

Healing School, A Specialist Science College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118095
Local Authority	North East Lincolnshire
Inspection number	326762
Inspection dates	4–5 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Brian Dower

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Anthony Beach
Headteacher	Mrs Ann Addison
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2006
School address	Low Road Healing Grimsby DN41 7QD
Telephone number	01472 502400
Fax number	01472 502401

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Healing School, a Specialist Science College, is slightly smaller than the average secondary school. Foundation status was awarded in 2006. It serves an area of relative social and economic advantage and is oversubscribed. Students are mainly of White British heritage, with the proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and for whom English is not their first language being well below that seen nationally. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average, and that of students with a statement of special educational need is above average. Very few students are entitled to free school meals.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school that provides excellent value for money. Standards are well above average and students' progress and the levels they achieve, when compared with their average attainment on entry to Year 7, are outstanding. Attainment has risen significantly over the last two years and the rate of students' progress continues to improve. They have excellent basic skills and the personal qualities to make the most of life's chances because their personal development and well-being are outstanding. This is recognised by the vast majority of parents who are fulsome in their praise of all the school does.

The school's specialist status as a science college is making a significant contribution to the excellent achievement of its students and to the wider community. Standards in the specialist subjects of science, mathematics and information and communication technology are particularly high. The specialist status underpins community and partnership links and enables students to maximise learning opportunities through those links, and allows staff to share expertise in science and mathematics with other secondary and primary schools in the community. Strong leadership skills at all levels have benefited markedly, not only at Healing but also in its partner secondary school. This partnership has been so successful that a National Challenge Trust is to be formed to provide both schools with the additional capacity that they need to improve further.

Students are confident and self-reliant. They say they feel safe and secure in school. They enjoy their learning, attend school regularly and punctually. They participate in a wide range of activities outside of lessons, including sports and cultural events which does much for their sense of well-being and physical health. Extensive opportunities for contributing to the school, and to local and wider communities, involve all students and result in mature young people who understand that with rights come responsibilities.

At the heart of all the school achieves is the consistently good and often outstanding teaching and learning which goes on in the classroom. Well qualified teachers, teaching assistants and learning mentors are committed to doing the best for their charges. They take full advantage of an excellent range of training opportunities to hone the students' skills. There is a balance between highly experienced and effective teachers and younger staff who are already good at what they do. Working relationships in the classroom are based on mutual trust and respect, leading to students' positive attitudes to learning. Expectations are high. Challenging and interesting work was seen in most lessons. In some of the lessons, students were tightly guided in how they learnt. The school recognises that extending opportunities for more independent and creative learning, for learning through discussion and through open-ended tasks where there is no ready and easily accessed answer to problems, is an area for development. This does happen but such exemplary practice is not widespread.

The excellent curriculum provides students with academic, vocational and work related pathways which meet all needs. The extensive range of well attended extra-curricular activities broadens students' understanding of the work they do in class and creates well-rounded, self-respecting and respectful young people. All receive outstanding care, guidance and support, evident in the excellent academic progress and personal development of those students who are vulnerable in any way.

This is a school which strives for continual improvement. There is no complacency. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher sees to that. The best is expected of everyone. All

relish such challenge and morale is high. Staff develop professionally and students make excellent progress. Leadership and management are outstanding at all levels and governors are well informed and play their full part in asking the right questions and forward planning. The school's capacity to build on its present impressive achievements is excellent.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend opportunities for students to work independently and creatively in lessons and to follow through their own ideas.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Students enter the school with attainment levels in line with national averages. The standards reached by students by the time they leave the school are well above average, and students' progress and their achievement are outstanding. This is so for all groups of students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those with a statement of special educational need and those from minority ethnic backgrounds. Standards have improved year on year, with the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, rising from 65% in 2006 to 72% in 2008. In 2008, the school exceeded its statutory and specialist college performance targets. Inspection evidence and the school's assessment records show that the rate of progress has improved further and students now in Year 11 are well placed to surpass the standards attained in 2008. A dip in performance at the highest GCSE A* and A grades in the single sciences in 2008 has been successfully addressed and progress is again excellent in this area of the curriculum. There was underachievement in French in 2008 but progress in the subject now is good. Students' skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology are highly developed.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. They have very high aspirations to achieve and they cooperate well with each other and with staff. The behaviour of the vast majority is impeccable, and commented on positively by parents and visitors. Students report that they feel safe in school and that the vertical tutorial system, with its family setting, gives them an even wider social group to turn to for support. Students enjoy school and this is reflected in their high levels of attendance. Through their school council, students have ample opportunity to express their views and are regularly involved in decision making. This has had a positive impact on the provision and take-up of healthy school lunches and the promotion of cycling to school each day. They keep fit and well through participation in sports activities. Positions of responsibility in the school are sought after. The prefect system is valued and the senior students' judgements on matters of day to day regulation of school uniform and break-time discipline are respected by other students. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This is reflected by the awareness and consideration which they show to one another and adults. Students gain an excellent understanding of the diverse cultures represented in Britain through visits and visitors, assemblies, work in religious education and the personal, social, health and citizenship programme. Many students contribute to the wider community through sports activities, charity work and enterprise activities. Because students are doing so well in their academic work and have such excellent basic skills, they are particularly well prepared for their future lives and careers.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. The school has raised the standard of teaching and learning since the last inspection and these improvements underpin students' outstanding achievement. In most lessons, the pace of learning is brisk because teachers plan very thoroughly and are extremely well informed and enthusiastic about their subjects. Interesting, well chosen activities engage students' interest and challenge their individual needs and ability. Teachers' use of assessment information is exemplary and this helps them to track individual students' progress, identify underachievement quickly and provide the necessary interventions. Teachers constantly refer to the various examination grade or level criteria so students know how to improve their work. Students thrive in this very positive environment, they work hard, their attitudes to study are exemplary and they talk very highly of their teachers. Regular monitoring by senior and subject leaders has promoted a high degree of consistency in teachers' planning, use of information and communication technology for teaching and learning and day-to-day assessment. Lessons were seen where students worked creatively and independently of the teacher. Such exemplary practice is not universal, however, and in other lessons opportunities were missed for students to discuss and follow through on their own ideas. Marking is effective and provides good guidance for students. Partnership links with a neighbouring school have improved teaching expertise in both institutions.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum and other activities provided by the school meet the needs, aspirations and capabilities of the students outstandingly well. All students have access to a wide range of vocational courses. More able students can take additional courses, in some cases linking with a local college. Students who are gifted and talented benefit from the school's leading role in this area. As a result, many of these students achieve the higher grades at GCSE. As a result of effective support, groups of students, for instance, those with a statement of special educational need, secure access to all aspects of the curriculum. A wide range of extra-curricular activities are on offer throughout the year and are well attended. Students take part in many local and national competitions and challenges and their success is celebrated in displays throughout the school. Teachers provide many additional revision and catch up classes after school, on Saturday mornings and during the school holidays to maximise every opportunity for success.

