

Humberston Comprehensive School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118101
Local Authority	North East Lincolnshire
Inspection number	326763
Inspection dates	9–10 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Tanya Harber Stuart 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	715
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Wendy Bagnall
Headteacher	Ms Carol Sanderson
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2005
School address	Humberston Avenue Humberston Grimsby DN36 4TF
Telephone number	01472 319990
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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

Humberston School is a smaller than average secondary school located in North East Lincolnshire. The school serves a relatively affluent area. A much lower percentage of students is entitled for free school meals than nationally. The vast majority of students are of White British heritage with very few speaking English as an additional language. The percentage of students with a statement of special educational need is twice the national average. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also higher than average.

The school has specialist status in mathematics and computing. It gained the national Healthy School award in 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its students an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Humberston School has experienced much turbulence in the past three years. A large number of staff have left the school and the school has found it hard to replace them. It has been particularly difficult to recruit mathematics and information communication technology (ICT) teachers. These difficulties have been compounded by budget issues. These two factors have diverted leaders and managers away from improving the educational standards reached, and the progress made by the students. While parents were mainly supportive of the school, many raised concerns about students' academic progress in their inspection questionnaires.

Students enter the school with standards which are broadly in line with national average. In 2008 standards in GCSE examinations were well below those attained in 2007 and English and mathematics results were below average. During the last three years, there has been considerable variation in the overall progress made by students between Years 7 to 11. In particular boys, middle attaining students, and most students with learning difficulties made inadequate progress. These variations were identified as an area for improvement at the last inspection and strategies adopted by the school to eradicate these differences have not made the impact necessary to ensure that all students make satisfactory progress.

In the last inspection, the personal development and well-being of the students was judged to be good; it is now satisfactory. The behaviour of the students is also satisfactory overall. However, low level disruption was seen by the inspection team in those inadequate lessons which did not meet the needs and interests of the students. Students on the school council feel that students' views have played a positive part in the development of the school, for example in the refurbishment of the toilets.

Teaching and learning are inadequate. In lessons observed by inspectors, planning and activities were often not based on accurate assessment data and lessons did not meet the needs and interests of all students. Too often, all students completed the same work; while some found tasks too easy, others found them too demanding and this resulted in inadequate rates of progress.

The curriculum and the school's care, guidance and support for students are satisfactory. The new mixed age tutoring system is enabling students in different year groups to work together. Academic guidance, in terms of the transition from Year 6 to Year 7 and Year 9 to Year 10 is satisfactory.

Leadership and management are inadequate. Although new policies have been put in place to improve the progress made by students, leaders and managers at all levels have not acted swiftly enough to ensure that the policies are embedded across the school and are impacting positively on student outcomes. This is contributing to the variations in progress students make and their inadequate progress overall. Specialist mathematics and computing college status has substantially increased the provision of ICT equipment available. Staff and students across the school spoke positively about these facilities. However, the impact of the specialist status, in terms of raising standards and improving the progress made by the students across the school is inadequate.

The inadequate progress made by the students between Years 7 to 11, the decline in aspects of personal development since the last inspection and the inadequate teaching and learning seen, all contribute to the judgement that the school is making insufficient progress. Given this lack of progress, the school does not provide value for money and leaders and managers at all levels do not demonstrate the capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all groups of students make at least satisfactory progress.
- Embed the use of assessment data into classroom practice to ensure that learning activities meet the needs and interests of all students.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning: eradicate the inadequate practice and develop the satisfactory lessons to good or better.
- Focus leadership and management, at all levels, on improving the outcomes for students.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Students' attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. By the end of Year 11 significant differences are evident in the performance of respective groups of students. Since 2006, while girls have made satisfactory progress, the performance of boys during this period has been inadequate. In addition, students of average ability and some with learning difficulties have not achieved in line with their capabilities. There are marked variations over time in the standards attained by students at the end of Key Stage 4. In 2007 standards were high and well above average but in 2008 they were much lower and below average in English and mathematics. Four percent of students left without any qualifications.

Although students with learning difficulties are supported and integrated into the school they do not always make satisfactory academic progress. This is often because the work in lessons is not always at the appropriate level.

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At the end of Key Stage 3 in 2008 students reach standards which are broadly in line with national average. However, the 2008 provisional national test results indicate that students did not meet their targets. In particular, students capable of achieving the higher levels in English and science did not do so and did not make the progress they were capable of. The standards reached by students in English and mathematics declined in 2008; standards in science declined considerably.

Although senior leaders and managers have accepted that achievement is inadequate for many students, and have put in place strategies to improve it, it is too early to judge their impact. Additionally, the high proportion of inadequate teaching and learning is hampering the progress made by students in lessons.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are satisfactory. Students understand the difference between right and wrong. Staff and students agree bullying is decreasing, racist incidents are rare and any incidents are promptly dealt with. Students' behaviour is satisfactory overall, although behaviour is better when teaching engages their interest and allows them opportunities to work collaboratively to

solve problems. Parents stated in the inspection questionnaires, and the inspection team agree, that there is some low level disruptive behaviour in a minority of lessons. Most students say they enjoy school and value the opportunities offered to them. They form satisfactory relationships with teachers and each other. Students say they feel safe in school and know who to turn to if adult help is required. They behave responsibly in laboratories and workshops and around the school.

