



Newport Free Grammar School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115352
LEA ESSEX LEA
Inspection number 279583
Inspection dates 15 March 2006 to 16 March 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. John Williams LI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Bury Water Lane
School category	Foundation		CB11 3TR
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01799 540237
Number on roll	987	Fax number	01799 542189
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr.Simon Cooke
Date of previous inspection	7 February 2000	Headteacher	Mr. Richard Priestley

Age group 11 to 18	Inspection dates 15 March 2006 - 16 March 2006	Inspection number 279583
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Newport Free Grammar is a comprehensive, foundation and specialist language school with 1000 boys and girls aged 11 to 18 years on roll, of which 190 are in the sixth form. The school has steadily increased in size over the years and the headteacher, soon to retire, has been very successful in making it very popular and oversubscribed. The intake contains students of all levels of ability though the overall attainment of students when they enter the school in Year 7 is above the national average and a significant proportion is more able. The number of students entitled to free school meals is well below the national average. The numbers on the school's register of special educational needs and of those with statements of special educational needs, though increasing, are also below the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Newport Free Grammar is a good school which provides good value for money. It has an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. The acquisition of language college status has had a big impact on standards and quality. Since the last inspection standards have risen with exceptional standards in languages. Improvement since that time has been good. Different groups of students all make good progress and below average ability students do particularly well in their GCSEs, but in the past some of the most able have not always achieved the highest grades. The school cares well for the students giving them good support, guidance and attention to their personal development. Much of the teaching is good though it needs improving in mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). In subjects such as languages and humanities, teaching is sometimes outstanding, even inspirational. In the vast majority of lessons students take a keen interest in their learning and their behaviour is normally good. However in a few lessons, their response can be poor, often related to badly planned lessons and a minority of the current Year 11 students are not well motivated. That said, the vast majority enjoy coming to school and do well. The school's curriculum is good. The focus on adopting a healthy lifestyle is now established and students have access to an excellent physical education programme and extra curriculum activities. The school does not offer vocational GCSE courses at the end of Key Stage 4, although some courses are available in the sixth form and more are being developed. The influence and say they have in the running of the school is good and the school council meets regularly. The school has benefited from an experienced and very effective headteacher who, together with a stable leadership team have led the improvement in standards and quality. Management is good. Senior staff are aware of any small pockets of weakness and efforts continue to eradicate this. The vast majority of parents and carers are very positive about what the school does for their child. The school demonstrates that it has good capacity to maintain high standards where they exist and to use these as exemplars of good practice and thus further improve overall.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Inspectors confirm the school's view that the effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Standards have risen considerably since the last inspection to above national average, although in the last year a small minority of students did not achieve as well as expected. Overall, students make good progress and especially the students who attain lower grades at GCSE. Teaching is also good. Students are well supported by their teachers, are eager to take responsibility, and have a mature attitude to their work. They are heavily involved in the day-to-day running of the school. The extensive range of GCE 'A' and 'AS' level courses is balanced by a currently limited range of vocational options. Language college status enhances both standards and provision and all students, as a minimum, follow a short language course.

What the school should do to improve further

- improve the quality of teaching in mathematics and ICT and the use of ICT across the curriculum - improve the quality of lesson planning where teaching is not identified as 'good' - improve progress in the sixth form so that it is as good as the rest of the school - further develop vocational courses and programmes for pupils aged 14-19.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards in the subjects identified as weaker at the time of the last inspection have improved and are now very good. They are particularly high in modern foreign language where the impetus of the language college status has had a big impact. By the end of Key Stage 3 students' attainment is above average. A high percentage of them go on to gain five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C. Standards at the end of Year 11 are well above average. Progress for most is good and very good for those with learning disabilities and difficulties. Sometimes the higher achievers have not gained the best grades. Progress in mathematics is not as good as in English or science. The current Year 11 students, identified as underachieving at the end of Year 9, are mostly making very good progress towards meeting their challenging targets. Students know the levels to which they are aspiring. Most know what they have to do to achieve their targets. Some aspects of students' learning skills are very good, especially speaking and listening skills. They question very well and most are independent and co-operative learners. Standards in the sixth form have risen considerably since the last inspection to above national average, although a small minority of students have not achieved as well as expected recently. However, progress has still been good. Lower attaining students do particularly well. There has been a good increase in the number of students attaining grade 'A' and a 100% pass rate in the vocational courses.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development is good overall and is outstanding in some aspects. Students like coming to a successful rural school that is welcoming and enables them to develop positive relationships with teachers and friends. Despite many travelling some distance, attendance rates are good and truancy is rare. Attitudes to learning are positive and students' desire to learn and do well is outstanding where teaching is very good. Behaviour in the school is good, though students misbehave when the teaching and class management is less effective. Parents and students rightly view the school as a safe and secure place to learn because bullying and intimidation are infrequent and resolved effectively. The very popular provision for sports and physical activity, together with a greater emphasis on healthy eating, has encouraged more students to adopt healthy lifestyles in an exceptional way. The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Social and moral development is strongly promoted in personal, social and health education lessons and in assemblies. It is strengthened through the mentoring programme, participating in the school