The school uses its subject specialism to lead in providing work related learning through a coordinated five year programme of enterprise activities that build in complexity. These experiences, together with outstanding achievement in science, mathematics, English and information and communication technology, ensure that students are self-confident and well prepared for the future.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides outstanding care, guidance and support to its students. Government requirements to safeguard students and all necessary child protection and health and safety procedures are in place. 'The excellent pastoral care treats students with care and understanding.'

This is a typical comment from parents and there was additional praise for the support students receive on their transition from primary to secondary school. Students feel that care in the school is particularly strong because 'each of us is valued and known about.' Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are especially well nurtured and integrated with the school community, not least through the school's excellent links to outside agencies. The school is quick to identify any students whose personal difficulties may create barriers to their academic progress and has in place an effective and extensive mentoring programme. Strategies and systems for monitoring and improving students' attendance and behaviour are constantly scrutinised and improved to support students' outstanding personal development. The school works very effectively with careers services and other agencies to provide both academic and personal guidance to students on their move to further education. Highly effective procedures are in place to track the progress of all students. This information is used successfully to keep all students remain on track to meeting their challenging targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership, management and governance are outstanding. The leadership of the headteacher is inspirational and she has provided the direction and drive which has led to the improvement in standards. She is well supported by able and committed deputy and assistant headteachers, subject leaders and senior support staff. Self-evaluation is accurate, based on the rigorous monitoring of students' progress and the involvement of all staff and governors in forward planning. Appropriate priorities are in place to take the school forward. These include challenging performance targets to improve standards further. The school's commitment to giving every student the best possible deal is signalled through the excellent progress made by vulnerable students and their participation in all that the school has to offer. The school is a harmonious place in which to work and its involvement in the local and wider communities is extensive. The contribution it makes to the work of other schools through partnership arrangements is effective in improving provision and standards. Its contribution to community cohesion is therefore excellent. Significant improvements have been made since the previous inspection, particularly in students' attainment and in the quality of teaching and learning. The school's capacity to improve further is outstanding.

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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?	1
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	1

Achievement and standards

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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**

8 June 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Healing School, A Specialist Science College, North East Lincolnshire, DN41 7QD

Thank you for the warm welcome we received when we visited your school. You know that the purpose of the visit was to inspect the quality of the education you receive and the progress you make in your academic and personal development. Our judgement is that you attend an outstanding school and that the progress you make is excellent.

We found you to be hard working young people who have the skills and personal qualities to be successful in your future studies and in the world of work. Former students gained excellent qualifications by the time they left Year 11. The evidence we have seen indicates that you are well placed to do equally well and possibly surpass their achievements.

Such exemplary progress is down to three things. You are keen to learn and always give of your best. You are taught well. Your school is led by a headteacher who has high expectations of you all. Everyone rises to this challenge.

I hope that the inspection report captures all that is special and impressive about Healing School. We have asked your teachers to look at extending opportunities in lessons for you to work independently and creatively and to have more time to learn through trial and error. Please don't think that by highlighting this point we underestimate the excellent teaching and learning that is evident across the school. Neither are we unaware of the pressure on time from examination course requirements which prevents teachers devoting extensive time to this way of learning. Independent learning is crucial to your development, however, and we feel more could be done to challenge you in this way.

Our best wishes to you all. Enjoy the summer break which is not too far ahead now.

Yours sincerely

Brian Dower

Lead inspector, on behalf of the inspection team.