities. Students know a lot about life in multicultural Britain and greatly appreciate their own and other cultures and respect diversity. However, students have limited opportunities to engage with people from different religions and cultures.

A good curriculum includes a wide range of GCSE courses. The mathematics and computing specialism enhances the opportunities available for students. They benefit from vocational courses but opportunities for level 2 study are currently limited. Observations by the inspector confirmed the school's view that the quality of teaching and learning is good. The school has worked hard at monitoring and evaluating lessons regularly. As a result, the school has rightly identified the need to improve the quality of homework set, a point made by a few parents as well, and to ensure greater consistency in marking within the overall priority to embed effective assessment practice. Occasionally, lesson planning does not identify clear learning outcomes in terms of the knowledge, understanding and skills that students are expected to gain. There is some excellent assessment evidence in some subjects which harnesses student self and peer-assessment and there is a strong commitment to widening this across all departments.

Students make good progress from their starting points. There is some variability in the standards attained. At the end of Year 9, overall standards have been above average over the last three

years. The school's performance in the unvalidated 2008 Key Stage 3 tests shows that students continued to achieve well in Years 7 to 9, compared with their broadly average attainment on entry to the school. However, the rate of progress has been slower in Years 10 and 11 and GCSE standards have been average. In 2008, the proportion of students attaining five A* to C grades remained the same as in 2007 at 59%. Five A* to C grades including English and mathematics was just below the national average, having been slightly above in previous years. Senior leaders recognise that this figure needs to rise and a robust tackling of this dip is now evident in the setting of challenging targets and in the implementation of well-directed intervention strategies. Students' most recent and current performance, based on lesson observations and secure school evidence, strongly indicate improvement. Inspection evidence indicates further improvements in 2009 GCSE results, such that a higher proportion of students are on the way to attaining five or more A* to C passes including English and mathematics. Although this has yet to be fully demonstrated in national examination results, nevertheless it reflects the good progress that is now evident in Key Stage 4.

The quality of leadership provided by the headteacher is outstanding. Senior leaders rigorously monitor the work of the school using well-established systems of quality assurance. Procedures for safeguarding students are secure and reviewed regularly. Health and safety systems are monitored carefully. Evaluation by senior leaders gives them a secure view of strengths and weaknesses and improvement planning identifies the right priorities. Consequently, the use of assessment to set targets and track student progress against them is beginning to make an impact on improving standards. However, there is some variability in the quality of monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning at middle management level. In the most effective examples, managers undertake rigorous analysis of learning and make interventions to promote better teaching and learning. However, in a small minority of cases, there is an insufficient focus on learning and the progress students make in lessons. Governance is good. Governors are committed, support the school well and play a suitable role in setting a direction for the school. They ensure that the school provides good value for money. The governing body has recently set in train a process of evaluating their own work and they recognise the importance of gathering more first hand evidence to support the challenge they provide to senior leaders. The clear focus provided by the school's leadership on raising standards and improving students' academic achievement demonstrates that the school has a good capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the proportion of students who attain five or more GCSE A* to C grades, including English and mathematics.
- Ensure that all middle managers are consistently rigorous in their evaluation of the quality of learning.

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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 ¹ 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

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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	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?	1

Leadership and management

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	1
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**

12 June 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of John Flamsteed Community School, Ripley, Derbyshire DE5 8NP

I thoroughly enjoyed visiting your school. It was a real pleasure to meet you and to talk with you about your school. I also spent time meeting with your school leaders, several teachers, the chair of governors and briefly visiting lessons. I also read many letters from parents. Thank you for your cooperation and help throughout the day.

Yours is a good school overall. There are some outstanding features, including the quality of leadership provided by Mr Holden. The quality of care, guidance and support you receive is excellent. You spoke powerfully about this, saying for example, 'Teachers really know you, watch you grow up and respect you' and, 'School is like a big happy family - every body knows each other'. Consequently, your personal development and well-being is outstanding. You feel safe, partly because of your involvement in drawing up the anti-bullying policy and your continuing role in implementing it. Staff also take your safety and welfare seriously ensuring that procedures are followed robustly. The great majority of you behave excellently, care for each other, attend regularly and lead healthy lives. You enjoy learning and very many of you take part in a wide range of extracurricular activities. Your contribution to the school and the local community is impressive.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Your achievement in Years 10 and 11 has been slower compared to that made in Years 7 to 9 but action headed by senior leaders is reversing this trend. Your achievement now is good and this reflects the good quality of senior leadership. GCSE standards, including English and mathematics have been slightly below the national average but the 2009 results look promising. I have asked the senior leaders to ensure that GCSE standards continue to rise. You can play your part by acting on the advice teachers give you. I have also asked subject leaders to be consistent in how they check the quality of learning and the amount of progress you make in lessons.

I found the students I chatted with to be confident, polite and justifiably proud of their school and their achievements. I am sure that they typically represent the great majority of you. They are great ambassadors for your school, so well done to you.

Yours faithfully

Dilip Kadodwala

Her Majesty's Inspector