

The National School, a Church of England Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122897
Local Authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	340236
Inspection dates	13–14 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Richard Marsden

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
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	1147
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	115
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Keith Whiting
Headteacher	Dr John Edwards
Date of previous school inspection	6 June 2007
School address	Annesley Road Hucknall Nottingham
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by six additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 29 lessons, spending about 20% of their time in lessons, and observing 28 teachers. They held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at: information which tracks the academic and personal progress of pupils, their current work, development planning, subject self-evaluation, records of recent classroom monitoring and evidence to demonstrate how the school supports pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Inspectors also examined documentation provided by the school to ensure that it meets statutory requirements with regard to safeguarding. In addition, 108 parental questionnaires were scrutinised, along with questionnaires returned by staff and a representative sample of pupils.

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

- the impact of initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and learning for all groups of pupils within the school
- the impact of the changes and innovations introduced by senior managers and their effectiveness in sustaining improvements
- why standards in the sixth form are not higher, and whether the sixth form effectively meets the needs of its students.

Information about the school

This school is larger than most secondary schools although the sixth form is relatively small. Many students transfer to a neighbouring sixth form college at the end of Year 11. The school draws pupils from a wide area. Most come from White British backgrounds and very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The percentage with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. Very few have a statement of special educational needs. The school is designated by the local authority as an inclusive school for pupils with a physical disability. It has had specialist technology college status since 2002. It holds Healthy Schools and Sportsmark awards.

The school was given a notice to improve when inspected in 2006. Since then, there has been a change in the leadership team who work in collaboration with an executive headteacher from another school, and the school was judged to be satisfactory when inspected in 2007. During 2008/09 the school suffered staffing difficulties, mainly due to the long-term illness of key staff, including the head of school and faculty leaders.

The headteacher is known as head of school to distinguish him from the executive headteacher who is present at the school for two days each week.

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

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 where pupils are esteemed and valued. It has close and productive links with the parish and diocese, and a strong Christian ethos pervades all aspects of its work. Pupils enjoy learning and their attainment is above average. Pupils achieve well at Key Stages 3 and 4 and satisfactorily in the sixth form. The school is a welcoming and inclusive community where equal opportunities for all are well promoted. Pupils show loyalty to the school and are pleased to belong to it. It prepares them well for the next stage of their education or employment.

All groups of pupils achieve equally well. An effective system of identification and support ensures that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same good rates of progress as their peers. Pupils enjoy learning and understand how to be safe and healthy. They are polite and courteous to each other and to adults. Inspectors found behaviour to be good, whether pupils were directly supervised or not. Pupils engage well with their work in lessons and are keen to learn. They speak of the school as a friendly and cohesive community. However, pupils are given relatively few opportunities to make their voice heard, their awareness of communities beyond the school is at an early stage of development and they have too few opportunities to take responsibility.

An energetic group of staff has led teaching and learning, including a programme of review and innovation which has improved the quality of teaching. Teaching is good at Key Stages 3 and 4 and satisfactory in the sixth form. The same is true of the curriculum: a minority of students in the sixth form are not well matched to the courses they pursue as there are few opportunities for them to follow vocational courses or assume leadership roles in the school.

The head of school and other senior leaders, ably supported by the executive headteacher, provide a strong drive for improvement. The school's development suffered a setback last year because of the prolonged absence of the head of school and other staff due to illness. Behaviour deteriorated, examination results dipped, and the confidence of pupils, staff and parents faltered. Leaders have not yet fully regained the confidence of parents and carers, but the improvement process is firmly back on track and standards in Year 11 are again above average. Results and progress are monitored carefully by leaders to ensure that no group, whether by gender, ethnicity or ability, is disadvantaged or falls behind. A regular programme of lesson observations ensures that the leadership team has a clear and accurate understanding of the quality of teaching throughout the school. Teaching staff are rigorously held to account in the drive to improve outcomes for pupils. Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and have sharply defined plans for improvement. The school

