



Northgate High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121151
Local Authority NORFOLK
Inspection number 292034
Inspection dates 20–21 September 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Anthony Knight HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Cemetery Road
School category	Community		Dereham
Age range of pupils	11–18		Norfolk NR19 2EU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01362697033
Number on roll (school)	882	Fax number	01362698484
Number on roll (6th form)	343		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs. Daphne Price
		Headteacher	Mr. John Smith
Date of previous school inspection	3 December 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	20–21 September 2006	292034

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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

Northgate High School is larger than most secondary schools. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals has risen but is still below the national average. Relatively few pupils are from minority ethnic groups and very few pupils do not have English as their first language. There are fewer pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities than the national average and fewer pupils with statements. The school has specialist status for the Arts and Humanities. It has also achieved Artsmark Silver, Sportsmark Gold, FA Charter Mark status and, as a result of being awarded the Schools Eco Award four times, it has permanent Eco-Schools status. Northgate School jointly manages the Dereham Sixth Form College with Neatherd School. Members of staff from both schools teach in the sixth form, which is based at a separate site with its own specialist facilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The overall effectiveness of Northgate School is good with some outstanding features. The school knows itself well and is deeply committed to providing the best education for its pupils. Northgate High School is a very happy school. Visitors gain a very positive impression of the school as they enter the foyer and immediately feel welcomed by pupils and staff. The overwhelming response from parents and pupils is of very high praise for the school. Pupils enjoy lessons and staff work excellently together. Good leadership and management have developed outstanding working relationships which are enabling pupils to make good progress and reach good standards in all key stages and achieve outstanding personal development. Teaching is good and the school recognises that to raise standards further all teachers need to ensure that pupils always know how they can improve their work. The pupils contribute much to the effectiveness of the school through their excellent behaviour and increasing opportunity to influence school improvement as members of the school council. They are very appreciative of the excellent range of extra-curricular activities and of the opportunities to present performances to the community. The curriculum is good and the school is extending the range of vocational options. The headteacher has been instrumental in developing the good care, guidance and support that are increasingly enabling all pupils to flourish while at the school. Good senior management and good support from the governing body have enabled considerable improvements to be made, particularly in relation to staffing. With a significant number of effective new middle managers the school is poised for further success. The school is sensibly identifying individual staff to take forward specific areas of development. The school is also giving appropriate high priority to improving the monitoring of teaching so that outstanding practice is shared more widely and new members of staff are supported fully. The specialist school status has had a positive impact on the school by giving greater emphasis to its strengths and enabling new developments such as literacy across the curriculum. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. The school has good capacity to improve and offers good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Sixth form provision is good overall, with some outstanding features in the personal development and well-being of students and in the quality of care, guidance and support provided for them. Students are especially well supported by tutors in how to manage their work and very well informed about careers and choices in higher education. Students enjoy their learning, make good progress and reach standards at GCE AS and A-level which are above the national average. Very few students do not complete the courses they begin. The sixth form curriculum gives a good choice of GCE AS and A-level courses, but the absence of lower-level courses denies opportunity to lower attaining students who lack alternative provision locally. Students are articulate, confident and have mature and highly positive attitudes to learning. They have a strong work ethic, shown by a determination to gain further skills and

qualifications to reach economic independence. The college has created a safe, supportive and challenging environment in which most students flourish and mature as fine young adults.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further by making it clear how pupils can improve their work. - Develop more systematic monitoring by senior staff and subject leaders to ensure the outstanding teaching is shared more widely and new staff are supported fully. - Provide a range of courses below advanced level in the sixth form to meet the needs of all students from the contributing high schools.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Attainment in Key Stage 3 has been significantly above the national average for the last five years. While standards in English fell between 2003 and 2005 the results for 2006 show considerable improvement and are now also above the national average. Standards are good in mathematics and significantly above the national average in science. Pupils enter school with broadly average attainment and make good progress overall. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities also make good progress. Overall attainment in Key Stage 4 rose significantly between 2003 and 2005 and is well above the national average. The percentage of pupils achieving at least five A*-C grades increased further in 2006. The relatively low attainment in English Literature in 2005, in comparison to other subjects, improved significantly in 2006, although this improvement was not matched in English Language. The number of pupils achieving A/A* in English Language and English Literature also increased significantly in 2006. The school's targets for 2005 were broadly met. The targets for 2006 were exceeded. Sixth form students make good progress and achieve well. Consequently, they attain standards above the national average on advanced courses. Students and parents are pleased with standards in the school and in the sixth form college.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils love coming to school as they feel safe, cared for and enjoy lessons. Their social and moral development is outstanding. Pupils are courteous and helpful and have a clear sense of appropriate behaviour. They confidently engage adults in conversation and are respectful of each other, valuing the contributions of all members of the group. Pupils play a significant part in the care and support provision by acting as buddies and supporting each other, especially the more vulnerable pupils in the school. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development is good and they confidently consider and discuss more complex issues