Attendance has improved steadily in the last few years and is now good. The school has gained the Healthy Schools award; many students take part in the wide range of extra-curricular sporting activities offered. However, while students express understanding about how to lead a healthy lifestyle, not all choose to follow one. The school council makes an effective contribution to school life. The vast majority of students go on to further education or training.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

While the school evaluates teaching as satisfactory, inspectors judge the overall effectiveness of teaching as inadequate. There is considerable variation in the quality of teaching. The proportion of lessons considered good or better is too small and there are too many inadequate lessons. This has a considerable impact on the inadequate progress made by too many students. The school has placed considerable emphasis on training in order to make teaching more effective but this has had insufficient impact.

Where teaching is good, lessons are well planned with opportunities for students to work independently, and develop higher level thinking skills. In such lessons work is tailored to the needs of students, behaviour is managed effectively and students make good progress in their learning. For example, in one history lesson, students were developing their skills in the interpretation and evaluation of evidence through a murder mystery. This encouraged discussion, cooperation and challenged their thinking; students also enjoyed their learning. Where teaching is less effective, lessons are frequently dull and offer little to excite and engage students in their learning. As a result, students become bored and on occasions disrupt the work of others. In a significant proportion of lessons information on student progress is not sufficiently analysed and used systematically to inform planning.

Marking is inconsistent. While staff frequently seek to praise students, feedback lacks rigour and does not make it clear what students have achieved or how to improve further. This is also contributing to the inadequate progress they make while at the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is broad and balanced. The issues in the last inspection report relating to religious education have been dealt with successfully. The curriculum promotes students' personal as well as academic development. The promotion of literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory, although students' ICT and numeracy skills are underdeveloped in other curriculum areas. The response of different groups to the curriculum provided is monitored satisfactorily and the curriculum is kept under review to ensure that the subjects meet students' needs. This year a small number of Year 10 students have embarked on the new Diploma in construction with its strong work-related emphasis. The school offers a range of suitable courses for older students

who find learning difficult and might be at risk of failure. All Key Stage 4 students complete two weeks of work experience and have other satisfactory opportunities to develop enterprise skills and to make a contribution to the wider community. These include helping in local primary schools and retirement homes. The range of out-of-school activities includes music, and sport, foreign visits and field trips. A large number of students participate in these activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school's commitment to the welfare of its students is evident; it has introduced a new mixed age tutoring system to improve its pastoral care. This is proving successful: students say that it is helping new students settle into the school. However, tutor time is not used effectively to mentor students in order to support them to make satisfactory progress in their learning. The transition arrangements for Year 7 students successfully support their introduction to the school and are valued by parents. In addition, the subject choices booklet for Year 9 students provides satisfactory guidance to help them choose their courses for Years 10 and 11.

Arrangements for safeguarding students meet current statutory requirements. Regular and effective links with a wide range of agencies help the school to meet the needs of students. Care and support for vulnerable students are sensitive and responsive. Students with additional needs are supported satisfactorily through the learning support department.

Academic guidance is developing but the setting and monitoring of students' targets remains variable. The 'heads of house' enjoy positive relationships with students and promote their welfare satisfactorily, but their role in supporting academic achievement is less effective.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Leadership and management are inadequate. Leaders and managers at all levels are not demonstrating the capacity required to make the necessary improvements to teaching and learning and to raise achievement and standards. There is too much variation in the effectiveness of the school's work.

Systems to review the strengths and weakness of the school have been established at a senior leadership level, but too many middle leaders are unclear about what improvements are required and how these should be achieved. Self-evaluation completed by the subject departments is linked to whole school self-evaluation. However, the school underestimates a number of important weaknesses and over-values the areas where progress has been made. This is particularly so with respect to teaching and learning. Strategies to secure improvement are insufficiently monitored by senior and middle leaders. The strategies are applied inconsistently by leaders and line managers of different subject areas. As a result, key initiatives are not effective in securing whole-school improvement.

The school is making satisfactory progress in promoting community cohesion. The school's work with others to ensure students' well-being is satisfactory also. However, although the school complies with the statutory requirements to promote equal opportunities, many students, given the inadequate progress they make at the school, do not fully benefit from this provision.

Governors are supportive of the school, with a clear focus on financial management. However, they have only recently started to ask the necessary critical questions about student's

underachievement and the variation in their performance. Given the decline in standards at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, the inadequate teaching and learning and students' personal development and well-being now satisfactory rather than good as in the last inspection, governors have not secured the improvements necessary. The school has received much support from the local authority in the past 15 months.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	4

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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	4
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

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

11 December 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Humberston Comprehensive School, North East Lincolnshire, DN36 4TF

Thank you for welcoming us to your school during the recent inspection. It was very helpful to talk to so many of you, both formally and informally, as it allowed us to take your views into account. We were also grateful to your parents and carers who filled in a questionnaire for us.

We found that, through the school council, you have made a positive contribution to developing the school, particularly with respect to the redecoration of the buildings. Your attendance is good.

However, the inspection raised many concerns. Many of you are not making the progress you should. In some lessons, usually where the teaching does not meet your needs and interests, you do not listen and you chat to your friends. Many of you do not know what you have to do to improve your work and this hinders your progress. To make Humberston School a better school, we have asked the governors, Ms Sanderson and the staff to:

- Ensure that all of you achieve at least the grades and levels you are capable of.
- Make sure that staff use assessment data to plan lessons which meet your needs and interests.
- Improve lessons so that more of them are good.
- Make sure all leaders and managers in the school focus on improving the progress you make.

You can play your part by continuing to attend. You can also help by making sure you pay attention in all your lessons.

We have judged that your school requires 'special measures'. This means that you will be regularly visited by inspectors to see how you are getting on and the school will be supported to improve the progress you make.

I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Tanya Harber Stuart

Her Majesty's Inspector