

# Cromer High School and Language College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	121209
<b>Local Authority</b>	Norfolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	327431
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 January 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ian Seath 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>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	583
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr David Fincham
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Glynn Hambling
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 March 2006
<b>School address</b>	Norwich Road Cromer Norfolk NR27 0EX
<b>Telephone number</b>	01263 511433
<b>Fax number</b>	01263 515378

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

Cromer High School and Language College is a smaller than average school. A lower than average proportion of students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The extent of deprivation within the area it serves is around the national average. The school has very few students of ethnic minority heritage and the proportion that are known to be eligible for free school meals is low. With minor fluctuations between years, the prior attainment of students when they enter the school in Year 7 is around the national average. The school has specialist language school status.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

The overall effectiveness of the school is inadequate. In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI 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. Significant improvement is required in relation to achievements and standards at Key Stage 4, particularly for boys.

Achievement and standards are inadequate because standards are too low and students make insufficient progress. When students enter the school, their prior attainment is broadly average. Since the last inspection, the overall progress of students has declined and is now well below that expected. This decline has been most marked for boys at Key Stage 4. The proportion of students obtaining 5 or more good GCSEs has remained significantly below national average. However, there are indications of recent improvement which confirm that the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve. Performance at Key Stage 3 has improved to be around national average. Key Stage 4 English results have also improved and this was an issue at the last inspection. Recent improvements include results for early entry GCSE mathematics which are encouraging.

Personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Students demonstrate positive attitudes around school, though levels of persistent absence are high. Behaviour is satisfactory, although when lessons lack challenge it can distract learning. Bullying is rare, and students report that when it occurs it is dealt with effectively. The school's specialist language status helps students gain a good appreciation of European culture. Students engage in a good range of sporting activities, and are well aware of the requirements for healthy lifestyles.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Improving assessment and monitoring of progress is allowing teachers to be more aware of the needs and abilities of individual students. However, this has not yet had a sustained impact on performance at Key Stage 4. Too many lessons do not challenge students sufficiently to make good progress. The quality of marking and comment on written work varies considerably across the school. The school's curriculum is satisfactory and meets requirements. The school provides a good range of extracurricular activities which are enjoyed by students.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory with some good features. Child protection arrangements are sound, and the needs of vulnerable children are well met. Students are aware of their targets but are often unsure how to meet them or improve. Pastoral arrangements are good, and this was confirmed by parents. The provision of academic support and careers advice is satisfactory.

Leadership and management are satisfactory because the school is demonstrating that it has satisfactory capacity to improve. Since the last inspection, staffing in the school has undergone a period of turbulence. The head is relatively new in post, as are a number of managers and leaders. The headteacher's agenda for improvement is now becoming established. Staff are working hard on improvement, and this is beginning to show in results. Although most issues from the previous inspection have been addressed, one area, the monitoring of the effectiveness of actions to ensure improvement, is not well developed across the school and requires further improvement.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards at Key Stage 4 by improving teaching and learning to provide greater challenge for students.
- Ensure that the identification and monitoring of actions for improvement is carried out effectively at all levels within the school.
- Improve attendance and persistent absence.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 4

Achievement and standards are inadequate because too many students make poor progress and do not attain the standards of which they are capable.

When students enter the school in Year 7 their prior attainment is around average. In Key Stage 3 they attain in line with expectations, although the most recent results in national tests in 2008 indicate progress better than the previous year. As students move through the school into Key Stage 4, however, the progress of too many students declines to well below that expected. Overall progress has declined since the last inspection. It is now significantly below national averages. The progress of boys is well below average in 2007 and declined further in 2008 in relation to girls. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.

At Key stage 4, standards remain low. The proportion of students achieving 5 or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C has increased slightly since the last inspection but remains significantly below national averages. Of the 20 GCSEs offered by the school, only two achieved A\* to C pass rates above the national subject average in 2008. The proportion of students achieving passes at the highest grades A\* and A is well below the national average. The grades attained by boys alone are much lower than those for girls alone.

