

The Nobel School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 117530 |
| Local Authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 339026 |
| Inspection dates | 9–10 February 2010 |
| Reporting inspector | Paul Brooker HMI |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 11–19 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in the sixth form | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1205 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 233 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Slava Budin-Jones |
| Headteacher | Alastair Craig |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1 December 2006 |
| School address | Mobbsbury Way Stevenage Hertfordshire |
| Telephone number | 01438 222600 |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The majority of the inspectors' time, over 20 hours, was spent on lesson observations, some of which were undertaken jointly with school senior leaders. In total, 44 part lessons were observed, covering approximately half of the school's teaching staff. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the documentation relating to the safeguarding of students, the progress students are making in their learning, the school's own evaluation of its work and school improvement plans, as well as 362 parental questionnaire responses and questionnaires returned by a large number of staff and a representative sample of students. Meetings were held with nominated staff, the chair of governors and groups of students.

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

- the effectiveness of teaching and learning in lessons
- whether different groups of students make equally good progress across all subjects and particularly in English
- the effectiveness of leadership and management of teaching and learning and the impact of recent strategies to raise standards
- the school's capacity for sustained improvement.

Information about the school

The Nobel School is a popular secondary school with joint specialist status in science and performing arts. It is also a training school. Most students are from White British backgrounds, but the proportion from other ethnic backgrounds is increasing steadily and is broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational need. There are 11 looked after children on the school's roll. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is also below the national figure. However, the school serves an area where adults have had comparatively low levels of participation in further or higher education. The school was awarded full service extended school status in January 2008, and is the hub school for extended services in the locality.

Plans are well underway for the refurbishment of the school's ageing accommodation under the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme. Links have recently been established with a partner school in order to raise standards.

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

3

Main findings

The Nobel School provides a welcoming, safe and supportive environment which creates a positive climate for learning and for the students' personal development. The school's pastoral systems provide good levels of care and guidance, particularly for those who need the most support. The sixth form is also a notable strength. Sixth form students have the opportunity to develop the good academic qualifications and personal attributes that prepare them well for the next stage of their education and later life.

Student attainment is broadly in line with national figures, but the school recognises that results should be higher, given the students' starting points. Their progress and achievement are satisfactory overall, although the most recent GCSE results indicate pockets of underachievement in 2009, and that some groups of students did not gain the grades of which they were capable. Most teachers have high expectations of what the students can achieve but, despite significant recent improvements, the quality of learning varies widely across the school.

The school is going through a period of significant transition, linked with the implementation of strategic plans to raise standards and the development of its new accommodation. Considerable time has necessarily been taken up with the plans for the new building. Meanwhile, recent changes to the Key Stage 4 curriculum, the school day, the length of lessons, and proposed changes to the tutoring system are not universally popular. Questionnaire responses received during the inspection indicate that parents and students have accepted many of these changes more readily than some staff, a significant proportion of whom expressed dissatisfaction with the way that changes have been led and managed. Despite this turbulence, however, there is evidence that most staff have embraced the need to raise standards. Teaching is improving and is often good or outstanding, but its quality is inconsistent because weaknesses in planning and assessment limit the progress that some students are able to make in some lessons. Assessment information is not consistently well used to present challenging work for the range of different abilities within each teaching group. Although some marking is effective, students are often unclear what they need to do to achieve their target grades.

Students have high expectations of their own conduct and behaviour. Attendance is above average and students' positive attitudes to learning make a strong contribution to their progress in lessons and to the cohesiveness of the school community. Students know how to stay safe and understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle, although many do not value it highly enough. The students' positive contributions and participation in school and wider community activities reflects their good social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. The school surveys the views of parents, staff and

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students, but the role of the student council is underdeveloped, particularly as many students are keen to assume more responsibility and have a greater influence in the life of the school.

