



Sprowston High School

Inspection report

**Better
education
and care**

Unique Reference Number 121162
Local Authority Norfolk
Inspection number 292038
Inspection dates 21 - 22 February 2007
Reporting inspector Anthony Knight HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Cannerby Lane
School category	Community		Sprowston
Age range of pupils	12-18		Norwich
			Norfolk
			NR7 8NE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01603 485266
Number on roll (school)	1426	Fax number	01263 426213
Number on roll (6th form)	191		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Barbara Lashley
		Headteacher	Mr Andrew John
Date of previous school inspection	3-7 March 2003		

Age group	Inspection date(s)	Inspection no.
12-18	21 - 22 February 2007	292038

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Sprowston Community High School is an over-subscribed 12-18 mixed comprehensive school. With 1426 students including 191 students in the sixth form, it is larger than most secondary schools. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. Few pupils are from minority ethnic groups and very few pupils do not have English as their first language. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities and statements of special educational needs is below the national average. Attainment on entry is generally below average. The school has specialist status for Performing Arts and Media and is involved in the National Education Breakthrough Programme. The school, in partnership with The Blyth Jex School and Heartsease High School, has formed the Kett Sixth Form College which operates collaboratively across the three secondary schools. Sprowston has Artsmark Silver and Sportsmark and is developing closer links with the community. The school is undergoing a major rebuilding programme as it prepares to include Year 7 from September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school is in the process of considerable change. Following two years of disappointing results in Key Stage 4, effective systems are being put into place to raise standards. These systems have largely been instigated by the newly appointed headteacher who has quickly gained the respect of pupils, teachers and parents since joining the school at the beginning of this academic year. However, the full impact of these developments has yet to be seen. So, although there is good capacity for improvement, the overall effectiveness of the school is currently satisfactory. This emerging improvement is also reflected in the satisfactory judgement for leadership and management. There is secure financial management and the school is providing satisfactory value for money.

Students' achievement is generally sound in relation to their starting points and standards are broadly average. Students' personal development is satisfactory as, while the school is making good progress in improving behaviour, there is still more to be done. Of the relatively small proportion of parents who responded to the questionnaire the majority were concerned about the behaviour of students. The behaviour seen around the school and in lessons was satisfactory but there were instances when students became bored and uninterested. Several students commented that this lack of interest occasionally disrupts learning for other students. The school is aware that more opportunities are needed for students to be actively involved in class work so they can get greater enjoyment from the lessons and take more responsibility for their learning. It recognises the need to develop greater consistency in the level of behaviour expected and in the application of agreed behaviour management strategies. Students are making satisfactory progress overall and the school recognises that greater consistency is also needed in the quality of teaching to improve the impact of teaching beyond satisfactory and thereby raise standards further.

The curriculum, and care, guidance and support provided by the school are satisfactory with some good features such as the development of reward systems and the choice of courses in Key Stage 4. Some aspects need further development, particularly the way targets are set and the information that is given to students about how they can improve their work further. Students feel safe and are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles. Good opportunities are provided for students to contribute to the community through the school and year council and fund raising activities. Students are prepared satisfactorily for life beyond school.

The Performing Arts and Media specialist status of the school is contributing significantly to the quality of education provided by the school. Many students praise the high quality of teaching and care shown by arts staff and the excellent range of arts experiences.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are satisfactory. Students make satisfactory progress in relation to their lower than average attainment on entry. They make satisfactory progress on A-level courses although results are below average. In 2006 a small but significant number of students, mainly higher achieving girls, did not do as well as expected. Students who study vocational courses achieve average results. Some subjects are taught extremely well but the majority of teaching is satisfactory and at times, fails to ignite students' interest and enthusiasm, which restricts what they achieve. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and have developed good relationships. However, there is not always sufficient challenge in lessons or enough opportunities for students to work independently.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory and students appreciate the easy access to subject staff when they have problems with their studies. A good curriculum enables students to pursue a wide range of qualifications. Students' personal development is satisfactory. They are well behaved and pleasant but are given insufficient opportunities to develop their leadership and discussion skills. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The director of the sixth form has evaluated strengths and weaknesses well, including the need for a more robust academic tracking system and closer monitoring of individual students.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase students' enjoyment through engaging them more fully in lessons and giving them more opportunity to take responsibility for their learning.
- Further improve behaviour by increasing consistency in the level of behaviour expected and in the way behaviour is managed in all classes.
- Raise standards by making sure students know how to improve their work and by using target setting more effectively.
- Clarify roles of all sixth form managers of post-16 provision in order to improve the academic tracking and overall monitoring of individual students.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Attainment on entry is below average and students, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, make satisfactory progress overall.

Students' attainment in Key Stage 3 is broadly in line with the national average. While the attainment of students in English was significantly below the national

average in 2005 it improved in 2006 and just missed the school target. The targets for mathematics and science were exceeded. Overall, students make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3.

Attainment in Key Stage 4 is below the national average. The percentage of students attaining at least five A*-C grades at GCSE fell in 2005 and continued to fall to significantly below the national average in 2006. However, there are strong indications of improved attainment for the current Year 11 and significantly more students are on track to achieve higher levels of attainment than last year. Students are also making more progress in lessons.

Personal development and well-being Grade: 3

Students' personal development including spiritual, moral social and cultural development is satisfactory. Attendance is satisfactory and is improving slightly because of procedures recently put in place; however more could be done to improve Y11 attendance. While students enjoy some lessons this is not consistent across the school. When they do not feel engaged in lessons they lose interest and find it difficult to apply themselves to the work. Behaviour is improving in lessons but the misbehaviour of some students sometimes detracts from the learning of others.

