

# Sir John Nelthorpe School

## Inspection report

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Unique Reference Number	118112
Local Authority	North Lincolnshire
Inspection number	326766
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Janet Palmer HMI

The inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	894
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr T R O'Neill
Headteacher	Mrs L Hewlett-Parker
Date of previous school inspection	January 2006
School address	Grammar School Road Brigg North Lincolnshire DN20 8AA
Telephone number	01652 656551
Fax number	01652 658229
Email address	admin.sjn@northlincs.gov.uk

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## Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 29 lessons, and held meetings with staff, groups of students, a member of the governing body and a local authority representative. They observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation including 166 responses to parental questionnaires.

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

- the progress made by students across the school, particularly in English, science, and information and communication technology (ICT)
- the impact of subject leaders on the quality of teaching and learning
- how well the curriculum meets the needs of all students, including those in the sixth form.

## Information about the school

Sir John Nelthorpe is an average sized voluntary controlled school. The school has a small sixth form which is federated with The Vale of Ancholme Technology and Music College to form The Brigg Sixth Form. The Brigg Sixth Form collaborates with Baysgarth School in the delivery of post-16 courses. Students come from a wide range of social backgrounds. The proportion of students eligible for a free school meal is below average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is very low and there are very few students who are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average, although the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is higher than average. The school gained specialist status for science, mathematics and computing in September 2005 and has achieved the Healthy Schools Award.

## Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

3

### Main findings

Sir John Nelthorpe school provides a satisfactory education for its students. Some aspects of its work are good, notably the rates of attendance and behaviour of the pupils. The headteacher, with active support from the senior leadership team and the governing body, is promoting a shared vision for improvement across the school. The culture of the school is changing and the climate for learning improving. However, ambitions for the school are too limited. There is insufficient focus on areas of priority and a lack of urgency in the actions undertaken.

Students achieve satisfactorily overall. They enter the school in Year 7 with broadly average levels of attainment and although there is some inconsistency year-on-year, make satisfactory progress during their time at the school. In 2008 the percentage of students gaining five or more GCSE grades A\* to C, including mathematics and English was below what could be expected for students at this school. It was also the case that, in most subjects, too few students obtained the higher grades in GCSE examinations. Since 2008, initiatives to track students' progress and provide targeted academic support for groups and individuals at risk of underachieving, indicate that current students are now progressing in line with expectations, although some who have reached their targets are not challenged to go further.

Most teaching is now good and students are enthusiastic and keen to learn. Teachers know their students well and lessons are interesting and engaging. However, in some lessons tasks are not sufficiently well matched to the learning needs of all students; as a result not all students progress as well as they should. Occasionally, teachers direct lessons too much and this can limit the degree to which students develop as independent learners. Marking, especially of assessed pieces of work, is usually thorough and affirms the efforts of the students. However, advice to students on how to improve or reach the next stage in their learning is limited.

Curriculum provision is improving and meets most students' needs. Students' moral, social and cultural awareness is satisfactory. Charitable work adds to their personal development in empathising with others and the excellent religious education lessons make a positive contribution to their spiritual awareness. However, students' cultural awareness is limited, particularly their understanding of British diversity. Students make a satisfactory contribution to the school and wider community by acting as mentors to younger students and taking leadership roles in sporting activities. Elected members of the school council would like more opportunities to contribute to

the decision making process and develop support skills for other students.

Subject leaders of English and mathematics, with support from the local authority, are now able to collect and use data effectively to inform their planning and develop the work of their departments. As a result, they are more accountable for the outcomes of their departments, and better able to support and challenge students. However, accountability for middle managers across the rest of the school is not as robust or consistent.