Effective partnership arrangements make a strong contribution to the school's provision and to the students' well-being, particularly in the sixth form where collaborative arrangements are well established and effective. Recent work in partnership with a nearby school has helpfully focused on strengthening assessment, curriculum and provision in order to raise standards. The school has focused on improving areas of weakness in teaching and learning, and there is a trend of improvement in key areas despite a few remaining weaknesses. Thus, the school has capacity to improve further. However, although the improvement plan articulates an ambitious vision, ambition is not embedded in classroom practice because some senior and middle leaders drive improvement more effectively than others. Self-evaluation is broadly accurate, but resulting improvement strategies are not rigorously evaluated. Hence, they have not galvanised the efforts of all staff to focus sharply on strengthening key elements of teaching and assessment.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Embed ambition in all classrooms by:
 - making more effective use of assessment information to ensure that staff have suitably high aspirations for all students and that learning outcomes are sufficiently challenging
 - strengthening the effectiveness of senior and middle leaders in driving improvement.
 - Strengthen the quality of teaching by focusing more sharply in all lessons on:
 - what students should learn
 - how they will learn most effectively
 - how marking, assessment and target setting can guide their improvement.
 - Strengthen the impact of self-evaluation by:
 - making more effective use of assessment data and tracking to rigorously evaluate the quality of provision and the impact of improvement strategies
 - making better use of the views of students.
- About 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students make satisfactory progress to reach standards at GCSE that are broadly in line with those seen nationally. The proportion of students achieving at least five A*-C

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grades including English and mathematics increased to 47% in 2009, but was held back by comparatively weak performance in English. A few subjects, including religious education, dance, drama and art, produce exceptional GCSE results, although comparatively few students achieve the highest A* and A grades in most other subjects. Lesson observations confirm that suitable steps have been taken to address areas of underachievement and that standards are rising, including in English where staffing difficulties have now been resolved. Students, including those from different backgrounds and with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make at least satisfactory and often good progress in lessons. Most students enjoy being presented with challenging work, particularly when they are given the security of working together in small groups and when learning activities actively engage their interest and involvement. By contrast, students make only limited progress in lessons when learning objectives are unambitious and when students themselves are unclear what they need to do to improve.

The students' positive attitudes are reflected in the school's low levels of absence, the school's good ethos and the settled climate for learning in lessons. Students follow instructions, behave well and sustain their concentration, often for long periods of time. They feel safe and well cared for and respond positively to the opportunities to contribute to the life of the school and the wider community. This is exemplified by the school productions that play to large audiences, work in local primary schools, and the students' participation and enjoyment of enrichment events such as the China Day held recently. Many take advantage of the good range of extra curricular activities on offer; there is a reasonable level of participation in sporting activities.

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 | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles | 3 |
| The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community | 2 |

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

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| 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 | |
| The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹ | 3 2 |
| The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good in many respects and is sometimes excellent, but it is too variable, particularly in the quality of planning and use of assessment. Much of the classroom accommodation is rather tawdry, but many teachers work hard to make lessons lively. The best lessons provide memorable experiences for the students because teachers go to considerable lengths to ensure that learning resources are stimulating and that activities enable students with different abilities to tackle complex and challenging new ideas. However, too often lesson planning considers what students should learn, but not how this might be achieved or how specific groups might best be supported. Relationships between adults and students are good, and students respond positively to teachers' expectations. Assessment, like teaching, is very variable in its effectiveness. Although students know what level they should achieve, marking provides encouragement but does not effectively guide improvement because it too rarely makes clear what students need to do to improve.

The curriculum has undergone considerable modification in recent years in order to ensure that it better meets the needs of all the students. A suitable range of different pathways is offered at Key Stage 4, including 'fast-track' GCSE options, and sensible revisions have been made to courses in Key Stage 3. Curriculum breadth is enhanced by well established collaborative arrangements with local schools.

Well-organised arrangements for the care of all pupils contribute positively to their well-being and personal development. Staff know students well, and students are confident that there is always an adult to whom they can turn. The school can point to striking examples of where it has helped individual students overcome significant barriers to their education.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning | 3 3 |
| The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships | 3 |
| The effectiveness of care, guidance and support | 2 |

How effective are leadership and management?

