

Sprowston Community High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121162
Local Authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	339886
Inspection dates	8-9 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Martin Beale

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
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	1780
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	261
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Fiona Hardman
Headteacher	Mr Andrew John
Date of previous school inspection	21-22 February 2007
School address	Cannerby Lane Sprowston Norwich Norfolk NR7 8NE
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by six additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 51 lessons, attended assemblies, and held meetings with staff, groups of pupils and three governors. They observed the school's work, and looked at assessment information, pupils' books, progress records and improvement plans. The team received and analysed 207 parental questionnaires, 136 responses to the pupils' survey and 35 responses from the staff.

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

- how effectively the more-able pupils are engaged in learning and making progress towards their targets
- how effectively the school supports the achievement and personal development of its more vulnerable groups of pupils
- the use of assessment, marking and target-setting to inform learning and help all pupils to have a clear picture of how well they are doing and how they can improve.

Information about the school

This large school has grown in size since it began admitting Year 7 pupils in 2007. It has been a specialist school for the Performing Arts and Media since 2004. Most pupils are of White British backgrounds and very few speak English as an additional language. Free school meal eligibility is below average. There are more pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities than in the majority of other secondary schools. The proportion of statemented pupils is broadly average, with most of these pupils having moderate learning difficulties. Sixth form provision is through a consortium arrangement with two local schools. The school has received several awards in recognition of the quality of its work. These include Artsmark Gold and Investors in Families.

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

2

Main findings

Sprowston Community High School is on an improving path under the skilled and determined leadership of a very effective headteacher. Along with an expertly led governing body, he has built a team of senior staff who share his drive to make school life a more interesting and positive learning experience for all pupils. Parental views are somewhat mixed about aspects of the school, although they recognise the strides forward it has made in recent years.

Through this drive for improvement and a concerted effort to raise the quality of teaching, pupils are now making more consistent progress than in the past. This has led to a rise, to national averages, in GCSE results over the last three years as the pupils make up for a legacy of lower achievement in the past. They are now more securely placed for success in their future lives. Targets are more challenging, but are not always met at the highest grades across all subjects. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, not all teachers challenge the most able in lessons. Secondly, the list of pupils identified as gifted and talented is rather large, limiting the impact staff have on these learners' achievement in lessons and through other activities.

Pupils have developed a positive approach to their work. This and their good behaviour are providing the conditions in which they can thrive. As with behaviour, attendance levels have risen and the number of pupils persistently absent has fallen as a consequence of the consistent and rigorous approach taken by all staff across the school. There is a constant drive from everyone to make this a truly inclusive school. Every effort is made to identify an individual's needs and aspirations so that programmes can be carefully tailored to meet their goals.

The specialist performing arts and media status adds much to the pupils' worthwhile experience both within and beyond the school day. One consequence is that the school has met the large majority of its specialist school targets, both academically and in terms of the participation rate of pupils in arts and media courses. Drama, music and media pervade many aspects of school life and make very valuable contributions to enjoyment of learning. Pupils identify the wide range of additional activities as a major strength and the area that brings them most enjoyment in school.

There are examples of outstanding teaching that grab pupils' attention, engage them fully and move their learning forward at pace. Nevertheless, some pockets of inadequate teaching remain, and there are shortcomings in otherwise satisfactory

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lessons. In these lessons, pupils become passive learners and not engaged. In addition, they are not always clear about how well they are doing and the next steps they can take to meet their targets. Courses are carefully planned but provide limited opportunities for the pupils to develop and apply their basic skills, particularly those of information and communication technology (ICT), across a wide range of subjects. A programme of individual coaching is successfully helping teachers to improve their practice, although this initiative does not always focus sufficiently on how pupils can develop the skills to become more effective learners themselves.