Despite this however, there are early signs that the hard work of school staff and managers is beginning to result in improvements. At Key Stage 3, standards have now risen to around the national average and progress has improved. Standards have improved to around national averages in English, an issue at the last inspection. Recent results for those students who entered GCSE mathematics a year early have shown an encouraging improvement.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 3

Personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Students enjoy school life and demonstrate positive attitudes around the school. The school is putting appropriate procedures in place to encourage and monitor attendance. Persistent absence remains above the national average, though with recent indications of improvement. Behaviour around the school is well-ordered. Attitudes to learning are improving, but students often lack the level of challenge necessary to maximise their achievement. Students report that they feel safe and secure at the school and are confident that they could talk to a member of staff if they had a problem. Students say that incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively by the school.

The general ethos in the school has a positive impact on students' personal development. Students acquire a good appreciation of European culture through the schools' language programmes and the opportunities provided to participate in an interesting range of national and European visits. The provision for students' moral and social development is good. The

spiritual aspect of their education is less well-developed, and is satisfactory. The school offers a broadening range of extra curricular clubs and activities but students have few opportunities to develop their understanding of multi-cultural Britain.

Students contribute to the life of the school through the school council and their roles and responsibilities within the popular house system. They engage in a good range of sporting activities, including after school and competitive sports, and are made aware, particularly through the personal and social education programme, of the importance of adopting a healthy and safe lifestyle. Engagement in fundraising for a range of charities contributes to their financial and social understanding.

The school makes a good effort to seek the views of parents and benefits from the work of an effective Parent Support Adviser. Links to the community are well developed and the school makes a positive contribution to community cohesion.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, and this agrees with the school's own evaluation. During the inspection, many lessons observed were satisfactory and a few were good, together with a small number that were inadequate. The school's own data indicate that teaching and learning are improving. However, inspectors found that in most lessons, teaching did not challenge the learning of students sufficiently to make good progress.

In the best of lessons, teachers prepare well and provide a range of engaging activities that capture the imagination of students. They build opportunities for individual and group work offering opportunities for reviewing progress. Students are praised for their achievements and given constructive guidance to help them progress further. In a good history lesson students enjoyed a 'blind date' exercise to help them explore and understand the qualities needed for a successor to the throne.

In less successful lessons teachers lead without offering students the opportunity to participate. These lessons often provide insufficient challenge. Teachers have low expectations of students, the pace of lessons is slow and learning is not checked. Under these circumstances students become passive and are sometimes distracted leading to low level disruption. Assessment is satisfactory. The monitoring of progress is improving. In most lessons students are aware of their targets but do not always know what needs to be done to move from one level to the next. Marking is inconsistent across subjects, as is the written feedback given to students in order to help them improve.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory. It covers statutory requirements and meets the needs of students as it offers an extensive choice of subjects in relation to the size of the school. At Key Stage 3, in addition to the broad curriculum on offer, a rotation of literacy and numeracy lessons is provided alongside programmes for more able students to enhance their learning. Thematic days organised through the year involve cross curricular experiences for students across subjects that often add relevance to their studies. For example, one day focused on the Olympic games.

At Key Stage 4, four pathways are offered to meet the needs of students. One of these allows them to study two languages and builds on the school's language specialism. Students are able to undertake work related learning that combines GCSEs, vocational courses and work experience. They follow courses that interest them and will help them in future employment. Cooperation with local schools and Further Education colleges is broadening opportunities for students.

Arrangements for preparing students for the world of work are satisfactory. This is done through dedicated enterprise days, work experience and careers advice. Students appreciate and enjoy the wide range of extracurricular activities. These are significantly enhanced by the school's language specialism which drives the 'international dimension week' and provides further opportunities for students to enhance their personal development and well being.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory, though with some good features. Suitable arrangements are in place for ensuring child protection and the needs of the most vulnerable children are met well. The school has good systems for ensuring students' health and safety, including a programme in beach and water safety. The high quality relationships between students and staff underpin the school's work. Students say that their voice is heard and they are trusted. They speak enthusiastically about the school community.