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

Self-evaluation provides an accurate appraisal of the school's effectiveness and identifies what it needs to do to consolidate success and secure improvement. Senior leaders and governors are suitably ambitious, but have not successfully embedded this ambition across the school, partly because recent changes have not been readily embraced by a significant number of staff. Suitable plans have been implemented, aimed at improving areas of weakness and developing high-quality teaching, both through well planned training 'in house' and in association with the partner school. The governing body is committed to the school's improvement and fully support the drive to raise standards. Governors know the school well and provide suitable support and challenge.

Essential systems are embedded sufficiently to enable the school to run smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Safeguarding procedures are thorough and effective. The school communicates regularly and effectively with parents and carers, and has developed a number of strategies to better engage those who might be reluctant to approach the school. Links with the community are also a significant strength because the school understands the importance of developing its wider role. The school's promotion of community cohesion is effective and well led. The steps taken to promote community cohesion are impressive and varied, and the school can point to positive impact within and beyond the school.

The school can reference several instances where it has supported students to ensure that they are given equal opportunity to succeed, including potentially vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals. However, the school cannot say with confidence that variations in performance or levels of participation are improving because the use of tracking data to monitor the progress of different groups is underdeveloped.

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 | 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 | 3 |
| 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 |

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Sixth form

- students have the opportunity to develop the good academic qualifications and personal attributes that prepare them well for the next stage of their education and later life.

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The school is going through a period of significant transition, linked with the implementation of strategic plans to raise standards and the development of its new accommodation. Considerable time has necessarily been taken up with the plans for the new building. Meanwhile, recent changes to the Key Stage 4 curriculum, the school day, the length of lessons, and proposed changes to the tutoring system are not universally popular. Questionnaire responses received during the inspection indicate that parents and students have accepted many of these changes more readily than some staff, a significant proportion of whom expressed dissatisfaction with the way that changes have been led and managed. Despite this turbulence, however, there is evidence that most staff have embraced the need to raise standards. Teaching is improving and is often good or outstanding, but its quality is inconsistent because weaknesses in planning and assessment limit the progress that some students are able to make in some lessons. Assessment information is not consistently well used to present challenging work for the range of different abilities within each teaching group. Although some marking is effective, students are often unclear what they need to do to achieve their target grades.

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Effective partnership arrangements make a strong contribution to the school's provision and to the students' well-being, particularly in the sixth form where collaborative arrangements are well established and effective. Recent work in partnership with a nearby school has helpfully focused on strengthening assessment, curriculum and

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provision in order to raise standards. The school has focused on improving areas of weakness in teaching and learning, and there is a trend of improvement in key areas despite a few remaining weaknesses. Thus, the school has capacity to improve further. However, although the improvement plan articulates an ambitious vision, ambition is not embedded in classroom practice because some senior and middle leaders drive improvement more effectively than others. Self-evaluation is broadly accurate, but resulting improvement strategies are not rigorously evaluated. Hence, they have not galvanised the efforts of all staff to focus sharply on strengthening key elements of teaching and assessment. What does the school need to do to improve further? Embed ambition in all classrooms by:

- making more effective use of assessment information to ensure that staff have suitably high aspirations for all students and that learning outcomes are sufficiently challenging
- strengthening the effectiveness of senior and middle leaders in driving improvement.

Strengthen the quality of teaching by focusing more sharply in all lessons on:

- what students should learn
- how they will learn most effectively
- how marking, assessment and target setting can guide their improvement.

