

# Hellesdon High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	121152
<b>Local Authority</b>	Norfolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	327415
<b>Inspection dates</b>	5–6 November 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Mitcheson HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	1117
Sixth form	271
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Mark Lenton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Gerard Batty
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	23 November 2005
<b>School address</b>	Middletons Lane Hellesdon Norwich Norfolk NR6 5SB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01603424711
<b>Fax number</b>	01603487602

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Hellesdon High school is a large comprehensive school that serves an area of west Norwich. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The majority of students are White British; very few are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities including those with a statement of special educational need is below the national average but rising. The school accepted students into Year 7 for the first time in 2007 and has undergone a significant building programme to accommodate them. Attainment on entry is average. The school is a specialist technology school and holds the Sportsmark, Healthy Schools, Eco schools, National Youth Agency, Quality in Study Support and Investors in People awards. In 2008 it was one of the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust's most improved schools. Sixth form education is provided through the Wensum partnership, a consortium of two other schools, a further education college and adult education service.

## 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 significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Improvements are required to its sixth form because a significant proportion of students under-achieve, the curriculum does not meet the needs of all learners and the actions taken by sixth form leaders and managers to address these weaknesses are inadequate.

For the vast majority of students in Key Stages 3 and 4, Hellesdon High school provides a satisfactory education. It provides a caring and supportive atmosphere where students say they feel safe, cared for and enjoy coming to school. Most make satisfactory progress and attain broadly average standards. GCSE results have risen steadily since the previous inspection and provisional results for 2008 show that the percentage of students gaining 5 or more grade C's in GCSE examinations has risen from 58% in 2007 to 68% this year. The proportion of students attaining five GCSEs including English and mathematics is above the national average. A satisfactory curriculum meets the needs of most learners and the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Satisfactory leadership and management, strengthened by recent additions and changes to the senior leadership team ensures that the safeguarding and personal development and well-being of students is satisfactory.

However, education in the sixth form is inadequate. The partnership arrangements with other schools do not work as well as they should do and too many students underachieve. Not all students receive adequate advice on which courses to study. A significant number of students with low prior attainment enter the sixth form to study Advanced (A) level courses that are unsuitable for them. Poor guidance and ineffective monitoring of progress leads to many, including some more able students attaining lower grades than expected. Attendance in lessons has improved recently due to improved monitoring and students say that fewer lessons are cancelled at short notice. However, senior managers are unable to monitor effectively the quality of teaching and learning on all of the school sites. The school's own evaluation recognises that achievement in the sixth form is inadequate.

Students' personal development including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Throughout the school, the majority of students behave satisfactorily and display positive attitudes. They say that when bullying occurs staff deal with it promptly. A small minority disrupt the learning of others in some lessons, particularly when teachers do not apply the behaviour policy consistently. Prompt action to follow up student absence has led to improved attendance which is now similar to the national average. Students lead healthy lifestyles through regular participation in physical education and eating healthily at lunchtimes. They, and a number of their parents comment favourably about the good range of sports activities after school and participation rates are high.

Overall, teaching and learning in all key stages is satisfactory but it is inconsistent in quality. Lessons vary from outstanding to at times, inadequate. This is because there are too many inconsistencies in planning and in applying agreed teaching procedures. At times, teachers' expectations are not high enough. Senior leaders and an increasing number of middle leaders monitor lessons but this is not yet leading to improvement in all subjects. Not all teachers make systematic use of assessment data to identify at an early stage those at risk of underachieving

or set individual students clear targets for improvement. The school has adapted well to delivering the whole of the Key Stage 3 curriculum. A number of parents praised the school's induction procedures and say that they help their children to settle quickly into the school. Phonics lessons in Year 7 help an increasing number of students who find reading difficult. Inspectors observed some of the best teaching in Year 7.

Arrangements for safeguarding students are secure and the school works well with other agencies to support those who find learning difficult. Staff working in the 'Bridge' and the 'House' help the most vulnerable students to improve their social skills and build self-esteem through a programme of interesting and challenging experiences. This has helped to increase attendance and reduce the number of students excluded from school. However, there is less emphasis on ensuring that students who find learning difficult achieve equally as well as others and a small proportion of students did not make the progress expected of them in 2007. Action has been taken to address this and results show some improvement this year.

