

Heritage Mathematics and Computing Specialist School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112964
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	338061
Inspection dates	11–12 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Nada Trikic 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	998
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger Jones
Headteacher	Donovan Spencer
Date of previous school inspection	9 April 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 34 lessons, and held meetings with staff, governors, the school's National Challenge adviser, parents and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including: improvement plans, tracking records of students' progress, monitoring of classroom observations, attendance and exclusion data, minutes of governors' meetings and 228 questionnaires returned by parents.

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

- rates of learning and progress across the school, especially in English
- how well progress is assessed, tracked and monitored to enable students to achieve challenging targets
- the effectiveness of leaders in improving the quality and consistency of lessons
- the impact of senior and middle leaders in driving improvement through planning and regular checks on all aspects of the school's work
- the place of exclusion in the behaviour policy, and the impact of support strategies.

Information about the school

Heritage Mathematics and Computing Specialist School is larger than the average secondary school. The vast majority of students are from White British backgrounds with very few from other minority ethnic groups. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is above average. The number of students identified by the school as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. The school makes arrangements for students in Key Stage 4 in partnership with five local schools and a college.

The school gained specialist status in 2006 and is a member of the Institute for Mathematics and its Application. It holds a number of national awards including Careers Mark, Healthy Schools, Sport England and the Princess Diana Memorial Award.

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

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. Significant improvement is required in relation to standards and rates of progress particularly in English, the use of assessment to improve the quality of teaching, and in behaviour.

Leaders recognise that although there has been an improvement in overall performance there is more to be done to tackle the trend of low standards, and to accelerate all students' learning and progress, including those identified as having special educational needs and disabilities. In recent years, students have not made enough progress.

Targets now reflect higher expectations and greater challenge for students and staff to promote higher standards. A strong assessment, monitoring and tracking system is now in place in Key Stage 4. In 2009, this contributed to an improvement in the proportion of students gaining five or more higher grade GCSE passes. Once English and mathematics are included the proportion drops significantly to 33%, well below the national average, and the school's target. Although performance in mathematics improved well, students' results in English were poor. This is explained partly by difficulties in recruiting specialist teachers but also by weaknesses in teaching. Literacy skills are not supported well enough across the curriculum, particularly writing, presentation and oracy. Marking is too inconsistent and some students are not fully aware of their learning targets.

Specialist targets in mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) were exceeded. Strong practice in these areas is shared but not sufficiently embedded across the school.

In most lessons, students were attentive and motivated to learn. However, there is not enough good teaching because teachers do not use assessment information to plan and adjust lessons well enough to meet students' learning needs. Typically the same task is set for the whole class. In the best lessons teachers provide interesting and varied tasks and students know very clearly the purpose of the lesson, and how they are progressing. The curriculum is expanding well to provide more accredited vocational courses in Key Stage 4. This is enabling students, particularly those with special educational needs and disabilities, to make better progress.

Students say they feel safe and know who to turn to if they need help. They have a good understanding of how to adopt a healthy lifestyle and gain access to information to support their awareness of health issues. Although behaviour during the inspection did not cause concern, the levels of exclusion from school and the use of internal exclusion are high. Strategies employed to manage and promote better behaviour are not

effectively evaluated. Behaviour is an area of concern to parents and students.

The headteacher has a broadly accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Substantial information is collected on aspects of the school's work although evaluation to support improvement is less well developed. For example, information about students' progress is not routinely analysed for different groups of learners to identify key findings and enable specific action to be planned. Re-structuring to achieve a more distributed style of leadership has strengthened the capacity to focus on remaining areas of weakness. Significant training has raised the expectations of middle leaders and helped leaders to use new knowledge to monitor the impact of teaching on learning. Subsequent action has led to good improvement in some areas, notably mathematics, science and ICT.

Governors bring a range of beneficial skills and expertise to the school. They are frequent visitors and involve themselves in subject reviews and tracking meetings to monitor students' progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards and improve rates of progress, particularly in English by:
 - consistently using assessment and information about students' prior attainment to plan schemes of work and lessons to meet the learning needs of all students
 - tracking progress rigorously across the whole school to enable students to achieve challenging targets
 - giving greater emphasis to the standard of written and oral presentation and to providing time for students to respond to written feedback
 - developing and assessing literacy skills in all lessons
 - monitoring more closely the progress of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- Increase the proportion of good teaching by ensuring that teachers:
 - plan lessons to take account of prior attainment, assessment information and the learning needs of students
 - plan interesting and varied tasks that challenge students of all abilities
 - involve students regularly in assessing their work
 - use questioning to challenge all students to think more deeply about their learning and to develop their oracy skills
 - share learning outcomes with students and give more emphasis to frequent checks of their understanding during lessons in order that plans can be adjusted to meet needs
 - provide regular feedback on written work to guide students on how to improve
 - group students flexibly in the classroom in order to provide targeted support where necessary and to promote independent learning.

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

- Improve behaviour and reduce the rate of internal and external exclusion by:
 - reviewing and evaluating the impact of the behaviour policy
 - critically evaluating the wide range of information already gathered on behaviour and its links to learning and progress.
 - Achieve consistency and improvement across the school by strengthening monitoring and evaluation and the lines of accountability between senior and middle leaders so that:
 - the outcomes of regular monitoring of teaching and learning lead to improvement programmes to enhance teachers' skills, and the sharing of good practice
 - all staff use tracking and analysis of progress information to identify the learning needs of individuals and groups
 - high quality marking of students' work is reinforced and consolidated across the curriculum
 - the governing body has sufficiently detailed information on all aspects of the school's work to hold leaders to account.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

Attainment on entry to the school is below the national average. Since the last inspection standards in Key Stage 4 have remained low overall, and students have not made the progress expected by the end of Year 11. Recent changes have boosted performance but this has not happened quickly enough, especially in English. Improvements to target setting and the tracking of progress are helping students in Key Stage 4 to make better progress. This is not yet fully embedded across all years.