provides good value for money and has a good capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in the sixth form by:
 - improving the quality of teaching to bring it in line with that in the rest of the school
 - ensuring that courses provided more closely match the needs of individual students.
- Increase opportunities for pupils to contribute to the school and wider community by:
 - providing more opportunities for them to take responsibility and contribute to the life of the school
 - broadening opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of communities beyond the school, both nationally and internationally.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils join the school with levels of attainment which are broadly average. They make good progress at Key Stages 3 and 4. Results at the end of Key Stage 4 were average in 2009, whereas in the previous two years they were above average. Year 11 pupils are currently working at above-average standards. Progress seen in lessons and in pupils' written work is good, and there was no significant variation in the rates of progress of groups of pupils. Boys and girls, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils for whom English is an additional language achieve equally well. Although GCSE results in design and technology, the school's specialism, were lower than those in most other subjects in 2009 attainment in this subject has improved markedly and the school is on track to reach the challenging targets set. The school is designated by the local authority an inclusive school for pupils with physical disabilities, but few pupils from this group currently attend the school and none were observed during the inspection.

Pupils say that they feel safe and are confident to approach adults with any concern. A minority of pupils and a small minority of parents mentioned behaviour in their questionnaires as an area where they felt improvement was needed, but inspectors found behaviour around the school and in lessons to be consistently good during the inspection. Many of the concerns related to the period of the staffing difficulties when the school frequently had to use supply teachers who did not know the pupils. These difficulties have now been overcome.

Pupils are encouraged to pursue a healthy lifestyle. They purchase healthy food in the school canteen and many engage in extra-curricular sport. Pupils develop core skills for the workplace and, through events such as the Year 9 industry day and Year 10 work experience, are well prepared to take their place in the world of work. The school is successful in ensuring that virtually no pupils leave without a place in employment, education or training. The school's Christian ethos permeates all aspects of its work and

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

ensures that pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. They learn about other cultures and religions, too, although their understanding and first-hand experience of other peoples' values and traditions are less well developed.

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	2
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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

A large majority of lessons seen during the inspection were good and none were less than satisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They use information and communication technology and visual aids very effectively and provide opportunities for pupils to discuss and interact well with one another. In assessing pupils in lessons, teachers refer explicitly to the requirements of National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades as they strive to push pupils to reach high standards. The feedback which teachers provide through their day-to-day marking is often good but more variable in its impact. In a few lessons, questions and answers are too dominated by the teacher. Teachers are careful to ensure that all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those for whom English is an additional language, are fully included in all activities. However, some individual pupils are not

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

always sufficiently challenged.

The curriculum is broad and balanced and effectively meets the needs of pupils. Pupils appreciate the diverse range of opportunities for extra-curricular sport, music and the arts as well as out-of-school visits. Higher-attaining pupils in Years 8 and 9 study two foreign languages, which add to their understanding of different cultures. The school, in partnership with another local school, provides vocational courses for Key Stage 4 pupils, though vocational opportunities do not fully meet all students' needs in the sixth form. Although the school has had technology college status since 2002, this aspect of its provision is less prominent than might be expected, other than in increased and improved resources for certain subjects. The school's improved promotion of healthy lifestyles for pupils is reflected in its Healthy Schools and Sportsmark awards.

The school makes good provision for pupils' care, guidance and support. Effective procedures are in place to ensure that new pupils settle in quickly. The work of the Epiphany Centre, which provides support for pupils whose circumstances could make them vulnerable, is most impressive, and the school works well with a range of agencies to support vulnerable pupils. Pupils, regardless of their attainment and progress, receive good-quality guidance about their future plans as they move up the school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
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?