The school has satisfactory capacity to improve and is being effectively supported by the local authority in strengthening this. Management systems are improving, albeit more slowly than required, and the school's tracking data indicate that standards are rising. Teaching has improved and is now generally good. However, this has yet to have a measurable impact on students' progress over time.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' rates of progress and raise standards by:
  - ensuring more effective use is made of assessment information, to enable teachers to plan learning activities that better match students' learning needs
  - ensuring that, in all subjects, teachers' marking provides clear guidance to students on how to improve.
- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels by:
  - developing a more focused, ambitious and urgent approach to improvement
  - ensuring systems of accountability for middle managers are robust and consistent.
- Improve students' personal development and well-being by:
  - enabling students to more effectively participate in decision making affecting the life of the school
  - strengthening the spiritual and cultural dimensions of students' learning.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students' progress over time is satisfactory. However, there are signs of improvement in the quality of their learning, most clearly where teaching is better matched to students' individual needs. In such lessons, engaging activities that stimulate students' thinking, together with probing questions that encourage clear articulation of ideas, accelerate students' progress towards their targets. However, such rigour is not sufficiently well embedded across all subjects to improve students' progress overall. Assessment information is collected and analysed at regular intervals and, although it is being used appropriately at Key Stage 4 to identify students at risk of underachievement, it is not fully and consistently informing classroom practice. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported in lessons and progress as well as their peers. There is little difference in the achievement of boys and girls.

Students generally feel safe around the school and feel they have someone they can turn to for support. While students acknowledge that there is some bullying, most are confident that it will be sorted out by the staff.

Students behave well during break and lunchtimes; movement around the school is sensible. Most students are sensitive to the needs of others and are courteous to staff and visitors. Classroom behaviour is positive, with students engaging well and contributing to their own and others' learning. Students understand the sanctions and rewards system in the school; younger students participate well in trying to secure rewards through the merit system.

Most students eat healthily in school and all experience two hours of physical education. Students understand the dangers of smoking, drug and alcohol misuse, sexual health risks and factors which may lead to emotional difficulties. Students report that a small number of students smoke in the school's grounds but none were noticed by inspectors.

The school operates good procedures to monitor and support attendance. As a result, attendance levels are good. Punctuality to lessons is satisfactory overall, although movement between the upper and lower school sites hinders prompt starts to a proportion of lessons.

There are some strengths in students' work related skills and understanding. Arrangements for work experience and careers guidance are good; the great majority of students move on to employment, further education or training when they leave the school. Still, lower than expected attainment in basic skills and insufficient opportunities to engage in enterprise activities suggests provision is not robust enough to ensure good preparation for the workplace.

Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	3
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	3
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	3
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	3
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	3
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	3

## How effective is the provision?

Arrangements for students starting the school are effective and ensure the school is aware of any particular needs of students before they arrive. The school engages appropriately with external agencies to provide additional support for those students who may require it.

The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and have good relationships with students. In the lessons that are satisfactory the activities are not always well matched to students' learning needs. Although much marking is good, it is inconsistent across the subjects and does not always explain to students what they need to do to improve.

Since the last inspection, the school has broadened its curriculum to ensure it more effectively meets the differing needs and aspirations of all its students. In Years 7 to 9, students study a balanced curriculum enriched by provision for drama, and the opportunity for the more able to take two modern foreign languages from Year 8 onwards.

The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is improving. Students are now able to follow learning pathways which they consider are relevant for their current and future needs and ambitions. There is a choice of a broad range of GCSE courses together with a growing number of vocational qualifications. Some courses are now starting in Year 9 which further motivates students and provides positive levels of challenge. This flexible approach is providing more appropriate experiences for a growing number of students, including some who are not well suited to a full GCSE programme.

Some students at risk of disaffection with school are effectively catered for through a combination of school and off-site opportunities, for example, through links with a

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<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

local college or other providers. A range of extra-curricular clubs and activities are provided including sporting opportunities, additional learning support sessions, and educational visits both in this country and in Europe. The school's specialist status has enriched the curriculum through the wider range of courses now available in science, mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT).

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

The quality of teaching	2
The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

## How effective are leadership and management?

The leadership and management of the school have been strengthened since the last inspection by additions to the senior team, and by enhancing the role of middle managers. There is now an appropriate emphasis on improving students' achievement and the quality of teaching and learning. Systems for analysing and using data and for monitoring the work of the school are improving. Systems to check how well students are doing enable the school to match suitable intervention programmes with identified students who require support. Despite this, long term target setting to support continuous improvement lacks ambition. Constructive support from the local authority is helping managers take action to deliver improvement, albeit slowly.

