

Hellesdon High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121152
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	339880
Inspection dates	18–19 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Ian Seath HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1342
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Lenton
Headteacher	Gerard Batty
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2008
School address	Middletons Lane Hellesdon Norwich
Telephone number	01603 424711
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 43 lessons and held meetings with governors, leaders and managers, teachers, students, and a representative from the local authority. They observed the school's work, looked at documentation and student's work, and received 246 completed questionnaires from parents.

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

- changes in the sixth form since the last inspection
- the variability in examination results between subjects and how the school is tackling them
- how well the school caters for students of all abilities both through teaching and through the curriculum it offers
- the extent to which the school has a good understanding of its own strengths and weaknesses and is tackling the weaknesses and building on the strengths.

Information about the school

The school is larger than most secondary schools and has a relatively large sixth form. The school's catchment area is relatively advantaged and the proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below that expected nationally. The proportion of students with minority ethnic heritage is low. The school has specialist technology college status and holds an Investors in People award, and Sportmark, Healthy Schools and Eco schools awards. Sixth form education is provided in collaboration with two other schools in the Wensum partnership. At the last inspection the school was judged to have significant weaknesses and was given a notice to improve. This inspection removed the notice to improve.

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

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.

This is a satisfactory school that is improving. Since the last inspection a year ago many changes have been made. Self-evaluation processes have now improved and the school has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. It is too soon for the impact of these changes to be seen in achievement and standards in the main school, however. The monitoring of teaching and learning is broadly accurate but places insufficient emphasis on what students learn rather than what teachers do. This was a key issue at the last inspection. The school's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

The school's curriculum has improved and is becoming more diverse than at the last inspection. Students benefit from the continued development of vocational provision. In class, students learn effectively and make satisfactory progress. Their skills of independent learning are not well developed however and school's virtual learning environment lacks content so cannot be used effectively to develop those skills. Opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy are not fully exploited in class or in the marking of student's work in subjects other than English and mathematics. Teachers have good subject knowledge but do not always ensure that teaching caters for students of all abilities. There are wide variations between the GCSE results of different subjects. The care, guidance and support that students receive have improved and are now good. Students receive good advice and guidance, particularly those entering the sixth form.

The headteacher has given the school a clear emphasis on improvement. Managers, leaders and staff feel well supported and have a renewed pride in their school. Systems for improvement are being put in place quickly, and these are reflected in the views of parents and students alike. Some of these changes have begun to have an impact, for example in the sixth form, in the curriculum and in the care and guidance that students receive. The schools has made a good start in tackling issues identified at the last inspection but recognises that there remains much to do.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Within 12 months, increase the proportion of good or better lessons to 70% by:
 - ensuring that the lesson observation system effectively monitors learning
 - ensuring that teaching caters for the needs of students of all abilities
- Within 12 months, develop, implement and monitor a cross-school literacy and

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numeracy policy so that:

- opportunities to develop numeracy and literacy skills are fully exploited in subjects other than mathematics and English
- marking and homework become more consistent between subjects so that, for example, poor spelling and grammar are corrected
- Within 6 months, Develop the extent to which sixth form students are encouraged to develop skills of independent learning by:
 - giving them the opportunity to attain and practice these skills in class
 - further developing the Virtual Learning Environment so that students are able to learn and work more effectively outside of classes.
- About 40% of the 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**

When students enter the school in Year 7 their attainment is around the national average. They make satisfactory progress and reach standards that are close to national averages in their GCSE examinations, though with considerable variations between subjects. In recent years, girls have reached higher standards than boys because they enter the school with better literacy skills. The recent introduction of intensive mentoring and improvements in behaviour mean this gap is narrowing, however. The school's own monitoring shows encouraging signs that standards are set to improve in 2010. The proportion of students attaining the highest GCSE grades A* and A is satisfactory, being around that expected. Students undertaking vocational subjects and classes with other providers achieve well.

In class, students demonstrate satisfactory learning and progress, a point echoed by the large majority of parents. Progress is better in those classes where students are given the opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning, for example during groupwork in which ideas are shared. The use of student experts is successful, for example in information and communication technology (ICT) where they help other students, or in the organisation of some groups in mathematics where they learn from each other. Inspectors agreed with many parents and students that behaviour has improved. The school is calm and orderly, albeit with occasional boisterous episodes in corridors. In class, learning proceeds appropriately and time is rarely wasted.