Staff and governors have a very clear view of the school's qualities and the action to be taken for further improvement. Through this they have secured improvement in many areas since the school's previous inspection. The headteacher's high ambitions for the school are reflected in the increasingly challenging targets he sets everyone. The school's future is in safe hands; it has good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Focus teaching more sharply on developing the pupils' learning skills so that they:
 - can take an increased responsibility for their own learning
 - participate in more varied activities focused on increasing their engagement
 - are helped to understand how to improve and take the next steps in their learning.
- Provide greater and more consistent challenge for the more-able pupils by:
 - ensuring that they engage in more higher level learning tasks
 - using more rigorous criteria when assessing pupils as gifted and talented so that a more concerted approach is taken.
- Ensure that pupils can consistently develop and apply their basic skills, particularly in ICT, across subjects.

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

Most pupils try hard in lessons and are keen to learn. They make satisfactory and improving progress from their average attainment on entry to the school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, especially those with moderate learning difficulties, make similar progress to others. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds also make satisfactory progress. The few using English as an additional language are able to access the curriculum and learn successfully. The school is very aware from its thorough analysis of assessment data that boys are not closing the gap in their

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attainment with that of girls. Consequently, their results at GCSE are lower although the difference is broadly the same as nationally.

Pupils behave with consideration towards each other. They are taking an increasing interest in human rights issues as well as how they can protect the environment for the future. They show respect for different cultures. Incidents of harassment or bullying are few. Pupils collaborate well when working in pairs or groups and enjoy the opportunity to discuss their ideas with others. Most persevere when faced with a problem. Pupils' basic skills are secure, but they do not apply them consistently across subjects.

Many pupils develop their leadership skills by taking on roles of responsibility with enthusiasm, such as developing the role of 'lead learners' in conjunction with the University of the First Age. Pupils feel that their voice is heard and their views valued, although there is only limited involvement in making decisions about their learning and well-being. Their involvement in the local community is extensive, particularly through the performing arts.

Most pupils have a clear understanding of what it means to adopt a healthy lifestyle. While many appreciate the school's efforts to support them, through healthy-eating options and opportunities for physical exercise, this is not the view shared by all. The large majority say that they feel safe in school and report their confidence that there is always someone to turn to if they have a problem.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	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	2

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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How effective is the provision?

Improvements have produced some lively and interesting teaching that captures the pupils' imagination and involves them fully in their learning. Teachers manage the pupils' well so that classrooms are calm and well-organised places in which to learn. In these lessons, pupils are clear about the aims of the tasks they are undertaking and are able to assess their success in meeting these goals. This is not consistently the case. A small minority of teachers do not always put across clearly what the purpose is behind the activities being undertaken and do not consistently involve pupils in their learning. Furthermore, the more able-pupils only get on to more appropriate work on the completion of routine tasks.

The curriculum is kept under regular review, so that changes can be made and additional learning opportunities introduced, to make an enjoyable and creative experience for pupils. The wide range of courses and pathways available at Key Stage 4 are appreciated by the pupils and matched closely to their needs and aspirations. This has led to better attendance and good behaviour in class. Vocational elements and new diplomas extend the conventional range of subjects. Partnerships with local community groups add much to pupils' experiences. The school uses its specialism well to promote arts activities in local schools.

Pastoral care is good and helps pupils to feel secure. Tracking of pupils' progress has improved considerably and now offers staff a very clear picture from which to identify quickly and tackle any underachievement. This has led to the introduction of a wide range of successful intervention programmes with resulting improvements in the achievement of the specific pupils involved. The school is effective in ensuring that statemented pupils have good support. Thoughtful arrangements on transfer from primary school are much valued by the pupils and help them to settle smoothly into their new school.

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 is very effectively supported by other senior leaders in driving improvement forward. They can point to many successes such as rising attainment, improved behaviour and higher attendance levels. Middle leaders, such as year heads and those with subject responsibilities, have developed skills and expertise to

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play a crucial role in leading developments in their areas.

Governors play a pivotal role in supporting the school in its drive to improve. They are very focused on making it even better by the realistic level of challenge they pose to the headteacher and his staff. At the same time, governors are developing more secure systems by which they can check the impact of their policies on outcomes for the pupils. One example of this is that they are rigorous in ensuring that arrangements for vetting adults who have contact with the pupils, and all safeguarding requirements are thoroughly applied.