The school's promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory. It has well established links with local schools and colleges. Charitable fundraising and extra-curricular visits help to expand students' horizons but a policy to ensure a coherent approach for all students is not in place. As a consequence, students' understanding of Britain's diverse communities is limited.

Governors know the school and its community well. The improved use of information about the work of the school enables governors to understand the strengths of the school and the areas requiring improvement. Governors carry out their duties appropriately and supportively. They monitor and challenge the school's progress carefully but there is an opportunity to extend this further. The impact of the school's actions to secure equality of opportunity for students is satisfactory. Safeguarding procedures related to recruitment and child protection are in place and sound.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and	3

tackles discrimination	
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

## Sixth form

Students achieve satisfactorily overall in the sixth form. Attainment in A level examinations is broadly in line with national averages. These results represent satisfactory progress given the students' prior attainment at GCSE. The progress of students has increased significantly over the past three years and the school's detailed assessment information shows that this is likely to rise again. This is a consequence of good leadership and management of the sixth form. The drive and ambition held by the head of sixth form, together with the strong focus on improving outcomes for students, are showing positive signs of success. The robust monitoring systems enable key areas of weakness to be tackled effectively.

Teaching is good in the sixth form. Teachers have good subject knowledge and provide good opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning. The curriculum has improved in recent years and offers a good range of academic and applied courses in co-operation with other providers in the area.

Effective tracking procedures to monitor the progress of students have been implemented. Students are given constructive feedback on how to improve and as a result make sound progress given their starting points. This focus on achievement gives rise to a strong learning ethos where the students become mature and purposeful learners.

Students are well cared for and guided by their tutors and the head of sixth form. Objective guidance is given to ensure that students are on the right course, succeed and move onto suitable higher education courses, employment or training. As a result, students are well prepared for the next stage in their lives.

Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2
Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3

## Views of parents and carers

In their responses to the questionnaires, the overwhelming number of parents expressed their satisfaction with the work of the school. Although the school seeks their views, a number of parents expressed concern about a lack of communication between themselves and the school.

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Sir John Nelthorpe School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspection team received 166 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 826 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	72	83	8	3

## 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. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
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. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

- Attainment:** the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
- 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.
- Achievement:** the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
- 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.

19 June 2009



Dear Students

Inspection of Sir John Nelthorpe School, Brigg, DN20 8AA

I would like to thank you on behalf of the inspection team for making us feel welcome at your school. I appreciate the time many of you gave to tell us about your work and other activities. These are the main findings of the inspection.

You make satisfactory progress during your time at Sir John Nelthorpe School. The headteacher and senior leadership team are working successfully to improve teaching and learning across the school. We have recommended that they continue to do this more speedily, with even higher expectations of what you can achieve.

Teachers are now better able to track your progress and provide extra support for groups and individuals at risk of underachieving. As a result, your learning is improving and most of you are expected to reach your targets. Inspectors were pleased to see these developments and have recommended that all departments do this equally well.

Most teaching is good and you are enthusiastic and keen to learn. Teachers know you well and are good at ensuring tasks are interesting and engaging. However, in some lessons the tasks are too easy or too difficult for some of you and this means that you do not learn as well as you should. We have recommended that teachers make sure the work they set is just right for your level and that, when marking your work, they give you clear advice on how to improve.

The curriculum has improved recently and meets most of your needs. You can now choose from a broad range of GCSE courses together with a growing number of vocational qualifications. You have a good opportunity to develop your spiritual awareness through the excellent religious education lessons but we have recommended that you have more opportunities to learn about diversity in Britain. The sixth form offers you a good range of courses and you make satisfactory progress. Teaching is good and staff ensure that you are guided well as you learn and make decisions about the next stage of your lives.

Many of you make a contribution to the school and wider community by acting as mentors to younger students and taking leadership roles in sporting activities. Outside of lessons some of you are involved in charity work which helps you to empathise with others. We have recommended that the school gives you even more opportunities to contribute to the school by strengthening the work of the school council.

Your behaviour is good in lessons and around the school and you have a good understanding of the benefits of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. You can help the school to achieve its ambitions for you by continuing to behave well and by making the most of the opportunities the school offers you.

I would like to wish you all the very best for a happy and successful future.

Yours faithfully

Janet Palmer HMI

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