Following the setbacks due to the staffing problems in 2008/09, leaders and managers, in partnership with the executive headteacher and, increasingly, other staff from his school, who have a two-way exchange of ideas and resources with staff at the national School, are steering a steady and long-term course which has begun to lead to improved outcomes for all pupils. Senior leaders are adept at using statistical information to track pupils' progress. They set ambitious, though carefully considered, targets for improvement. They hold teachers to account very rigorously. The very large majority of teachers say they are proud to be a member of staff at this school, share leaders' quest for excellence and support the increased level of monitoring and accountability

Governors effectively hold the school to account. They are well informed and many of them avail themselves of regular opportunities to update their knowledge and expertise so that they can effectively carry out their role of critical friend. Safeguarding procedures are regularly reviewed and robustly meet requirements

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

The school benefits from a good partnership with the Church, with another secondary school with which it shares its executive headteacher, with other primary and secondary schools, and with local businesses. It is a harmonious community and plays its part well in the local community, although strategic planning to promote community cohesion more widely is at an early stage of development. Although it has had Technology College status since 2002, this aspect of its work lost momentum during the staffing difficulties in 2008/09. The school has ambitious plans and has begun to re-energise this aspect of its provision.

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	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
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	2

Sixth form

Numbers staying on after Year 11 are relatively low, although increasing. There is a partnership with nearby Holgate School, where some lessons are taught. More than 20 A- and AS-level subjects are offered, and attainment in them is broadly average, given the students' starting points. A large majority of students complete their courses, although a minority of students are not well matched to the courses they pursue.

The quality of teaching, guidance and support that the students receive is satisfactory. Sixth form students have a low profile in the life of the school and, apart from a weekly 'enrichment' lesson when they go into classes to assist younger learners, they take up few opportunities to take responsibility or assume leadership roles within the school or more widely.

Although the leadership and management of the sixth form are focused on improvement, and information about students' performance is collected and analysed,

recent staffing changes mean that the impact of innovations has yet to be felt in terms of improved provision and better outcomes for students.

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 received questionnaires from approximately 10% of parents and carers, which is a low percentage. A very large majority of these parents and carers feel that the school keeps their child safe, that their child enjoys school and is well prepared for the future. Many parents wrote to express their satisfaction with the school and its programme of improvements. A minority said they were not given a clear indication of how to support their child at school or that they were unclear about the roles of senior staff in the day-to-day running of the school. A minority of returns disagreed that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Where this was the case, parents often added notes linking this to the lack of continuity for some classes during 2008/09 when the school had to rely heavily on supply teachers. Inspectors found that these difficulties are now in the past and evidence indicates that there is little unacceptable behaviour. Some other parents, keen to support their children, said they wanted better information from the senior leaders of the school about its agenda for improvement and the parents' and carers' role in this.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The National School, a Church of England Technology College 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 inspector received 107 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1147 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	18	17	68	63	17	16	4	4
The school keeps my child safe	18	17	76	70	11	10	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	21	19	74	69	12	11	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	18	17	69	64	14	13	3	3
The teaching is good at this school	8	7	69	64	24	22	4	4
The school helps me to support my child's learning	6	6	63	58	37	34	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	6	6	67	62	26	24	2	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)	9	8	75	69	16	15	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	11	10	74	69	18	17	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	9	49	45	34	31	10	9
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	8	7	57	53	25	23	5	5
The school is led and managed effectively	9	8	56	54	33	31	4	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	23	21	64	59	17	16	4	4

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.



15 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The National School, a Church of England Technology College,
Nottingham, NG15 7DB

Many thanks for the warm and friendly welcome which you gave to inspectors when we visited your school this week. We would particularly like to thank those of you who gave us your views, either in meetings or when we spoke to you around the school.

We came to your school to find out what was going well and what could be improved. Here is what we found:

Your school is a good one where teachers are working very hard to help you achieve your best standards in your work and personal development.

There is a strong emphasis on providing equal opportunities for every one of you.

Lessons are, in the main, good, and teachers give you helpful information about how well you are doing.

Some of you told us that you felt behaviour could be better, but inspectors found that there has been an improvement in behaviour and it was consistently good during the inspection.

You can be proud that you attend a good school where everyone wants the best for you. The senior leaders want to make your school better still and to help with this, we have asked them to:

- improve the sixth form so that teaching and the curriculum are as good there as in the rest of the school
- give you more opportunities to take responsibility and demonstrate maturity, and help you to appreciate the values and traditions of people from other cultures.

You can help to improve your school by always working hard and trying your best.

Your sincerely

Richard Marsden

Lead inspector

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