The new headteacher has already made his mark and is providing a clear direction for the school. He has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has immediately raised aspirations by setting much more challenging targets. He is supported by a committed senior leadership team who have driven improvements to GCSE results in recent years. Self-evaluation is satisfactory, but has mainly involved senior leaders and some middle managers. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities but have few opportunities to evaluate the school's performance or challenge senior leaders. Finances are well managed and resources are appropriately deployed, but value for money is inadequate overall due to the ineffectiveness of the sixth form.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 4**

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is inadequate. Students enter with a range of prior attainment levels, but in general, standards on entry are lower than those achieved nationally. Based on their starting points, a small proportion of students achieve well and exceed expectations. However, results over the past 2 years show that a significant proportion of students have underachieved and did not attain the targets set for them. For example, in A-level examinations in 2008 over half of the students in Year 13 and almost all students in Year 12 attained at least one grade in one of their subjects below what was expected of them. The percentage of students who stay on to study in Year 13 is broadly average but pass rates are below the national average. This year's A-level pass rates are particularly low in design technology, English literature and media studies. A high proportion of students studying critical thinking achieved no grade at all this year.

Students' personal development is satisfactory. Weekly conferences and enrichment activities contribute to their enjoyment and understanding of current and world affairs. Inspectors found teaching and learning to be satisfactory but senior leaders are unaware of the quality of teaching and learning in other partner schools because they do not observe lessons. Monitoring of students' progress against the targets set for them is inconsistent and is not sufficiently robust to ensure that those at risk of underachieving are identified early and are given the support they need. Care and support are satisfactory but poor guidance leads to students enrolling on inappropriate courses which contributes to their underachievement. Recent additions to the sixth form leadership team have increased the capacity to make improvements but overall, leadership and management of the partnership are inadequate because not enough action has

been taken to address the lack of effective guidance, the weaknesses in the curriculum and the under-achievement of students.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise achievement in the sixth form by ensuring that students are guided carefully towards the most appropriate courses for them, that senior managers monitor closely the progress made by students and where necessary, they take early action to support those at risk of underachieving.
- Ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school by reinforcing good practice in planning and agreed procedures in teaching, and by monitoring the impact of teaching on students' learning
- Add coherence to the ways in which assessment information is used throughout the school to monitor progress so that individual students know exactly how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their work in all subjects
- Engage all school leaders and managers including governors in regular, thorough and rigorous evaluation of how well they, their students and the school is performing.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Standards in Key Stage 3 in 2007 were below the national average in English and mathematics, and above average in science but school data shows a significant improvement in all three subjects this year. Similarly, the percentage of students attaining the higher Level 6 has increased significantly. Results in Key Stage 4 have improved each year for the past six years. Provisional results show that the school has exceeded the targets it set for itself. Over two thirds of students attained five or more GCSE grade C's and almost half attained five good passes including English and mathematics, helping to secure their economic well-being. The vast majority attained five or more A\* to G grades and almost all of them left Year 11 with at least 1 GCSE qualification. Girls have attained better than boys have but over the past two years, the performance of boys has improved and the gap has narrowed.

Between Year 7 and Year 11, pupils make satisfactory progress but this varies between subjects and between key stages. The school met some of its specialist targets this year, particularly the number attaining GCSE qualifications but targets in ICT and some aspects of design technology were narrowly missed.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

Students feel safe and say they know who to talk to if they have concerns. They develop a satisfactory understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. Visiting groups such as African musicians and storytellers, visits to drama and dance performances adds to student's appreciation of diverse cultures. Students develop an understanding of human rights' issues in assemblies. They respond generously to charity appeals and enjoy fund-raising to support other students involved in 'World Challenge'. The school sports partnership provides good opportunities for students to work with younger children as community sports leaders. An active school council contributes to improvements in school and the local community, such as developing improved healthy eating options at lunchtimes and advising on the redevelopment of a local park.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