Ensuring equality of opportunity is at the heart of the school's work. The attention to detail means that the needs of each pupil are known and responded to. The school understands the context within which it works. The success of the vast array of activities planned to support community cohesion, both locally and further afield, is clear. The school has developed many successful strategies for improving the partnership between home and school, particularly where more vulnerable pupils and harder to reach families are concerned. In spite of this, the school has not won over all parents as shown by the small minority of negative responses to parts of the parental questionnaire.

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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

Students in the sixth form benefit considerably from the opportunities within the consortium and are able to study courses that are matched well to their personal needs and goals. These build well from Key Stage 4 and include a balance of primarily academic AS- and A-Level courses as well as a few vocational courses,

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including new diplomas. The school's performing arts and media specialism makes a major contribution to the students' lives, through the courses they can follow as well as the additional activities provided. These are much valued by students and seen as a highlight of sixth form life. This also acts as a catalyst for their considerable involvement in the school and local community. They are fully aware of how to adopt a safe and healthy lifestyle. Students are also positive about the guidance they received in helping them to make their course choices, and the advice they currently get from subject teachers and their personal tutors.

As in the main school, students are making satisfactory progress from average standards on entry, and attainment is broadly average by the time they finish their courses. The vast majority of students complete the courses they begin. The quality of teaching is improving as the skills and expertise of teachers are extended, but aspects of learning, as in the main school, are not consistently promoted and students are too passive at times. Furthermore, there is insufficient opportunity for the students to develop and apply skills, such as ICT, across all their subjects.

The lack of clarity over roles within sixth form leadership and management identified at the last inspection has been resolved. This has helped to focus the team on the key priorities of improving teaching and learning, raising achievement and ensuring that everyone is clear about what makes effective learning.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	3
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 views of parents and carers are generally positive but a small minority have expressed concerns about some aspects of the school's work. These centre on some aspects of the partnership between school and home and the effectiveness with which poor behaviour is dealt with. These views may be based on the school's historic position, as the inspection team did not find evidence to support these responses. The school has worked hard to establish closer links with home and has received recognition for its partnership work. The inspection team found behaviour in school to be good, a view supported by the majority of pupils. The inspection team did find evidence to support the view of some parents that teaching is not always good, although this is another area where practise is judged to have improved.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sprowston Community 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 207 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1780 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	48	23	133	64	17	8	5	2
The school keeps my child safe	50	24	132	64	18	9	4	2
The school informs me about my child’s progress	39	19	118	57	34	16	9	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	39	19	121	58	29	14	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	28	14	125	60	35	17	4	2
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	26	13	115	56	44	21	4	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	17	8	139	67	34	16	5	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	15	127	61	18	9	6	3
The school meets my child’s particular needs	36	17	124	60	30	14	5	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	31	15	118	57	34	16	14	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	14	101	49	37	18	15	7
The school is led and managed effectively	33	16	128	62	31	15	5	2
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	47	23	121	58	27	13	7	3

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 all 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 pupils' 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.



10 December 2009

Dear Pupils and Sixth Form Students

Inspection of Sprowston Community High School, Norwich, NR7 8NE

You may remember that inspectors visited your school recently. I am writing now to let you know what we found out. Firstly, I would like to thank all of you who we came into contact with for your friendliness and the polite way you spoke with us. You are clearly proud of your school and recognise the improvements that have taken place in recent years. You have contributed to these improvements by attending more regularly and behaving more appropriately in lessons and around the school. Teachers have also worked hard to improve lessons and to provide you with a wider range of interesting activities during and after school. The school's specialist status makes a considerable contribution to your lives as many of you pointed out.

There is still some way to go if you are all to meet your headteacher's ambitions for you and the school. You make satisfactory progress during your time at the school, although this is steadily improving so that the targets you are being set are more and more challenging. There is scope for your learning to develop further in three main areas. Hence we have asked the school to:

- ensure that teaching helps you to be more effective learners and take greater responsibility for your own learning
- make sure that those of you who can learn quickly are challenged more in lessons and through additional activities
- provide opportunities for you to apply and develop your skills, such as in ICT, across a wider range of subjects.

You can play your part in helping your school to get better by continuing to take pride in it and by attending regularly.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale
Lead inspector

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