

# Hednesford Valley High School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124508
<b>Local Authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	328149
<b>Inspection date</b>	19 November 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Graham Pirt

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<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)	129
Sixth form	25
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Carol Felton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Anita Rattan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 October 2005
<b>School address</b>	Stanley Road Hednesford Hednesford WS12 4JS
<b>Telephone number</b>	01543 423714
<b>Fax number</b>	01543 423714

---

<b>Age group</b>	11–18
<b>Inspection date</b>	19 November 2008
<b>Inspection number</b>	328149

---

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school has recently been re-organised so that it now provides for secondary age pupils and students with moderate learning difficulties (MLD), severe learning difficulties (SLD) and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). An increasing number of the school's population have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) or complex medical issues in addition to their learning needs.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Hednesford Valley High School is a good school. Pupils make good progress in both their academic and personal development. These good achievements are supported by the good teaching and a curriculum which is well matched to the needs of the pupils. It is enhanced and enriched by a very good range of activities. The pupils enjoy themselves at school, greeting people with smiles and interest. Pupils feel safe and are very well supported and cared for by the staff making this a welcoming school. One parent commented, 'All staff are very pleasant, polite and always make you feel welcome.' Pupils understand about keeping healthy, knowing about and choosing to eat sensibly and taking part enthusiastically in a range of physical activities. They behave very well in lessons and around the school. This is evident in the very good relationships they have, both with staff and other pupils and the obvious pride they have in the school and their own achievements. One parent said that their daughter, 'has made very good progress and talks about what she has done each day'.

Learning is well supported throughout the day by teachers and support staff who understand pupils' learning difficulties. The systems for tracking pupils' progress accurately identify pupils likely to be at risk of failure. However, progress data are not always used effectively. Targets in individual education plans (IEPs) and in lesson plans do not always precisely reflect individual needs. As a result, work in some lessons is not matched fully to all pupils' needs and, on occasions, guidance for pupils is not as good as it could be. The data are not in a form that is easily accessible to all staff. A wide range of opportunities enriches the curriculum. Pupils take part in sporting and creative activities that add to their enjoyment of school and have a significant impact on their self-confidence and social development. The school has good links with the local community, making visits and undertaking valuable work in supporting charities. Pupils are not always given enough opportunities to learn about life and work in other parts of the world. The headteacher and deputy headteacher demonstrate a clear vision and commitment to the pupils and staff in developing the school, complementing each other in their leadership and management, following the re-organisation of the school. They are supported by equally committed, hard-working staff. The governors have been closely involved in discussions about the re-organisation and demonstrate a good understanding of the strengths of the school and where it needs developing. They challenge leaders well to improve provision. The school evaluates its own work well and has good capacity to continue this improvement.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 2

Students make good progress in their basic literacy, numeracy and life skills, and particularly in their work-related learning. Teaching is good and the curriculum is well matched to students' needs. As a result students achieve a good range of accredited qualifications. The range of qualifications available has improved since re-organisation due to good leadership and management. Students make good progress in their personal development because of the many opportunities to help them gain experiences of adult life through business enterprise, work in college and through physical activities. Work experience is carefully adapted to their abilities. The staff effectively promote an adult ethos and mature behaviour in the very appropriate setting.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Use progress data more effectively in target setting so that targets are always precisely matched to individual needs and used consistently to fully inform planning and guide pupils.
- Establish more accessible tracking systems to monitor the progress of all pupils accurately.
- Expand pupils' knowledge of the global community.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well during their time in the school, although the nature of their difficulties is such that standards remain well below average. Pupils with particularly low starting points, whose success must be measured by smaller steps, make progress at a rate that is good, as shown through the assessment data and analysis of individual education plan (IEP) targets. This leads to greater levels of understanding and the ability to apply this knowledge in different situations. Those pupils who are able to, demonstrate good levels of progress in national tests. There has been improvement in these results since re-organisation. Pupils in Key Stage 4 achieve well in entry level certificates, GCSE's and other accreditation modules. The school's data show that there is no underachievement by any groups, Students in post-16 achieve well in accreditation units preparing them well for their future.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils are very polite, have very good relationships between themselves and with staff, and display very positive attitudes to their work. They have a good understanding of other faiths in Britain. The well-planned activities and celebrations enhance their awareness of cultural diversity and this, with other experiences provided, contributes to their good spiritual development. They know right from wrong and behave well in the school. Pupils work well in 'teams' and tell us that they are proud of this. They participate well in all curriculum opportunities and take part enthusiastically in the very wide range of lunchtime clubs. Some attend the youth club in early evening. Pupils have a good understanding of the value of healthy eating and, with the very good opportunities to take part in physical exercise, they develop their knowledge of the importance of this very well. Attendance is satisfactory and improving although it is affected by a number of pupils with medical needs. The pupils feel safe and confident and when reporting that there was some verbal bullying, they said it was dealt with. The buddy system helps overcome this and is highly valued by them, as is the school council. These opportunities enable pupils to make valuable contributions to the school community. They are keen to take part in charitable activities and were successful as significant partners in a very large bid for playground equipment, although they are less involved in developing awareness of the international community. Their outdoor experiences in the Forest School contribute very highly to their personal development and this is very much valued by them. Work experience and mini-enterprise schemes contribute well to the development of pupils' economic well-being.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Pupils benefit from teachers' good understanding of their learning difficulties and the good teamwork between teachers and support staff which ensures that all know their roles and responsibilities during lessons. Staff know pupils well on a personal level and manage behaviour well. All staff have developed very good relationships with the pupils, encouraging and celebrating effort and achievement with praise. This ensures that pupils try hard and they show high levels of enjoyment in their work and learning. An example of this was seen when pupils were enthusiastically making 'alien's' heads in papier-mâché, linked to their literacy work. Signing and symbols are often used, although occasionally opportunities are missed to develop pupils' skills further. There is a good and increasing use of recording, using digital images to inform planning. In much of the teaching, activities are well matched to individual needs, keeping all pupils engaged and suitably challenged. On occasions, targets lack precision, leading to work not being well matched to all pupils' needs.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The broad and balanced curriculum has been suitably modified so that it is well matched to the wide range of pupils' needs. The use of information and communication technology (ICT), which has been limited due to prolonged staff absence, is now improving under new leadership and being increasingly used. The curriculum is well enhanced by many very effective activities, such as rebound therapy and hydrotherapy at the leisure centre and sporting activities including horse riding. These, together with individualised input by other agencies, help provide breadth to pupils' experiences. Opportunities are further enhanced by a good range of visits and visitors, and provide real-life learning experiences and ensure that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education and beyond. Work linked to how people live and work across the world and how this affects them is not as well developed.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 3

