

The Derby High School

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	105355
Local Authority	Bury
Inspection number	287208
Inspection dates	22–23 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Susan Wareing 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	916
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Barry Roth
Headteacher	Mrs Alyson Byrne
Date of previous school inspection	25 June 2001
School address	Radcliffe Road Bury Lancashire BL9 9NH
Telephone number	0161 7641819
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Age group	11–16
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Amended Report Addendum

It provides education and care for boys and girls aged 11 to 16 within a strongly caring and supportive ethos.

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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

The Derby High School is a slightly smaller than average comprehensive school. It provides education and care for boys and girls aged 11 to 16 within a strongly caring and supportive ethos. Social deprivation within the area that the school serves is broadly average. However, around 40% of students live in one of the most deprived areas nationally and the proportion entitled to free school meals is above average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly lower than average and, within this, 2% have a statement of special educational need. While 68% of students are White British, almost a quarter of students do not speak English as a first language. The student population is more settled than average. The school became a specialist college for science and the arts in 2003.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The Derby High School is a satisfactory school because students' standards and achievement are satisfactory overall. However, the school is also an improving school with many good features. It is popular with parents and draws on the diverse background of its students to create a community that shares and values the experiences of others. Students therefore enjoy their time in school.

In 2005 and 2006 overall standards and progress at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 were broadly satisfactory, with some pockets of underachievement, notably amongst girls, middle ability boys and students who do not speak English as a first language. However, in 2006 the progress of Year 9 students improved significantly in science and mathematics, compared to their starting points.

The progress of Year 11 students in 2005 was good, but satisfactory in 2006. Underperforming groups included lower ability girls and boys of Asian heritage. However, the school's timely actions have tackled underachievement in these areas and led to improvements in a range of subjects at both key stages this year. These have not yet had time to be reflected in external tests and examinations. The school's inclusive character is reflected in the A* to G pass rate at GCSE, which is significantly higher than the national average.

Attendance is close to the national average and the school is working extremely hard to improve it. Students are well cared for and supported by the school and an extensive range of guidance is available to students whenever they need personal or academic advice. Procedures for child protection and risk assessment are very robust.

The school's specialist science and arts status underpins improvements to the curriculum and the outstanding contribution made by students to the school and local community. Older students are very proud to take responsibility for younger students, for example as mentors and prefects.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher sets a clear direction for the school. Teamwork is strong and roles and responsibilities are clearly understood by all. Recent appointments within a new staffing structure have strengthened leadership and management at all levels, including departmental and financial management. The school's limited budget is very prudently managed to support improvements to the curriculum and much-needed refurbishment to make best use of outdated accommodation. New systems for school and departmental review and better use of information about students' progress allow senior leaders to identify and tackle underachievement much more quickly than in previous years.

Senior leaders have a good understanding of the quality of teaching in the school, which is good overall. In lessons seen during the inspection teachers displayed good subject knowledge and planning was effective. Students generally made good progress. However, the minority of satisfactory lessons do not always provide sufficient challenge to different groups and individual students. Governors are knowledgeable and very actively involved in planning and monitoring improvements within the school. They provide a very strong challenge to the school when necessary.

The school has tackled all the issues from the last inspection and uses its specialist status effectively to drive further developments. This and the quality of the school's leadership and management demonstrate the school's good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that improvements in students' achievement this year are sustained and increased.
- Ensure that all teaching provides an appropriate level of challenge to students of all abilities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall. The majority of students enter the school with broadly average standards, although a significant number of students have limited literacy skills.

In 2005 standards at the end of Year 9 were broadly average and progress was satisfactory overall. However, there was underachievement amongst some groups of students, including girls, middle ability boys and some students who do not speak English as a first language. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieved in line with their peers. In 2006 standards and achievement at Key Stage 3 remained broadly satisfactory overall, but results in mathematics and science showed significant improvement.

The school's results at GCSE in 2005 were below average, although not exceptionally so, at grades A* to C and A* to C including English and mathematics. They were significantly above average at grades A* to G. Progress was good overall, with no underachieving groups.

In 2006 results at GCSE grades A* to C and A* to C including English and mathematics remained below average, but not exceptionally so. The A* to G pass rate was well above average and no students left school without a GCSE qualification. Almost all students progressed into further education, training or employment. Progress was satisfactory overall but there was some underachievement amongst girls, in particular those of lower ability and some boys of Asian heritage.