Strengthen the impact of self-evaluation by:

- making more effective use of assessment data and tracking to rigorously evaluate the quality of provision and the impact of improvement strategies
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About 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection. Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils 3 Students make satisfactory progress to reach standards at GCSE that are broadly in line with those seen nationally. The proportion of students achieving at least five A*-C grades including English and mathematics increased to 47% in 2009, but was held back by comparatively weak performance in English. A few subjects, including religious education, dance, drama and art, produce exceptional GCSE results, although comparatively few students achieve the highest A* and A grades in most other subjects. Lesson observations confirm that suitable steps have been taken to address areas of underachievement and that standards are rising, including in English where staffing difficulties have now been resolved. Students, including those from different backgrounds and with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make at least satisfactory and often good progress in lessons. Most students enjoy being presented with challenging work, particularly when they are given the security of working together in small groups and when learning activities actively engage their interest and involvement. By contrast, students make only limited progress in lessons when learning objectives are unambitious and when students themselves are unclear what they need to do to improve.

The students' positive attitudes are reflected in the school's low levels of absence, the school's good ethos and the settled climate for learning in lessons. Students follow

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instructions, behave well and sustain their concentration, often for long periods of time. They feel safe and well cared for and respond positively to the opportunities to contribute to the life of the school and the wider community. This is exemplified by the school productions that play to large audiences, work in local primary schools, and the students' participation and enjoyment of enrichment events such as the China Day held recently. Many take advantage of the good range of extra curricular activities on offer; there is a reasonable level of participation in sporting activities. These are the grades for pupils' outcomes Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Taking into account:

Pupils' attainment

The quality of pupils' learning and their progress

The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress 3 3 3 3 The extent to which pupils feel safe 2 Pupils' behaviour 2 The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles 3 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

Taking into account:

Pupils' attendance 1 3 2 The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development 2

How effective is the provision? Teaching is good in many respects and is sometimes excellent, but it is too variable, particularly in the quality of planning and use of assessment. Much of the classroom accommodation is rather tawdry, but many teachers work hard to make lessons lively. The best lessons provide memorable experiences for the students because teachers go to considerable lengths to ensure that learning resources are stimulating and that activities enable students with different abilities to tackle complex and challenging new ideas. However, too often lesson planning considers what students should learn, but not how this might be achieved or how specific groups might best be supported. Relationships between adults and students are good, and students respond positively to teachers' expectations. Assessment, like teaching, is very variable in its effectiveness. Although students know what level they should achieve, marking provides encouragement but does not effectively guide improvement because it too rarely makes clear what students need to do to improve.

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Well-organised arrangements for the care of all pupils contribute positively to their well-being and personal development. Staff know students well, and students are confident that there is always an adult to whom they can turn. The school can point to striking examples of where it has helped individual students overcome significant barriers to their education. These are the grades for the quality of provision The quality

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of teaching

Taking into account:

The use of assessment to support learning 3 3 The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships 3 The effectiveness of care, guidance and support 2

How effective are leadership and management? Self-evaluation provides an accurate appraisal of the school's effectiveness and identifies what it needs to do to consolidate success and secure improvement. Senior leaders and governors are suitably ambitious, but have not successfully embedded this ambition across the school, partly because recent changes have not been readily embraced by a significant number of staff. Suitable plans have been implemented, aimed at improving areas of weakness and developing high-quality teaching, both through well planned training 'in house' and in association with the partner school. The governing body is committed to the school's improvement and fully support the drive to raise standards. Governors know the school well and provide suitable support and challenge.

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The school can reference several instances where it has supported students to ensure that they are given equal opportunity to succeed, including potentially vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals. However, the school cannot say with confidence that variations in performance or levels of participation are improving because the use of tracking data to monitor the progress of different groups is underdeveloped. These are the grades for leadership and management The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement

Taking into account:

The leadership and management of teaching and learning 3 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 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 3 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

Sixth form Sixth-form students make good progress in their learning and achieve well. Programmes are well matched to students' different needs so that rates of retention and

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attendance are high. Students readily take responsibility for their own well-being and make a strong positive contribution to the life of the school and their wider communities through initiatives such as the Helpliners student counselling service.

