

North Walsham High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121154
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	339881
Inspection dates	6–7 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Roderick Passant

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	845
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Russell Solly
Headteacher	Mrs Caroline Brooker
Date of previous school inspection	21 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. They observed the school's work, and looked at 30 lessons or part lessons and work of 30 teachers. Meetings were held with: a range of students from Years 7, 9, 10 and 11; members of the senior leadership team; a cross section of faculty and heads of department and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body. A range of school data and documentation was examined including those linked to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors scrutinised 105 parents' questionnaires along with 167 student and 26 staff questionnaires.

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

- how effectively higher attaining pupils, particularly boys are challenged
- the specific strategies introduced to raise standards in relatively underperforming subjects in 2009
- the specific impact of the school's specialism on standards, ethos and personal development.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than average. Very few students come from minority ethnic backgrounds or speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average as is the proportion of students with statements detailing their educational needs. There are a small number of looked after students. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The school has gained Artsmark Silver, Sportsmark and the full International Schools Award.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. Students make good progress academically and in their personal development. There has been significant improvement since the last inspection because leadership and management are now good across the school and at all levels. The school has a very accurate picture of itself, which means that improvements are targeted effectively. There is good capacity for sustained improvement.

The school's specialism has a profound effect on the school's standards, the curriculum and enrichment opportunities and students' personal development, particularly their confidence. One parent described her child's involvement in the international feature film as 'life changing'. The school, through its good curriculum and enrichment, provides wide ranging and, often, tailored opportunities for students to achieve success within a range of vocational and academic contexts. Good care guidance and support ensure that students chose courses with appropriate progression opportunities. Very few of the students leave the school without going onto education, training or employment.

The school has a calm purposeful ethos. Students feel exceptionally safe and there is some outstanding work on e-safety supporting both students and their families. Behaviour is good. Students on the register of special educational needs with identified issues relating to behaviour, social or emotional issues learn to manage and improve their behaviour over time. Students report very little bullying and are confident to approach staff if they are troubled. Staff know the students well and their good relationships with them, often forged within the many informal enrichment opportunities, is a key factor underpinning learning in the school.

Teaching is good although not yet consistent. It has improved since the last inspection. In the large majority of lessons, students make good progress. However, in weaker lessons learning is less challenging because planning does not identify the wide range of students needs, making effective use of the individual education plans where appropriate. In addition, day-to-day marking does not provide enough developmental feedback for students. Faculty reviews are at the heart of improving and managing teaching and learning in the school. Lessons observations as recorded vary in quality because there is often insufficient focus on impact of teaching on learning outcomes, including progress over time as reflected in students' exercise books, but a concentration on what the teacher does. In addition to lessons, there is an extensive support structure of revision classes, mentoring and one-to-one support and other interventions to help students' in their examination work or those who are in danger of slipping behind.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop an even higher proportion of good teaching by ensuring that:
 - all lessons plan for the wide range of students' needs, making effective use of student individual education plans, in order to challenge and support all students in the lesson effectively
 - day-to-day marking provides developmental feedback to students
 - middle managers judge lessons by the impact on learning, including progress over time as reflected in students' exercise books.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

In the large majority of lessons, students make good progress because they concentrate, stay on task and work effectively. In a mathematics group of higher attaining students, the large majority boys, they revelled in the complexity of what they were being asked and the rigour of the subject.

Standards at GCSE dipped in 2009, particularly in relation to five A* to C grades including mathematics and English, with some usually strongly performing departments having lower than usual results. The reasons were complex and actions taken by the senior leadership and the departments have been effective. Based on module assessments, early entry at GCSE and current tracking data, the school accurately anticipates that standards at five A* to C, including mathematics and English, will be slightly above the national average and continue the rising trend. While the proportion of A* -A grades was lower than expected in 2009, currently this is not the case. Early entry in English indicates that 15% of the year group attained these very high grades and there are similar forecasts in other subjects.

Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. They are supported well by effective teaching assistants who work closely with teaching staff. Looked after students make above average progress.

Attendance is high. The school helps students develop work place skills well. The majority of students have functional English and mathematics and the proportion of students with five A* to G grades is above the national average. Students have a good understanding of what constitutes healthy living. There are high participation rates in sport and the travel plan indicates that the majority walk or cycle to school. Pregnancy rates have dropped, as have the numbers of students smoking.

Students make extensive contributions to the school and local community. Senior students are keen to take posts of responsibility and help in the smooth running of the school. Students particularly value the peer-mentoring scheme. Sports leaders support the work of local primary schools and students regularly take part in performing arts activities in a variety of contexts. The impact of the school's work, in particular its international flavour, is evident in students' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students are confident, articulate, feel good about themselves and have a

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broad cultural awareness. They develop the skills of empathy and viewing a situation from different perspectives, have opportunities to reflect on their lives and lives of others, and extensive opportunities to work together intensively to reach a common goal.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

The curriculum is broad, relevant to the needs of individuals and groups of students and is leading to improving standards of attainment. It is well organised and increasingly responsive to students' needs. There are extensive creative and imaginative enrichment activities on offer. More able students have the opportunity to take two languages from Year 7. Students take functional English, mathematics and ICT tests in Year 9 and some start their GCSE courses in English mathematics and science early, with considerable success based on their module assessments. This, in turn, acts as a further spur to students' motivation and helps create the upward spiral of achievement. Suspended curriculum days are used to enhance or provide opportunities for immersion in a specific aspect. Outstanding partnerships extend the curriculum for Year 10 and 11 students,

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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providing vocational opportunities that have proved increasingly successful. The school contributes to the development of the curriculum across the immediate region and is leading on the Diploma in Creative and media.