The school quickly identified the causes of the underachievement and introduced measures to deal with it effectively, including much closer monitoring of progress and new staff appointments in underachieving subjects. Evidence from this process shows that most Key Stage 4 students currently in the school are on course to reach their target grades and there is improvement in formerly underperforming departments. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, most students made good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Students enjoy coming to school. They demonstrate confidence in their relationships with each other and staff and clearly value the wide range of opportunities that are available to them inside and outside the classroom. The large number of students choosing to eat healthy food at school and taking part in sporting activities reflects their good awareness of the need to follow healthy lifestyles. Overall, behaviour is good and students feel safe. They say that when incidents occur they are dealt with quickly and that there is always someone to talk to if they need help. They are very keen to contribute to the life of the school. All students value the school council as a means of voicing their views and ideas. Learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, as illustrated by their care for each other and their support for a wide range of charities. Students make good progress in developing the skills they will need in the world of work, particularly through taking part in enterprise activities and, in some cases, running their own businesses.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. This reflects the school's investment in developing teaching and learning styles. Monitoring, evaluation and time for discussing ideas support continuous professional development and the sharing of good practice. Many, but not all, teachers use information and communication technology to support and enrich learning. Students make the greatest progress in lessons where they are engaged by a range of activities and required to think for themselves. Full involvement in developing ideas and assessing their own progress sustains students' interest and concentration. In outstanding lessons teachers' enthusiasm for the subject is infectious. In less effective lessons there is limited dialogue and challenge and the work is not always well matched to the needs of different groups of students. Improved systems for tracking students' progress are raising achievement and expectations. Although students generally know their targets, the quality of marking is variable and does not always show students exactly how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and improving. It meets statutory requirements, and the needs and capabilities of all students increasingly effectively. The curriculum is enhanced by a science/arts course in Year 7 and a performing arts course in Years 8 and 9. There is also the opportunity for some students to study a second modern foreign language. In Years 10 and 11 the more able students have opportunities for challenge through the gifted and talented programmes and early entrance to examinations. The specialist college status has increased the variety of science and arts courses, and vocational subjects have been introduced. More are planned for next year's options. The specialisms have also extended links with partner schools and the business community. These are increasing work-related opportunities and mentoring support for the students. Work-related skills are developed further through two weeks of work experience in Year 10, work on citizenship and a variety of enterprise activities. The school is working hard to improve the curriculum for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, particularly at Key Stage 4.

Many students take up the wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities, enhancing their academic, social and cultural development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The school's approach to health and safety is meticulous. Arrangements for safeguarding students are clearly established and child-protection procedures are clearly expressed and understood by all. Well established links with partner primary schools ensure that the strengths and needs of all students are identified and the transition to high school is smooth. Students benefit from a comprehensive network of care and support. Year coordinators and form teachers monitor students' individual academic and personal progress rigorously and the school supports vulnerable students very well through external mentors and its own student mentor teams. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good individual support from well trained teaching assistants and the well established links

with parents and outside agencies. All students receive good advice about curriculum choices and future educational and career opportunities.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and senior leaders have established a very clear direction for the school, driven by development planning which is thorough, coherent and identifies appropriate areas for improvement. There is some variation in the quality of this process in less experienced departments and it needs time to embed securely. Recent appointments have strengthened middle management, and middle managers are clear and enthusiastic about their role in improving the school. They are effectively supported and challenged by their line managers. This year much sharper systems have been introduced for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance at all levels and these have led to better achievement in formerly weak subjects and amongst underachieving students. The school has successfully tackled all the issues from the last inspection. Its limited resources are well managed and spending is now very closely linked to development planning. The school provides good value for money.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

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

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of The Derby High School, Bury, BL9 9NH

Following our inspection of your school we would like to thank those of you who talked to us to let us know what you think of the school. This was very helpful. We found that The Derby High School is a satisfactory school because it helps you to achieve satisfactorily. However, it is also an improving school with many good features.

Teaching is good. In most lessons that we saw you made good progress because relationships with your teachers were good and they planned activities which motivated you and encouraged you to take an active part in the lesson. In other lessons the activities were not so well designed to support those of you who find the work more difficult and to stretch the more able ones amongst you. The marking of your work was also variable. It generally helps you to know your targets but does not always show you exactly how to improve your work. Teachers are very committed to caring for you all and supporting you. It was good to hear that there is always someone you can turn to when you need help. We know how much you value the good advice you receive on options in Years 9 and 11. We were pleased to hear how much you enjoy the wide range of after-school and lunchtime activities on offer and how many of you take part.

You told us also how proud you are of taking responsibility for others, especially for younger students, as mentors and prefects. It is clear that your commitment to both the school and local community is outstanding, for example through your work with your partner primary schools and the musical and other performances you offer to the community.

The school has made a lot of improvements since the last inspection. For example, the school has improved its use of information about your progress. This has begun to help you achieve better. Since the last inspection the school has become a specialist college for science and the arts. This has helped to provide new vocational courses in Years 10 and 11, such as dance, and more are planned for next year. We think that the school should now make sure that:

- the improvements in your achievement this year continue and increase
- all teaching gives all of you the right amount of challenge.