in subjects such as drama. They are very aware of the need to eat healthily and generally choose healthy options. They all have two hours of physical exercise each week and many take part in extra-curricular physical education (PE) activities. They make a significant contribution to the community through the increasing opportunity to influence school improvement on the School Council and through a variety of community events and activities. Attendance is satisfactory and improving, although some pupils miss out on lessons when their parents take them on holiday during term time. Above all, pupils are well-rounded individuals ready to take on the challenges of life when they leave the school. Sixth form students' personal development and well-being are also outstanding. Their behaviour is exemplary and they are highly motivated to learn.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are good because teachers have good subject knowledge and care greatly about the progress the pupils make. Teachers know their pupils well, and are increasingly using individual pupil information to track and monitor their progress. Teachers work together successfully to ensure good cross-curricular literacy for all pupils. Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent. Teaching assistants give very good support, especially to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils work hard and enjoy their work, especially when they are able to try different activities and learning styles. They make good progress and give thoughtful and mature answers when the questions posed by teachers challenge them to extend their learning. They take care over the presentation of their work. In the best lessons all pupils are clear what they need to do to improve their work. However, the school is aware that this level of support and challenge is not yet consistent within and across all subjects. Marking, in particular, does not always show pupils how they can improve their learning. Teaching in the sixth form is good and helps students to learn independently. As a result they gain confidence, make good progress and reach standards above the national average.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school provides a good broad and balanced curriculum overall which is enriched with an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in PE, music, drama and English. The extra-curricular activities are very well attended and large numbers of pupils audition for the school's excellent drama productions. All pupils follow a well managed and effectively delivered programme of personal, social and health education and citizenship. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are offered a good range of GCSEs as options,

including applied GCSEs in Art and Design and information communication technology (ICT). Vocational provision is further extended with the introduction of well taught Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) courses in personal development and opportunities for pupils to attend work related courses. The school is developing the vocational courses further. The two hours of taught PE, which all pupils receive, is enhanced with opportunities to take GCSE PE as well as a short course in PE and the Junior Sports Leader Award. Whilst the majority of pupils take discrete lessons in ICT throughout the school, including 70% who take the very successful applied GCSE course, the school is aware of the need to track more closely the development of the ICT skills of those not taking this course. The sixth form curriculum gives a good choice of advanced courses, but the absence of lower-level courses denies opportunity to lower attaining students who lack alternative provision locally.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The level of care, guidance and support is good. The pastoral support provided to pupils is outstanding and parents particularly value the support given by form tutors and Heads of Year. The quality of the transition process is outstanding and makes a very positive contribution to pupils' achievement and personal development. From the first induction meeting with the numerous feeder primary schools the process ensures pupils are well briefed and prepared for life in secondary education. Rigorous child protection procedures are well known by all staff and are implemented effectively. Risk assessments are completed diligently and ensure that students learn in safety. Good systems are in place for monitoring absence and for keeping parents informed. The care for lower achieving pupils is good and there are good plans to improve provision further through initiatives such as the Positive Activities for Young People, which is aimed at increasing older vulnerable pupils' self-confidence and sense of responsibility. While relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent overall, the school is aware that there is still a need to ensure every pupil is happy at school. The procedures for dealing with the very few concerns expressed by parents and pupils are being reinforced through planned follow-up to make sure that the issues have been resolved. Academic monitoring has improved considerably and is increasingly providing helpful information on overall pupil progress. However, it does not yet match pupils' individual progress to what they need to achieve in each year if they are to reach the standards of which they are capable. The care, guidance and support that sixth formers receive are outstanding. Tutors are highly committed to help individuals to manage life and work problems and students greatly appreciate the help they receive.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good. The school is led very well by the headteacher, who is respected by staff, pupils, parents and governors. He is deeply committed to the further development of the school, so much so that he has taken on areas of responsibility often shared more widely in other schools. There are good plans to involve individual members of staff to lead significant areas of school improvement. Good senior management and good support from the governing body have enabled considerable improvements to be made, particularly in relation to staffing. The five new middle managers who began this term have made an effective start, with clear plans for further improvement. The school's self-evaluation is thorough and perceptive and appropriate actions have been taken. However, while informal management structures have helped to develop very positive working relationships, the school recognises that more systematic monitoring of teaching by senior staff and subject leaders is needed to share the outstanding practice more effectively and to provide support for new staff. The tracking of pupil attainment and progress is being developed further to provide more information about pupils' progress in relation to expected targets. Excellent plans are in place to improve support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and pupils at risk of exclusion. Financial planning is secure. The governing body provides good support to the school. Leadership and management in the sixth form are good. The director and senior staff effectively balance the input of the two contributing high schools while retaining the college's own sense of identity. Heads of department successfully coordinate the input from the staff of the two contributing high schools.

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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	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
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?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
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	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	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	1

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.

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	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	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

25 September 2006 Dear Pupils Northgate High School Cemetery Road Dereham Norfolk NR19 2EU We enjoyed coming to your school and would like to thank you for welcoming us so warmly and talking to us so openly. We were very pleased to see that you are enjoying being at the school and agree with your comments and the views of your parents that Northgate is a good school. We were very impressed by the way you help each other and respect what others have to say. The working relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent and the school is working really hard to make sure you all have the best education possible. We have asked your school to develop the range of courses below advanced level in the sixth form to make sure it meets the needs of all of you. It was good to see that you understand that you have to make the most of your time at school if you want to have more choice about what you can do when you leave. Most of you work hard and do well but it is a pity that some still do not realise that every time you miss school it gets more difficult to show what you can really achieve. It would help you if you could ask your parents not to take you on holiday during term time. We were pleased to see that most of you are making good progress and that there is good teaching in all subjects. We have asked your headteacher and subject leaders to find ways to make sure that all teaching increasingly matches the best. We have also asked your teachers to make sure that in every lesson you know what you can do to improve your work. You can help by asking your teachers if you are not sure how you could provide a better answer, or piece of work. Your school council is working very hard to improve your school. We were impressed with what they are doing and know that they would welcome even more involvement from all of you. We have asked your headteacher to identify members of staff who can help the school improve further by taking forward specific areas of development. You can help by telling your school council about the areas that you feel need improving. There are many good opportunities for you at Northgate High School. We wish you every success for the future. Anthony Knight HMI