

Nova Hreod School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126465
Local Authority	Swindon
Inspection number	331614
Inspection dates	14–15 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Peter Sanderson HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carol Gibbon
Headteacher	Julie Tridgell
Date of previous school inspection	1 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 38 part lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation and planning documents, policy documents, students' books, 178 parental questionnaires, and staff questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- Whether standards are continuing to rise in the school and whether all students are making at least satisfactory progress in all subjects.
- The effectiveness of actions to improve teaching and learning so that all students, particularly the most able, are being sufficiently challenged in lessons.
- Whether leaders and managers at all levels in the school are clear about their roles and responsibilities and taking effective and consistent action to raise standards.

Information about the school

Nova Hreod School is a larger than average secondary school that moved into new buildings in April 2007. Most students are of White British heritage and the number of students whose first language is not English is well below the national average. The number of students eligible for free school meals is similar to that found in most schools. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. The most commonly identified of these needs relates to moderate learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school achieved specialist status in science and mathematics with computing in 2006.

The school was given a Notice to Improve at its last inspection. Significant improvement was required in relation to teaching, learning and achievement.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**3****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****2**

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the education act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. Nova Hreod now provides students with a satisfactory standard of education and is improving rapidly. The new headteacher has provided the school with outstanding leadership since her appointment 14 months ago and she has instigated a number of changes that are leading to significant improvement. Improved systems for setting challenging targets and tracking students' progress have been established. The data collected are now used well to identify individuals or groups of students who are underachieving and they are provided with effective support. Line management systems are robust and staff are being held accountable for students' outcomes. Staff's expectations of students' attitudes, behaviour and progress have been raised and there is a developing culture of high challenge in the school. There is now a justified sense of pride in the school's successes and an enthusiasm to build on them.

There was a significant rise in Year 11 examination standards in 2008 and provisional results indicate a further large rise in 2009. Standards are now close to the national average although there is variation in the standards students reach in different subjects. Students are making satisfactory progress in their learning. Many are regaining ground that they had lost in previous years. However, rates of progress are not yet consistently good in all subjects across the school. Good improvements in teaching and learning have underpinned the rising standards. Teaching and learning are now satisfactory. A significant proportion of lessons are good and some are outstanding, but there is still variation in the quality of teaching, which has an impact on the progress students make across the school. Teachers are not always providing students with sufficiently challenging activities, particularly the most able. Some marking of work gives clear and helpful advice to students about how to improve. However, this good practice is not yet consistent across the school. As a result, although students know their targets and how well they are doing they are less clear about the next steps in their learning.

Students are appreciative of their new building and there is a welcoming ethos in the school. They enjoy school and attendance levels have improved since the last inspection and are now above average. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is satisfactory and improving rapidly due to the consistent application of the school's behaviour for learning policy.

Strong leadership and management have underpinned the improvement since the previous inspection, and leaders have a good capacity to sustain this level of effectiveness. This is evident in good systems of self-evaluation, a good plan to tackle identified weaknesses and a good recent track record in improving teaching and

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students' achievement. The school's specialist school status has made a satisfactory contribution to the school's improvement. Resources have been used to improve information and communication technology (ICT) facilities across the school and this has had a positive impact on teaching and learning. Work in the school's specialist subjects has led to an improvement in standards in these areas. However, the specialism has had less impact on improving standards and progress across the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise attainment in all subjects by embedding assessment practices so that all teachers:
 - provide all students with activities that are well matched to their needs and capabilities, particularly the more able students
 - evaluate students' progress in lessons and give them clear feedback about their next steps in learning.
- Reduce the variation in students' progress and attainment between subjects by:
 - ensuring that all middle leaders rigorously monitor students' progress and take effective action to tackle underperformance
 - sharing effective teaching and learning practice so that it is consistently good across the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

The progress made by students in lessons is improving. Students made good or even better progress in a number of lessons observed during this inspection; however this was not consistently the case as in a number of lessons progress was satisfactory. Students are beginning to catch up the ground that was lost in their earlier years at the school and the progress they make from Year 7 to Year 11 is now satisfactory. Standards at the end of Year 11 have risen significantly during the past two years and the school's tracking data indicate they are due to rise again in 2010. Standards are now broadly average and the school attained its statutory target for the percentage of students attaining five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics in 2009. However, there is variation in the standards students reach in different subjects. For example, in 2009 students attained standards close to the national average in English and mathematics but below average in history and geography. Standards are rising in the school's specialist subjects of mathematics, science and ICT but challenging targets in these subjects were not attained in 2009. The progress made by nearly all groups of students is similar. However, the number of the higher A* and A grades attained in 2009 was less than expected and inspectors observed that some lessons do not sufficiently challenge more able students.

Students are developing personal skills well. Their spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is good and is well supported by a range of opportunities provided by the school. Students have a good knowledge of how to lead a healthy lifestyle, the 'Stellar

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Diner' offers a range of healthy foods and a large number of students participate in after-school sporting activities. The school has attained the healthy schools and sportsmark awards in recognition of its work in this area. The school has a number of links with the local community providing students with the opportunity to become involved in a range of activities such as becoming sports leaders in local primary schools and visiting elderly people's homes at Christmas. The school council is active and students' views are actively sought and responded to. The curriculum and links with local business and industry help develop students' enterprise and work-related skills well. However, their satisfactory development of literacy and numeracy skills means that their preparation for the world of work or the next stage in their education is satisfactory.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The leadership team have taken very effective steps to significantly reduce the amount of inadequate teaching that was seen during the last inspection. Much of the teaching is now good or better but there is also much teaching which remains satisfactory. There

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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are good relationships in lessons and students become willingly involved in the activities provided for them. Teachers have good subject knowledge and lessons are generally well planned using a common planning format. In the best lessons, activities are pitched at the right level for all students in the class, students are actively involved in a range of activities and learning proceeds at a high pace. Questioning is also used very effectively to check and develop students' learning. However, in a number of lessons teachers talk for too long, use a limited range of teaching strategies and the pace of learning is satisfactory. Not all teachers are making effective use of assessment information to plan lessons that sufficiently challenge all students, particularly the more able. Some teachers mark work well and give very effective feedback to students about how to improve their learning. However, this is not consistently the case across the school. The leadership team is aware of these issues and has good plans in place for further improvement. The quality of teaching in the school is improving quickly.