The school evaluates the quality of teaching and learning as satisfactory and observations by inspectors confirmed this. When students are actively engaged in their learning and work is interesting and challenging, they behave themselves and achieve well. However, not all teachers plan lively, stimulating activities or use information and communication technology (ICT) to engage students' interest. Students' behaviour is managed well by most teachers but on occasions, where school policies are not implemented consistently, a small minority of students disrupt the learning of others. In lessons where teachers' planning does not take enough account of students' different needs and abilities some tasks are too easy and do not provide enough challenge. Marking is inconsistent because different methods are used and do not always provide students with clear advice on how well they are doing or how to improve their work. Teaching assistants work hard to help students, but are often under-used because their roles and responsibilities are not made clear in lesson plans.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

Most subjects in Key Stage 3 contribute to improving students' literacy and numeracy skills but inspectors saw few opportunities for students to use computers. In Year 10 all students study for a qualification in ICT and participate in a work experience. They also select from a range of GCSE courses and a small number of vocational courses. Alternative programmes for a small group of students not suited to GCSE studies help to maintain their attendance and engagement in learning. Personal, social and health education, and citizenship lessons help them to learn about healthy lifestyles including drugs and sex education and to improve their understanding of the wider world. Enrichment activities are good.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 3

The quality of care and support provided for a small but increasing number of vulnerable students with behavioural and personal issues is good and helps these students to remain in school, attend regularly and behave themselves. Not all lesson plans include different activities for less able students and the special needs co-ordinator does not always receive information from teachers to accurately evaluate how well students are doing. Students find the 'traffic light' sheets used by some departments helpful in telling them whether they are on track to achieve their target grades but this is not done consistently in all subjects.

## Leadership and management

#### Grade: 3

Senior leaders and some middle managers have ensured that standards at the end of Year 11 have risen and have addressed most of the issues raised in the last inspection. A strengthened senior leadership team acknowledge that further improvements are necessary and show a common understanding of what needs to be done. Capacity to improve further is satisfactory. The new headteacher has shared his vision for raising achievement and has the full support of

staff and governors. A cycle of fuller subject reviews is underway and middle leaders show an increasing understanding of their roles in school improvement. Targets for all students have risen, but strategies to deliver these improvements are under development and it is too early to see their full impact. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion. Inadequacies in the sixth form mean that the school are not using resources effectively enough to achieve satisfactory value for money.



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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	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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**Overall effectiveness**

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	4	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	3	4
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3

**Achievement and standards**

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

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<sup>1</sup>Grade 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

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
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	3	

## The quality of provision

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	4
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	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3	
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	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?	Yes	

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

8 November 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Hellesdon High School, Middleton's Lane, NR6 5SB

At the beginning of last month a team of inspectors visited your school. We found that it provides those of you in Key Stages 3 and 4 with a satisfactory education. We also found that many of you in the sixth form do not achieve what you are capable of and could do better. Thank you for allowing us to join you in lessons and to talk with some of you. We also spent time meeting with your school leaders, several teachers, the chair of governors and read many letters from parents. Throughout the inspection, your behaviour was satisfactory and you made us feel most welcome.

We were particularly pleased to see the improvements made in Key Stage 4, especially the number of you achieving five GCSE's including English and mathematics. You are attending school more regularly and most of you behave well, although a small minority occasionally spoilt it for others in some lessons. You told us that school is a safe and enjoyable place to come to and you were keen to tell us about the wide range of sports and other activities you can take part in after school.

I have asked your senior teachers to make some improvements to your school:

- Make sure that those of you intending to join the sixth form are guided carefully towards the most appropriate courses for you and that senior managers monitor closely the progress you are making so they can support you if you need help.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by reinforcing the good practice seen in the best lessons and checking that the teaching you receive is helping you to learn well.
- Make sure that teachers and managers use assessment information to monitor your progress, let you know exactly how well you are doing and tell you what you can do to improve your work.
- Ask all leaders and managers, including the governors to evaluate regularly how well the school is performing.

You can help to improve your school by asking your school council representative to share your views about the school with senior staff.

Best wishes for the future.

John Mitcheson.

Her Majesty's Inspector.