The pastoral arrangements ensure that every child is well known and effectively supported. Satisfactory levels of support are offered to those with particular learning difficulties. There is effective liaison with external agencies so that students have access to the sources of help that they need. Well developed links with feeder schools and a good induction programme help new students to settle easily.

The use of target setting is improving. Most students know the levels at which they are working but they are not always given the indicators that they need to progress their learning. The school provides satisfactory academic support, and a mentoring system is in place to help those that are at risk of underachieving. The provision of careers advice and guidance is satisfactory.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory because the school is demonstrating satisfactory capacity to bring about improvements in its performance. This is beginning to show in rising achievements and standards. For example, intervention and action planning in English have helped raise standards since the last inspection.

The school has undergone a recent period of considerable turbulence. Some staff have left and this has resulted in staffing instability. The relatively new headteacher has managed these changes well and maintained a strategic focus on improvement. The school now has a new deputy with responsibility for teaching and learning, together with a stable management structure.

Although improvements in performance are beginning to emerge, too many students, especially boys, underachieve. Teaching and learning are beginning to improve. This process is being aided by improved monitoring of students' progress and the very recent introduction of more demanding target setting. The school has an accurate understanding of the quality of its own

teaching and learning. The lesson observation system is being changed to reflect a greater emphasis on learning. The identification and spreading of good teaching practice has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory.

Managers now use data more effectively, but the self assessment process is still uneven across the school. Departmental audits generally identify strengths and weaknesses and are useful documents for improvement. However, they are not well translated into clear and measurable actions and targets against which progress can be measured. Management systems are not yet sufficiently precise enough to ensure that the experiences of students, for example, in the setting and marking of homework, are consistent across subjects.

The school meets the requirements for child protection and race relations. However the monitoring of the performance of different groups, for example, by gender and ethnicity, could usefully be extended further. The schools' overall self evaluation identifies most of the issues which the school faces, though some grades are overgenerous. Links with other institutions are good and developing. The school's contribution to community cohesion is good. The large majority of parents who responded to questionnaires showed their support for the school, although a small number were concerned about aspects of behaviour\*.

Governors bring a good range of skills and experience within the local community to the school. They exercise their role responsibly and support the school well. However, the extent to which progress towards improvement targets is monitored and challenged could be strengthened further to ensure that the school continues to improve. The school provides inadequate value for money because standards are not high enough and students make insufficient progress.



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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	3

**Achievement and standards**

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
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	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
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	4
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
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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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
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**

16 January 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Cromer High School and Language College, NR27 0EX

As you will know, I visited your school recently with two other inspectors. We observed some of your lessons, talked with many of you, and met with several of your teachers. We were pleased to receive many responses to our questionnaire from your parents.

Throughout this you were polite and helpful, and I would like to thank you for that. You told us that almost all of you enjoy school, and that you get on well with the teachers. Most of your parents were supportive, although a few were worried about the behaviour of a small minority of students.

During our visit we found that your school needs to make significant improvements to ensure that you are more successful and make better progress. We have given the school a Notice to Improve, which means that we have asked the school to make improvements in some areas, and we will be visiting your school again. You should not be concerned about this because your new headteacher, together with all the other staff, have been working hard to bring about improvement, and I am confident that they will succeed because these improvements are already starting.

We have asked the school to improve the teaching and learning to challenge you more so that you can make better progress. We have also asked the school to make sure that it monitors its own improvement better. The last thing we have asked them to do needs your help. Your school has quite a high absence rate because a minority of students do not attend regularly enough. The school needs you to attend, and it is in your interests to do so.

Inspectors will be visiting again to see how improvements are progressing. I am sure that you will help the process. Thank you once again, and I wish you all well.

Yours faithfully

Ian Seath

Her Majesty's Inspector