The learning and progress of many students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. For others in this group it is not as good however in several curriculum areas. The school recognises this and has implemented a well-planned intervention programme. In class, support for some of these students is too focused on behaviour rather than learning.

Attendance has improved and is now satisfactory. Standards of literacy and numeracy are around average overall, though weaker for some boys. Of those students and parent asked, most indicated that they enjoyed their time at school and felt safe. Students

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make good contributions to their community and adopt healthy lifestyles, for example by demonstrating very high participation in extra-curricular activities and sports.

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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Inspectors observed teaching and learning that were securely satisfactory overall. There are indications that it has improved in some areas since the last inspection, and this agrees with the school's own evaluation. Teachers have good subject knowledge and good relationships with almost all students. In the classes demonstrating good practice, students are able to develop and use skills of independent learning. These lessons have a good level of challenge and teachers use a variety of teaching methods with effective questioning techniques that enable them to check learning well. In the similar number of satisfactory classes teachers do not provide sufficient opportunity for students to participate and so learning is not as effective. The work of teaching assistants in class is not always effectively planned. When ICT is used in teaching it is used well. However its use for independent learning through the school's Virtual Learning Environment is insufficiently well developed because it lacks content in many subjects

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 use of assessment has improved because the school has rightly put much effort into its development. Tracking and monitoring of progress have improved so that students have a better understanding of what they need to do to improve. However, this information is not consistently used well in class to enable students of all abilities to learn at their best pace. The quality of marking of students' work varies too much. A significant minority of parents and students are concerned about inconsistencies in assessment, homework and marking between subjects and teachers, and inspectors agreed with them. In too many examples, poor spelling or grammar are not corrected. Opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills in subjects other than mathematics and English are often missed.

The school's curriculum has improved markedly since the last inspection and is now good. It serves the needs of students well and enables them to achieve more. They are able to take GCSE examinations early in some subjects. Students benefit from good links with work-based providers and local further education colleges. Many students undertake vocational courses and attendance has improved for these students as a result. Those students identified as gifted or talented have additional after-hours sessions but this has little impact, for example, on the proportion of the highest grades attained at GCSE. The school's specialism has had a good impact on the wider curriculum. For example, students can undertake manufacturing and product design or post-16 engineering provision. Participation rates in extra-curricular activities are high. Care, guidance and support have improved since the last inspection and are now good. Changes in the curriculum have resulted in better guidance to support students in their choices of subject. Support is good for vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school is able to identify some striking examples of where it has helped individuals to overcome barriers and achieve, and where behaviour and attendance have improved as a result.

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
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 headteacher, new in post at the last inspection, has since given the school a new impetus for improvement so that it no longer requires significant improvement. Many changes of staffing and of responsibility have been made. As a consequence all staff are more accountable and responsible for the performance of their students. However, many of the changes are recent or as yet incomplete. As a consequence, their full

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impact has yet to be seen in achievement and standards at Key Stage 4, or in reduced variability of results between subjects. The extent to which leaders and manager, at all levels, drive improvement by raising ambition and expectations is currently satisfactory. The school has a good understanding of its teaching. The lesson observation system is now applied systematically, but it pays too much attention to what the teachers do rather than what students learn. Opportunities to evaluate standards in class are missed as a result. A significant amount of professional development is provided, but the systematic analysis of the observation of teaching and learning is weak. The identification and sharing of good practice is becoming widespread and effective.

The use of management information systems to both set and monitor targets for improvement is now much more extensive than at the last inspection. Good systems for self-evaluation and action planning are being introduced quickly, although their links to teaching and learning are not yet fully developed. Self-evaluation is accurate and the school has a good understanding of its own strengths and weaknesses.

The school complies with requirements for race relations and equality. Governors have ensured that arrangements for child protection are good. The school's promotion of equality and the extent to which it tackles discrimination are satisfactory. Governors are well informed about the performance of different groups of students. Students are very well represented and have a strong voice within the school. The school's promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory, and this agrees with the school's self evaluation. Staff understand the context within which they work and this has resulted in a cohesive school. However, the impact on community cohesion beyond the school is more limited. School facilities are increasingly used by the community during evenings.