The curriculum has been developed well and offers a broad range of experiences to students of all ages and abilities. In Years 10 and 11 a wide range of both academic and vocational courses are offered to students. A strength of the curriculum is the partnership with other schools and the local authority in developing diploma courses for these year groups. There is also the opportunity for more able students to start GCSE courses in science and mathematics in Year 9. The school's specialism contributes adequately to students' enjoyment of the curriculum. A growing number of activities to link learning between subjects, such as the science and English walks studying nature and poetry, was described by a student as, 'the best fun we have had in school'. However, the school still needs to better co-ordinate the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills across all subjects. The range of enrichment activities and trips offered to students is very broad, and participation in these activities is good. These contribute positively to students' personal development.

Students feel safe in school and they are confident staff will deal effectively with any concerns that are raised with them. The school has particularly well organised support systems for students with emotional, social and confidence problems. Staff also work very effectively with a wide range of external agencies to ensure that students whose circumstances make them vulnerable are well cared for and supported. The organisation of in-class help for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is currently under review in order to better target and improve the effectiveness of this support. Students enjoy school and attendance levels have improved since the last inspection because of robust systems to monitor absence and to stress the importance of frequent attendance. Good and helpful careers advice is given to students regarding future course and career options.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3

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The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The outstanding leadership of the headteacher, with the support of an increasingly effective senior leadership team, has brought significant improvements to teaching and learning and students' achievement. The weaknesses identified at the previous inspection have been addressed and the school is improving rapidly. The senior leadership team is committed to ensuring that all students achieve well. The progress of all groups of students is carefully tracked and effective strategies are now being put in place to tackle underachievement. Systems of self-evaluation are robust, and good plans are in place to drive further improvement. A new line management structure has been established and middle leaders are increasingly being held to account for students' progress. However, variation in teaching and students' achievement across the school indicate that not all middle leaders are equally effective at driving improvement. The governors, through the standards committee, are effective in supporting and challenging the school and make an important contribution to the raising achievement agenda.

Safeguarding procedures in the school are secure and checks on staff are robust and fully meet government requirements. Child protection procedures are fully in place and the school works effectively with outside agencies to ensure the safety of students.

The school makes a good contribution to community cohesion through its links with the local community and other countries. For example, very good use has been made of links with District Six in Cape Town, South Africa to develop students' cultural awareness. Students' understanding of the diversity of faiths, ethnicities and cultures found within the UK are developed satisfactorily through the curriculum and through links with a school in Reading.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2

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The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of questionnaires received from parents/carers were supportive of the school. Some parents raised a concern about how staff deal with unacceptable behaviour. However, inspectors judged that teachers manage students' behaviour well, and that behaviour is satisfactory and improving rapidly.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of students registered at Nova Hreod School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 178 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,208 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	60	34	108	61	10	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	66	37	109	61	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	62	35	95	53	13	7	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	55	31	109	61	8	5	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	37	21	117	66	12	7	3	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	40	23	102	57	26	15	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	30	17	114	64	19	11	2	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	55	31	101	57	9	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	50	28	109	61	11	6	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	52	29	80	45	27	15	6	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	31	17	109	61	18	10	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	56	32	106	60	7	4	5	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	66	37	96	54	9	5	3	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



16 October 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Nova Hreod, Swindon, SN2 2NQ

Thank you for being so welcoming when we came to inspect your school recently.

We very much enjoyed our discussions with you. Now that we have finished the inspection, we wanted to let you know our findings.

We think your school has significantly improved since its last inspection. It now provides you with a satisfactory standard of education and is improving rapidly. We are very pleased to let you know that we have removed the 'Notice to Improve' that was given to the school 16 months ago. The following points are the key strengths of your school.

- The headteacher has made many important improvements to the school and she is well supported by other senior staff. They have good plans to make the school even better.
- Teaching has improved in the school and you are all now making satisfactory progress in your learning.
- Relationships with teachers in lessons are good and you willingly become involved in the activities they provide for you.
- The large majority of you enjoy school. Your attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now above the national average.
- You are well cared for and supported by staff. This ensures that you feel safe in school.
- You are provided with a wide range of both academic and vocational courses that are tailored to meet your particular needs and interests.

The standards you reach at the end of Year 11 have significantly improved over the past couple of years and are now broadly average. In order to raise standards to above average, we have asked the leadership team to make a couple of important improvements. In some of your lessons, teachers provide all of you with tasks that are challenging and engaging. In these lessons, you make good progress. We have asked the leadership team to make sure that more of your lessons are like this. We have also asked them to work closely with middle leaders to reduce the variation in progress you make between different subjects.

You can help to make these improvements by continuing to be actively involved in

activities arranged for you by staff.

I wish you all good luck for the future.

Yours faithfully

Peter Sanderson

Her Majesty's Inspector

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