Students are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles through a range of extra-curricular sports which are well attended. Healthier meals have been introduced but there is still some improvement to be made in the variety of food options available. Bullying is not considered to be an issue by students and they feel they always have someone to talk to if there is a problem. Students are making an increasingly positive impact on the school through the school council and year councils. They contribute well to their immediate and wider community particularly through the performing arts and through fund raising activities. Some older pupils support younger ones through the peer mentoring system. Students are prepared satisfactorily for life beyond school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. While good and outstanding lessons were seen, too many were satisfactory and a small minority inadequate. The most successful lessons are characterised by a positive ethos for learning in which students are actively engaged; in these lessons a sense of enjoyment and achievement is evident.

In planning lessons, teachers consistently set learning objectives but these sometimes do not clearly identify the skills to be acquired. Some teachers do not always plan sufficiently for students of different abilities and students are not always clear about how to improve their work further. In some of the weaker lessons, too much teacher talk and/or direction undermines students' independence in their learning and on occasion results in challenging behaviour which is not always well managed.

Teachers regularly share assessment criteria with students in lessons but this has yet to feed through effectively into targets which will raise students' aspirations and motivate them to achieve more highly. At present a few students say they have no understanding of how targets are set.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory overall with some good features. Review and evaluation have led to improvements in choices at Key Stage 4 which are securing a better match to the needs of students. Students can select from a good range of vocational and traditional GCSE courses which are complemented by some college-based practical courses. These changes are at the early stages but are beginning to lead to more positive attitudes to learning. The curriculum planning to meet the needs of Year 7 students when they join the school in September is well in hand.

However, the changes to the structure of the curriculum have had some adverse impact, and pose some restrictions on the timetable. Where classes are split between two or more teachers there are continuity and planning challenges, particularly in the citizenship and information technology courses, where the quality of teaching students receive is variable. The quality of personal, social and health education is also compromised in this way and some of the older students in particular do not enjoy or value these lessons. Good plans are now in place to address these weaknesses.

The school's specialist performing arts status is having a positive impact, both on the range of opportunities open to all students within school and also in the local community. In year 10 the take-up of performing arts subjects has shown a significant increase, particularly amongst boys, reflecting students' enjoyment and valuing of these subjects. A range of clubs and a wide range of arts productions together with musical and sporting activities provide a good range of opportunities for students to enjoy and achieve beyond the school day.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides satisfactory care, guidance and support for its students. Rigorous procedures ensure students' health, welfare and safety. Child protection procedures are in place and will be reviewed shortly. Care for vulnerable students, in conjunction with other agencies is also fully in place. Learning support assistants provide effective help in the classroom for individual students.

The school has put procedures in place to deal with the issue of poor behaviour and is also concentrating on a reward system to encourage a 'cool to achieve' ethos. However, where behaviour management is inconsistent some students do not feel that they are always treated fairly.

Students are given good careers guidance about the pathways on offer to them and the school has made a significant effort to involve students and parents more in this process. Students are set academic targets but many feel that these are insufficiently challenging and do not reflect progress made during the course.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Since joining the school in September the headteacher has had a significant positive impact on the school. He is respected by students, staff and parents for the changes being made. Effective systems are being established by strong senior and middle managers, for example, the excellent coaching model of improving teaching through shared observation and evaluation in small teams of teachers. However, the full impact of these systems has yet to be seen and the school is aware of the need for continued focus on raising standards and ensuring greater consistency in the quality of teaching. The school knows itself well and recognises that while improvements have been made there is much more to be done.

The governing body is providing increasingly effective support for the school and is benefiting considerably from the guidance given by the Local Authority through the recently appointed project board. Students are sensibly being increasingly included in the ongoing development of the school through the year and school councils and the new team of prefects. Fund raising is an important aspect of school life and good international links are being developed.

The innovative development of the shared sixth form with two other secondary schools provides good opportunities for students. However, potential benefits from close links between Key Stages 3 and 4 in this school and the sixth form are being missed. For example, very few sixth form students are involved in extra-curricular activities and in providing leadership for the younger students.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.	School Overall	16–19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	NA	
The effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision	NA	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	



23 February 2007

Dear Students

Sprowston Community High School, Cannerby Lane, Sprowston, Norwich, Norfolk, NR7 8NE

You may remember that we recently held an inspection of your school. This letter is to let you know our findings.

We enjoyed coming to your school and would like to thank you for welcoming us and talking to us so openly. We agree that there are many good opportunities for you in the school, particularly in the performing arts. We have judged the overall effectiveness of the school to be satisfactory as while there have been good improvements, particularly recently, there is still more to be done.

We were pleased to see some very good teaching and have asked your headteacher and subject leaders to make sure you are given more opportunities to get fully involved in all your subjects. We agree that high standards of behaviour are not achieved in all lessons and are sorry that some students have still to recognise that poor behaviour in lessons not only affects their life chances but also affects the learning of others. We have asked your headteacher to make sure everyone understands the level of behaviour expected and the consequences of poor behaviour. We were sorry that a few of your parents have concerns about the behaviour of students and would like you to reassure them that the school is addressing these concerns.

Many of you are working very well and we recognise that some of you would welcome more challenging targets that reflect the good progress that you make. We have asked the school to make sure you all know what you can do to improve your work further and to ensure you always have challenging targets that will help you raise the level of your work. We have also asked sixth form managers to improve the academic tracking and overall monitoring of students in the sixth form.

We were impressed with the way that the school wants to involve you more in improving the school, for example through the year and school councils and prefects. It is clear that your school knows what you need and what to do to improve even further. I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Knight
Her Majesty's Inspector