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	3

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- education is provided in collaboration with two other schools in the Wensum partnership. At the last inspection the school was judged to have significant weaknesses and was given a notice to improve. This inspection removed the notice to improve.

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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 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

Taking into account:

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

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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 2 The effectiveness of care, guidance and support 2

How effective are leadership and management? The headteacher, new in post at the last inspection, has since given the school a new impetus for improvement so that it no longer requires significant improvement. Many changes of staffing and of responsibility have been made. As a consequence all staff are more accountable and responsible for the performance of their students. However, many of the changes are recent or as yet incomplete. As a consequence, their full impact has yet to be seen in achievement and standards at Key Stage 4, or in reduced variability of results between subjects. The extent to which leaders and manager, at all levels, drive improvement by raising ambition and expectations is currently satisfactory.

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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 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 3

Sixth form The sixth form has improved significantly since the last inspection. Students now make satisfactory progress. Standards are improving and are close to national averages, though with significant variations between subjects. Improvements are most noticeable in GCE AS results and in the proportion of students who attain the highest grades. Students achieve well on vocational courses. They learn effectively in class, although they often lack opportunities to gain and practice skills of independent learning. Care, guidance and support have improved so that entry requirements are now applied more consistently. Sixth form students make regular contributions to their community and to the school, for example by decorating their common room and acting as good role models for younger students. Leaders and managers have a good focus on improvement. Inconsistencies remain, however, and systems are insufficiently precise to ensure, for example, that homework is set and marked consistently across subjects.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

Inspectors broadly agreed with the majority views of parents and carers, including a few concerns which were expressed about the inconsistency of homework. A high percentage of responses were positive. Most felt that their children enjoyed their time in school and were safe. A few concerns were raised about unacceptable behaviour, but many recognised improvements which had taken place. Inspectors judged behaviour to be satisfactory. A significant minority of parents and carers felt that the school did not help them to effectively support their child's learning, and inspectors agreed because of inconsistencies in homework and the under-developed Virtual Learning Environment.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hellesdon High 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 246 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,342 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	56	22	170	68	18	7	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	42	17	181	72	15	6	2	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	39	16	169	68	33	13	5	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	34	14	162	65	37	15	4	2
The teaching is good at this school	35	14	163	65	26	10	6	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	8	135	54	69	28	7	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	20	8	177	71	33	13	6	2
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)	31	12	154	62	26	10	8	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	12	167	67	27	11	4	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	12	141	56	45	18	10	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	8	140	56	34	14	8	3
The school is led and managed effectively	34	14	157	63	26	10	6	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	51	20	160	64	25	10	5	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

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.



20 November 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Hellesdon High School, Norwich NR6 5SB

As you will be aware, I visited your school with five other inspectors earlier this week. We met with many of you, sat in your classes, looked at much of your work, and talked with teachers. Throughout this you were polite and helpful, and I would like to thank you for that.

The headteacher and the staff team have made many improvements to your school, a fact that most of your parents recognised. Because of this we have removed the 'notice to improve' that you were given at the last inspection. In no small measure this is due to your efforts because improved attendance and behaviour were two of the deciding factors - well done.

The improvements include changes to subjects and courses, better advice and care, and big changes to the sixth form. To help this process continue we have asked the school to improve teaching by measuring your learning carefully and making sure that classes suit all of you - particularly for literacy and numeracy. We have also asked the school to improve homework and marking because a number of you were concerned about them, and we agreed.

For those of you who are in the sixth form or who are intending to join it, we have asked that students are given more opportunities to develop and use independent learning skills and the use of online learning through the school's Virtual Learning Environment.

The school will need your help with these improvements. Remember that it is your education, and you are entitled to it. If you are not sure about something, or you need help, ask. One of the things you told us was that the amount of bullying is low. You can help keep it this way by reporting it if you are affected.

Once again thank you, and I wish you all well.

Yours sincerely

Ian Seath

Her Majesty's Inspector

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