

Smithdon High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121157
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	339884
Inspection dates	28–29 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Paula Heaney 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	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	993
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Veronica Welham
Headteacher	Jonathan Goodchild
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 2006
School address	Downs Way Hunstanton Norfolk
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 37 lessons, saw 35 teachers and held meetings with groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and staff. They observed the school's work and looked at; improvement plans; the analysis and tracking of students' progress and attainment for 2010; policies, procedures and records relating to safeguarding and child protection; records of governing body meetings; questionnaires from students and staff; and 245 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

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

- achievement at the end of Key Stage 4 in core subjects, particularly English and for girls
- improvements in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
- the effectiveness of support for students to enable them to reach their potential
- the quality of learning and support in the sixth form
- the capacity of leaders, managers and teachers to secure improvement across departments.

Information about the school

Smithdon High School is a broadly average-sized secondary school with a sixth form. Very few students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, reflecting the local area. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average. A higher than average proportion of students have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Smithdon High's specialisms are in mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). At the time of inspection the school was receiving external support through the National Challenge initiative.

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?

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 students' achievement and in the effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled effectively.

The school is led well by the headteacher, who has developed an ethos centred on securing improvement that is better than satisfactory. Following a recent restructure of the leadership team, leaders and managers are more sharply focused on bringing about more rapid improvement. They have identified accurately the key areas for improvement within the school, specifically the importance of accelerating the progress students make by improving the quality and consistency of teaching and learning. Early signs are that these actions are beginning to improve the quality of provision. As a result, the school's capacity to improve is satisfactory. The governing body, however, has not been effective in tackling the weaknesses identified. Vacancies on the governing body remain unfilled and inspectors found insufficient evidence in records of meetings held during the current academic year of debate or actions to tackle the school's weaknesses.

Smithdon is an improving school, but the pace of change has been slow since the last inspection and hampered by staffing and recruitment difficulties, particularly in the English and mathematics departments. Outcomes for students are inadequate as examination results remain well below the national average, despite improving sharply in 2009. Too often, students' progress is no better than satisfactory. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress as a result of the good support they receive. School data from recent mock examinations indicate improvements in achievement and a higher proportion of students achieving their targets, including girls. Behaviour is satisfactory but parents and students expressed concern about the poor behaviour of a few that disrupts learning and how effectively and consistently poor behaviour is managed by different teachers.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall but planning does not always take into consideration the needs of students or involve them sufficiently actively in their learning. Work is underway to develop best practice across the school more consistently although the skills of middle leaders are underdeveloped in this respect. The feedback students receive on how to improve their work is not consistently detailed or helpful and some work is marked infrequently. Some staff use data on students' prior achievement and knowledge of their capabilities well to plan lessons, but this is uneven across the

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school.

Curriculum choices meet students' needs increasingly, although the development of vocational options has been slow. Care and guidance are good. Support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good but support for other students has yet to translate fully into improved achievement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of learning across the school significantly and accelerate the rise in achievement, particularly for girls by:
 - planning lessons that meet the full range of students' needs and engage them actively in learning
 - using assessment information effectively to set sufficiently challenging targets
 - monitoring students' targets within lessons more frequently
 - ensuring support is in place to accelerate students' progress
 - ensuring students are clear about what they need to achieve within lessons and the quality of the work that is required
 - marking work more frequently and ensuring detailed feedback is provided on how students can improve further.
 - Further develop the skills of middle managers to ensure good practice is shared across the school.
 - Ensure consistency in the management of behaviour within lessons and around the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

Following a significant decline to below 30% in 2008, the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, rose in 2009 to 39%. However, attainment remains well below average. The pattern of improvement is evident in other subjects including those that attract a larger proportion of students such as art, design and technology, English literature, and the sciences. Results in biology, German, ICT and leisure and tourism are at or above national averages, although, with the exception of ICT, take up of these subjects is small. School data indicate that efforts to improve performance and ensure more students meet their targets are having some impact and, where the quality of students' learning is good or better, this is more successful. More frequent assessments within subjects enable teachers to identify where students are not making sufficient progress, resulting in earlier interventions to get them back on track. However where the quality of learning is only satisfactory, progress to improve students' performance is slow. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress due to high expectations and good development of literacy skills. The very small number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds make satisfactory progress. The progress of girls is below that of boys but is improving.

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Other key features of students' outcomes are as follows:

The large majority of students enjoy school, make satisfactory progress in lessons, know how well they are doing, but do not agree that behaviour is good. Behaviour is satisfactory in lessons and around the school.

Students feel safe in and around the school although a very small minority in Years 7 to 9 say that bullying is not dealt with effectively.

Actions to improve attendance and persistent absence have been successful and almost all students attend punctually.

Students have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles and school meals are popular. The school nurse provides good quality advice on drug and alcohol awareness.

The school recognises that, although students contribute through the school council and make recommendations, it has yet to act on their views fully.

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

How effective is the provision?

Actions to improve teaching, learning and assessment have had mixed impact across the

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

school, compounded by recruitment difficulties, with the result that most teaching remains satisfactory. Where lessons are effective, teachers' planning incorporates a range of activities to encourage learning and independence. Students learn effectively by working in pairs and in small groups, and they are clear about what they need to achieve. Where school data are used effectively, tasks are sufficiently challenging for the wide range of abilities in most classes. However, where lessons are dominated by the teacher, the inclusion of tasks to motivate students to take an active part in their learning are too infrequent. Although most students make satisfactory progress in lessons, they are not always challenged to employ their capabilities fully; this is particularly so for the most able.