There is a close, interlocking relationship with the school's good systems of care guidance and support to ensure option choices are based on good careers advice and provide progression to post-16 choices. Transition arrangements for incoming Year 7 students are very thorough and, across the school, there is a strong and effective pastoral support system. This includes very good arrangements for supporting vulnerable students or those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including timely interventions to prevent exclusions. The rigorous strategies to improve attendance have been particularly successful. There are also good links with a range of specialist and support staff. The school nurse operates a weekly clinic and students are used to seeing the local Police Liaison Officer working alongside colleagues.

In the best lessons, students can discuss what they need to do to improve because peer and self-assessment is used effectively and there are clearly displayed level or grade criteria. The tracking systems are accessible to both students and their parents to keep their progress under review. Staff use the tracking information effectively to identify students who are underperforming. Teachers have high levels of specialist subject expertise, which they draw on well in lessons as they explain or elaborate and questioning is often skilled as a result. There is a growing and imaginative use of interactive white boards.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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?

Returns from the staff questionnaire show that all staff feel proud to be a member of staff at this school and almost all feel that their contribution is valued. They know what the school is trying to achieve and that the school is led well. This reflects a cohesive staff that work together effectively and who share the headteacher's vision for the school's development.

The weekly professional development session is a very positive strength in the leadership of teaching and learning, as are the headteacher's and the deputy headteachers' accurate assessments of the quality of teaching and learning. In weaker lessons, staff are currently not making enough use of the individual education plans in planning lessons. The school recognises that additional training is required on how to

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use these and for dealing with specific special educational needs and/or disability issues. Governance is good. It has particular strengths in determining the strategic direction of the school. It provides both challenge and support. Policies are sometimes generic and are not specific to the school. Arrangements for safeguarding and child protection are satisfactory. Staff are appropriately trained and vigilant.

Along with its key partner, the school has been successful in gaining very significant funding for the co-location project. This reflects the very good understanding that the school has of the characteristics of the local community and its commitment towards it and particularly its young people. The school community is cohesive and students get on well together. There are very strong relationships within the school and with local community groups, with extensive initiatives stemming from the school's specialism, for example the local arts festival organised by the school and its partners. The international award is very positive. However, opportunities to experience national ethnic and cultural experiences are limited to visitors to the school and performing companies. The school promotes equality of opportunity well. Standards of all students have risen through careful matching of courses to students' needs and improvements in teaching.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Most parents indicated in their responses that their child enjoys school and a very large majority were happy overall with their child's experience at the school. A small minority of parents felt that the school did not manage unacceptable behaviour well and did not take into account their suggestions and complaints. Behaviour in the school is good.

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There is a well-attended parents' forum specifically established to listen to parents' views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at North Walsham 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 105 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 845 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	21	20	67	65	10	10	3	3
The school keeps my child safe	25	24	68	66	6	6	2	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	32	31	49	48	17	17	5	5
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	18	65	63	16	16	3	3
The teaching is good at this school	14	14	62	60	20	19	3	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	14	14	59	57	21	20	7	7
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	7	7	72	70	13	13	7	7
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)	16	16	65	63	13	13	4	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	17	66	64	15	15	4	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	17	47	46	21	20	10	10
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	13	58	56	17	17	11	11
The school is led and managed effectively	22	21	52	50	17	17	6	6
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	21	20	61	59	14	14	5	5

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



10 May 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of North Walsham High School, Norfolk, NR28 9HZ

Thank you for making us so welcome in your school. My particular thanks go to those students who gave up their time to talk to us. What you had to say was particularly helpful. I thought I would share our findings with you.

This is a good school. It is helping you to develop well as young people and achieve well academically. Behaviour is good: you report little bullying and that you feel extremely safe. Standards in GCSE examinations are around the national average and show an improving trend. The care guidance and support that you receive is good. The good curriculum provides you with wide-ranging and often very exciting opportunities, and it is increasingly being tailored to meet the needs of individuals or groups. You make good progress and achieve well because teaching in the large majority of lessons is good. Staff also put in a lot of extra work in revision clubs and in helping you to organise your course work. I have asked the headteacher to work with staff to ensure that there is even greater consistency in the good teaching that you receive by ensuring that:

- all lessons are planned to challenge and support the wide range of students' needs
- day-to-day marking is given a higher profile
- when staff observe each other's lessons they focus on the impact of the lesson on your learning, including the work over time as reflected in your exercise books.

The headteacher and her staff lead the school well and have brought about significant improvements' since it was last inspected. I have no doubt that, with your help, the school will continue to improve.

Yours sincerely

Roderick Passant

Lead inspector

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