council and the prefect system in the sixth form. Students' contribute actively in the wider community and participate fully in the substantial extra-curricular activities, despite the school's rural location and the need to bus to outlying areas. Careers education and appropriate work placements all help in preparation for the world of work, though the school recognises there is more to be done in this area.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The inspectors confirm the school's view that teaching and learning are good and its impact promotes good progress by pupils. Instances of outstanding teaching occur. Here, pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning because there is great challenge and interest in the teachers' approach, for example in languages. Imaginative materials are used and teachers are constantly guiding pupils to assess their own work and find ways of raising their standards. Excellent planning is a constant factor in these lessons, with fine examples evident in geography and history teaching. Other strengths in teaching and learning include teachers' strong subject expertise, well organised activities, clear instruction and good scope for pupils to participate. Support assistants also contribute well in many lessons. These factors all keep pupils well motivated and help them make good gains in learning. There is a small amount of inadequate teaching and learning in mathematics and ICT, where the main shortcoming is poor planning. The lack of structure allows pupils to operate at a leisurely rate, be off-task or to work to expectations which are too undemanding. In the sixth form, teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The quality varies with outstanding teaching in some subjects while the results indicate possible weaknesses in a small minority of other subjects. Students are generally highly motivated and appreciative of the high level of expertise shown by teachers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's curriculum is good, providing much more than is legally required. In Key Stage 3, for instance, pupils are offered a particularly wide range of modern language courses. These motivate pupils well and many are building on work begun by this language department while students were still in their primary schools. Another valuable addition is drama teaching in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum offers a very wide range of GCSE options, so that very few pupils have to drop subjects they enjoy. There are several science options and an exceptional range of modern Asian and European languages as well as Latin and ancient Greek. The school does not offer vocational GCSE courses but has introduced a work-focused programme for a group of lower attaining Year 10 students. The sixth form curriculum offers many more GCE 'AS'/'A2' options than usual, allowing a close match of applicants to course in Year

12. Two successful vocational courses are already in place and some expansion in this direction is planned. Students seeking such courses are often adequately provided for elsewhere in the area. In addition to the formal curriculum, the school offers a very good range of extra-curricular activities. For instance, the many visits and field excursions, the musical and sporting activities, especially hockey, are all of high quality and very well supported.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The inspectors agree with the school that its care, guidance and support systems are good overall. The school's readiness to accept children with more severe learning difficulties and disabilities is appreciated by parents who value the well organised and sympathetic school support. Good child protection procedures are well co-ordinated and reflect the strong links the school has with outside care agencies. Students in both the main school and sixth form value the help they get from their tutors. The sixth form has made more progress in placing the tutor at the centre of academic guidance and target setting than in the main school. However, in the latter, good assessment and support arrangements ensure students make good progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The very effective leadership of the headteacher, well supported by the governors and an experienced leadership team in setting out a clear educational direction for the school, is a major factor in the school's continued success and improvement. Together they have successfully focused on driving up standards, and continue to push for greater achievement in the sixth form. Management understands the strengths and areas for development. Communication between sections of the school community is good. Many heads of department have a good understanding of standards and quality in their subject and provide good leadership. Performance management is well established. A rolling programme of lesson observation and departmental monitoring effectively informs targets for the coming years. Inclusion is high on the agenda and the school seeks to provide value for money. The allocation of financial resources is based upon sound principles. For example, extra teaching sets have been created in Year 11 to address motivation and behaviour of these pupils. Many learning support assistants are employed. ICT as a subject, remains an underdeveloped area and its use to teach some other subjects such as mathematics is not good, often due to limited access to resources. The school's self evaluation document is good and provides an accurate assessment of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Progress has been good against some challenging targets, and the school is not complacent about what needs to be further achieved. There is commitment to ongoing development. The school's capacity to improve further is good.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
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	

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Mr Drew, Mrs Housden and Mr Preston and I enjoyed meeting you when we visited your school. Thank you for welcoming us and particularly to those who talked to us during their lunch break. It is clear that many of you are working hard and do well. The GCSE scores are very good. You make good progress in most subjects, but less so in mathematics, and ICT. The school is working hard to improve the progress the sixth formers make and you all seem to do very well in languages. Congratulations on that. Mr Priestley, the teachers, teaching assistants and other adults who work in school take good care of you. You behave well most of the time, though some of you in Year 11 have not always been good at this. However, everyone we spoke to enjoyed coming to school. It is good to see so many of you developing a better understanding of 'healthy options' food and taking part in so much PE and sport to keep fit and well. You work well in lessons. We like the way you work with each other, the teachers and teaching assistants. You speak clearly and accurately and listen to each others' ideas. This is good. We have asked the school to look at ways to help you become better at mathematics and ICT, including making more technology available for teachers to use in other subjects when they teach you. We also feel that some Year 9 pupils could be offered a choice of more vocational courses to study when they go into Year 10. The school has started to think about this one already. We hope you will continue to work hard and do well at Newport Free Grammar school. With best wishes