Assessment is used effectively in the better lessons where teachers use questioning skilfully to develop understanding and provide detailed feedback on marked work to help students improve. However, marking is inconsistent across the school both in terms of frequency and quality, with comments provided by teachers that are too brief. Students' targets are not used consistently to promote improvements in learning and achievement.

The range of courses on offer has broadened in Years 10 and 11, although the introduction of vocational subjects and options has been slow. Students benefit from courses offered at a local further education college and regular work experience. Plans to introduce a vocational diploma in physical education (PE) are underway for September 2010. Students in Years 7 to 9 benefit from a vocational ICT qualification to develop their skills. The development of functional skills in literacy and numeracy is at an early stage. A variety of after-school activities is available and take-up is high.

Arrangements to settle Year 7 students into the school are effective, as are the information, advice and guidance for students to help them make their choices in Years 9 and 11. The well-established team in the curriculum support unit knows students well and provides a good range of support for those who miss work through absence or illness. There are good arrangements to support students with disabilities and those with special educational needs. Learning support has yet to have a significant impact on improved achievement for other groups of students.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers are focused on raising the quality of provision across the school

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and strategies for improvement are beginning to have some impact. The headteacher has worked well with the local authority to resolve staffing difficulties more quickly, particularly in recruiting specialist staff to develop the specialisms. The restructuring of the senior team has enabled a sharper focus on teaching and learning, specifically on improving the rate of students' progress, although work is at an early stage. Key appointments have been made and more are planned. Middle leaders are at different stages in developing their roles to improve achievement across the school but their impact is inconsistent. Some good examples of the effective use of school data and team approaches to planning learning were seen in the design and technology and geography departments.

The governing body meets its statutory requirements, but is insufficiently challenging or focused on actions taken by senior leaders to bring about improvements to achievement and teaching and learning. Furthermore, links with departments are underdeveloped. The school is committed to equality of opportunity and monitors the performance of different groups carefully. School data indicate actions to improve the performance of lower ability girls are having a positive impact. Safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements. Effective procedures are in place to ensure students' safety and links with appropriate agencies ensure the safeguarding of more vulnerable students. The school promotes community cohesion appropriately through links with local primary schools via its arts, music and sports events. An international link with Nepal is well-established.

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	4
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	3
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

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

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Attainment is below the national average, but examination results are improving. Students make satisfactory progress overall given their starting points, although their performance across subjects is variable. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the better lessons a range of assessment techniques are used well to develop learning. The monitoring of students' progress is effective and opportunities are presented for independent working. In other lessons, the pace of learning is slow, challenge is insufficient and assessment is less frequent. Discussion with students and scrutiny of their work indicate that target setting and monitoring of their progress are not sufficiently rigorous across subjects. While students have access to a broad range of A-level courses, vocational options are limited. Students receive sound guidance and support to help them prepare for entry to higher education. Aspects of provision such as requirements for religious education are met.

Leaders and managers have a clear idea of how the sixth form should be developed and know the key strengths and areas for improvement. Plans to involve students in improving the quality of teaching and learning are underway. Although there are opportunities for sixth formers to make a contribution to the school and wider community these are underdeveloped.

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

The large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire agree that their children enjoy school and most say that the school keeps children safe. However, a third of parents and carers reported that overall they were not happy with their children's experience of school. Half of the parents and carers, a high proportion, expressed concerns about the school's management of poor behaviour. Around a third of parents and carers did not consider that their children were making enough progress, and similar proportions did not agree that teaching was good, or that the school took sufficient account of their concerns. Inspectors share the concerns expressed by parents and carers.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Smithdon 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 245 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 993 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	26	11	162	66	39	16	18	7
The school keeps my child safe	40	16	158	65	32	13	10	4
The school informs me about my child's progress	42	17	148	61	45	18	4	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	27	11	123	51	74	30	11	5
The teaching is good at this school	19	8	129	54	71	30	8	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	25	10	110	45	84	35	13	5
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	10	128	53	75	31	8	3
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)	27	11	147	62	38	16	7	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	28	12	125	52	62	26	12	5
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	28	12	86	35	73	30	48	20
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	10	120	50	55	23	22	9
The school is led and managed effectively	26	11	131	55	48	20	20	8
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	31	13	123	50	63	26	22	9

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.



30 April 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Smithdon High School, Hunstanton, PE36 5HY

I would like to thank you for your openness and friendliness during our visit. We enjoyed meeting you and appreciated your comments and opinions. We found your behaviour is satisfactory in most lessons and your attendance and punctuality are improving.

The inspection also found that your school requires significant improvement. Although examination results at the end of Year 11 in 2009 improved significantly, they remained well below the national average. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Some lessons are good, but others do not meet your needs and interests fully, or challenge you sufficiently well. Most of you enjoy school, but a significant proportion of you are concerned about how effectively behaviour is managed within lessons. You appreciate the arts, music and sporting activities provided after school, but would like the school to respond more quickly when you have concerns or recommendations, such as improvements to your toilet facilities.

We believe you should be making much better progress and the school agrees. As a result, we have asked the school to improve your achievement by:

- increasing the proportion of good and better lessons across the school by ensuring your lessons are carefully planned to meet your needs and providing comments on your marked work to help you improve
- using assessment information to ensure you receive appropriate support to reach your potential
- ensuring poor behaviour is managed well so it does not disrupt your learning.

You can help by behaving well at all times, continuing to attend regularly and punctually and by letting your teachers know how you learn best.

We wish you well with your future studies.

Yours sincerely

Paula Heaney

Her Majesty's Inspector

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