Pupils' care, welfare and support are a central priority and are good, although the academic guidance of pupils is not working as effectively as it might. The very good links with outside agencies enable the school to help ensure that pupils' medical, personal and therapeutic needs are met, ensuring that pupils are in the best possible position to learn and develop their personal skills. Parents are largely positive about the school and feel they are well informed about what is going on in school. However, a very small number feel that communication diaries are not used effectively and that targets are not always accurate or challenging. This was evident in a small number of IEP's that were seen and in some of the lesson planning, restricting the quality of the guidance provided for pupils for their academic development. When IEP targets are met they are not automatically updated until the review date. Pupils are aware that they have targets, but are not always guided effectively to enhance their knowledge of their targets. Systems for ensuring pupils' safety are very good and checks on staff are rigorous. The school makes good efforts to improve attendance.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The school's leaders and managers are effectively managing the recent changes to the age range of the school and the increase in the range of learning needs it has brought. This is enabling all pupils to sustain their good academic achievement and personal development. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work very well together and complement each other's strengths. They have developed a very clear vision and direction for the school which is shared by the staff. They have established a monitoring routine in partnership with the local authority and this has ensured that there is good teaching overall. Subject coordinators monitor the curriculum effectively and this contributes to school improvement and helps to maintain good standards of teaching and learning. Through their good self-evaluation they have an accurate understanding of the areas requiring improvement including the use of tracking data and setting of accurate targets. The school works well in developing community cohesion through the responsibilities given to pupils, visits by members of the local community and work it does in the local community. As yet it has not fully developed a global dimension to this, other than some curriculum aspects of geography, modern foreign languages and religious education. Governors work closely with senior staff and have been active with the local authority throughout the re-organisation, working hard to develop and adapt provision to meet the changing remit of the school.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**



**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>
---	-----------------------	--------------

**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>	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

**Achievement and standards**

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2	2

---

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

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	3

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	2
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?	No	

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

20 November 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Hednesford Valley High School, Hednesford, WS12 4JS

Thank you very much for being so kind to us when we visited. We really enjoyed the chance to hear about everything you are doing. It was a pleasure to meet so many polite pupils. The most important thing to say is that you go to a good school and we can see that you enjoy yourselves.

Here are some of the best things I liked about your school

- You are very friendly and helpful and you enjoy your work in school.
- You make good progress because you are taught well and you work hard.
- You eat lots of healthy food and work very hard in your PE and other activities. Keep it up!
- You particularly like the Forest School.
- The staff make sure that you have lots of visits and visitors.
- Everyone takes very good care of you so you are safe in school.
- The headteacher and staff are working hard to make Hednesford Valley High School an even better place to be.

What I have asked the school to do now to make things even better

- Make sure that staff always set targets in your individual education plans and in lessons that help each one of you do even better.
- Make sure that the staff are able to more easily check how well you are doing over your time in the school.
- Make sure that you learn and understand more about what it is like to live in different parts of the world.

You are very lucky to attend such a caring, happy school and we hope you go on trying hard. We wish you all good luck in your future.

Yours faithfully

Graham Pirt Lead inspector