In most lessons there is a positive atmosphere and students generally cooperate well with teachers and support staff. Students are often too dependent on the teacher for information and direction. This slows the pace of learning and provides little scope for students to work independently. Students enjoy opportunities to discuss their learning and share ideas although this does not happen often enough. In a few weaker lessons students lose interest and become unsettled and occasionally this distracts those wanting to learn.

Other features of outcomes for students:

Many students enjoy being involved in school productions, helping out in primary schools and contributing ideas for the new school building. The potential of the school council to promote active citizenship and involvement across the school is not fully developed.

Work experience, business enterprise projects, advice and guidance help to develop workplace skills. Improvements in mathematics and ICT promote students' economic well-being although literacy skills are weaker.

Attendance is broadly average and the school has worked hard to reduce the level of

persistent absence.

Social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Opportunities for students to develop their understanding of minority ethnic communities are under-developed.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	4
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Transition arrangements are well organised and there is good transfer of information about every student to help them settle. The curriculum is appropriate and balanced, with increasing personalisation at both key stages, and therefore increased opportunities for students to experience success. The range of subjects and courses has broadened over recent years, partly as a result of the specialist subjects, and partly through working with other providers to enhance students' vocational learning. Closer working with primary schools has led to greater continuity in learning from Key Stage 2. The modification of the Key Stage 3 curriculum has begun to build on this with a greater emphasis on basic skills.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory and benefits from greater stability in staffing in

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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the last year. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and plan structured lessons. Learning objectives are shared with students although they often focus on the task to be completed rather than the learning to be achieved. Students are not routinely involved in evaluating their own work although teachers are increasingly making use of level and grade descriptions to help students to understand how to improve the quality of their work.

A committed pastoral team provides advice and support, often on a one-to-one basis, and this is much appreciated by students. Effective collaborative work with a large number of outside agencies ensures the safety and well-being of any student giving cause for concern. The effectiveness of strategies to support students who have difficulties with their behaviour and monitoring information gathered on behaviour are not routinely evaluated to support adjustments to policy and practice.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

While there is strong commitment to improvement and evidence of impact in some areas, progress has not been quick enough in recent years. Recruitment difficulties have affected the school's capacity to improve at a faster rate. This is now resolved and given improvements in tracking, monitoring and intervention, and the expansion to the curriculum the school is now better placed to drive forward. This is evident in a sharper focus on progress for Key Stage 4 students, and a range of qualifications already achieved. Leaders are also turning their attention to ensuring that systems to bring improvement, based on consistent monitoring by senior and middle leaders, are sufficiently robust. The effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements is good reflecting a strong awareness of the needs of students and families.

Other features of leadership and management:

Governors understand the school's strengths and remaining challenges. A lack of detailed information about the progress of different groups of students restricts governors' contribution to rigorous self-evaluation.

(Care and support systems demonstrate a commitment to inclusion. It is acknowledged that the next step is to draw together different sources of information to identify more precisely the targets for action planning to promote equalities.

(Work on promoting community cohesion has focused strongly on the local community. The senior management team recognise that further expansion of students' experiences

is required to broaden their horizons through links with different socio-economic, cultural and religious contexts.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire had a positive view on all aspects of the school. A few expressed concern about bullying and unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors looked closely at this matter and, having spoken to a number of students, judged that bullying is rare and dealt with effectively. However, inspectors found that it was not unusual for lessons to be disrupted, and that exclusions are too high, arising from incidents of poor behaviour.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Heritage Mathematics and Computing Specialist 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 228 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 998 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	68	30	151	66	9	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	55	24	162	71	9	4	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	68	30	135	59	19	8	5	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	60	27	146	65	16	7	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	49	22	148	66	25	11	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	36	16	150	67	33	15	5	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	44	20	151	68	26	12	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)	40	19	158	73	16	7	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	52	23	150	67	21	9	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	50	23	128	58	37	17	7	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	16	152	69	29	13	4	2
The school is led and managed effectively	71	32	130	59	18	8	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	98	43	98	43	25	11	6	3

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.



13 November 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Heritage Mathematics and Computing Specialist School, Chesterfield S43 4QG

Thank you for making the inspectors' welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed our discussions, and seeing you at work. You told us that you feel safe in school and know who to turn to for help. You appreciate the advice and help you receive from the guidance managers and behaviour support assistants. We found that relationships were generally positive in lessons and around the school. However, feedback from you and your parents, and information about exclusions indicate that there are too many incidents of poor behaviour.

In recent years students have not made as much progress as they should. In 2009 overall GCSE results improved, but results in English were low. The school agrees that there is more to do to ensure that you all achieve your potential. Targets are now more challenging and progress is checked regularly in Key Stage 4. The curriculum has been expanded and supported by the specialist subjects, so that there are more courses available to support your achievement. You told us that you learn best when lessons involve a variety of interesting tasks and you can work with each other to discuss your learning.

At the end of the inspection we judged that your school needs a notice to improve. It will have another inspection in 12 months or so to check that it is making enough progress. We agreed that the school needs to:

- raise standards and improve rates of progress, especially in English
- increase the proportion of good lessons
- improve behaviour and reduce the rate of internal and external exclusions.

To help this to happen we have asked the school's leaders to work closely together to check on all aspects of work such as:

- the quality of lessons
- whether you are making good enough progress in your work
- the quality of marking so that you know how to improve.

We have asked the school's governors to look carefully at the information gathered so that they can identify areas of success and areas needing further improvement. You can

all help by discussing how you can play your part in making improvements.

Yours sincerely

Nada Trikic

Her Majesty's Inspector

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