Collaborative arrangements provide a very good range of courses at different levels of accreditation. They also necessitate extended blocks of lesson time, but sixth-form teaching is good because these very long sessions are sharply focused on specific outcomes and are punctuated by a sensible range of learning activities that give students the opportunity to deepen their understanding and consolidate their learning. The sixth form is well led and managed. Sixth-form students are well cared for, and the enrichment curriculum includes helpful guidance across a range of issues. The sixth form promotes the development students' independence and prepares them well for the challenges they will face after leaving school.

These are the grades for the sixth form

| | |
|--|----------|
| Overall effectiveness of the sixth form | 2 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Outcomes for students in the sixth form | 2 |
| The quality of provision in the sixth form | 2 |
| Leadership and management of the sixth form | 2 |

Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of parents and carers who returned the inspection questionnaire are happy with the school's provision, their child's overall experience at the school and the outcomes that they achieve. Parents are particularly positive about the students' enjoyment of school and the fact that they are safe. Several parents commented that the school had exceeded their expectations and praised specific support provided for their children. Most parents agree with the statement that teaching is good, but a few also express concerns about weaker provision and some felt that the school did not help their children to keep healthy. Inspection evidence supports the view that there is wide variation in the effectiveness of teaching and that the school could do more to promote a healthy lifestyle for students. A very small number of parents raised specific concerns about unsatisfactory behaviour, inconsistent behaviour management, inadequate support for individual students and poor communication. The school takes appropriate steps to respond to concerns raised by individual parents; inspectors consider that the school's engagement with parents and carers is good. Inspection evidence indicates that student behaviour is generally very good both around the school and in lessons, although incidents of unsatisfactory behaviour occasionally disrupt learning, particularly when teaching is less effective.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Nobel 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 362 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1205 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|----|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 116 | 32 | 217 | 60 | 22 | 6 | 4 | 1 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 133 | 37 | 214 | 59 | 14 | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress | 101 | 28 | 223 | 62 | 31 | 9 | 1 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 94 | 26 | 226 | 62 | 28 | 8 | 5 | 1 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 80 | 22 | 252 | 70 | 20 | 6 | 3 | 1 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 84 | 23 | 233 | 64 | 33 | 9 | 2 | 1 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 60 | 17 | 237 | 65 | 52 | 14 | 4 | 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) | 88 | 24 | 228 | 63 | 17 | 5 | 5 | 1 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 83 | 23 | 240 | 66 | 23 | 6 | 2 | 1 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 86 | 24 | 212 | 59 | 38 | 10 | 7 | 2 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 60 | 17 | 228 | 63 | 39 | 11 | 4 | 1 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 102 | 28 | 215 | 59 | 28 | 8 | 2 | 1 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 118 | 33 | 213 | 59 | 26 | 7 | 2 | 1 |

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

| Type of school | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) | | | |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
| | 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.



12 February 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of The Nobel School, Stevenage SG2 0HS

Thank you for the warm welcome that you gave us and the positive contribution that you made to our recent inspection. We enjoyed talking to you and were very impressed with your maturity and confidence when speaking to us about your work. Your carefully considered opinions, alongside the questionnaire survey responses from your parents, were very helpful in confirming our first hand observations about the school. We were particularly impressed with:

- your good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning in lessons, the care that you take with your work and the way that you collaborate well in small groups
- your good attendance, the fact that you feel safe and are generally happy at school, and the positive contributions that many of you make to your own community and beyond
- the overall quality of the sixth-form provision
- the good quality care, guidance and support that the school provides.

In some lessons you make excellent progress and achieve really well, particularly when teaching is lively and actively involves you in your work. Some of you commented that lessons are sometimes dull. We agree that the quality of your learning is too variable, particularly when work lacks challenge or learning activities lack variety. We have specifically asked the school to:

- make better use of assessment information to set consistently challenging work for you
- improve the quality of some of your lessons
- strengthen school self-review and make more use of your views and opinions, perhaps through the student council.

You can see that you can have an important role to play. We wish you all every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Paul Brooker

Her Majesty's Inspector

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