



John Spence Community High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108644
Local Authority North Tyneside
Inspection number 288147
Inspection dates 16–17 November 2006
Reporting inspector Ann Wallis

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Preston Road
School category	Community		North Shields, Tyne and Wear
Age range of pupils	11–16		NE29 9PU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 2005220
Number on roll (school)	881	Fax number	0191 2005225
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Martin Shortreed
		Headteacher	Mr Jim Stephenson
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	16–17 November 2006	288147

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This specialist Sports College is of average size. It is an established Community School and has an adult education base. The school serves an area of North Tyneside, which includes a wide socio-economic mix. The attainment of students when they enter the school is average. There are small numbers of students from minority ethnic groups and a few with English as an additional language. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school has Healthy Schools, Sportsmark Gold, Artsmark Gold and Basic Skills awards. It also has Investors in People status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

John Spence is a good school with outstanding features, as stated in its own accurate self-evaluation. The school provides excellent personal development for its students; their achievement, well-being, health, safety and enjoyment are all central to its work. Students are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They clearly enjoy their learning, behave well, attend regularly and want to succeed. They are particularly appreciative of the outstanding care, guidance and support which the school provides. Groups of confident and articulate students described to inspectors the varied ways in which the school had given them individual support. These ranged from nurturing talent in gymnastics and ice skating to providing invaluable extra help with their work or giving just the right advice about future career opportunities.

The large number of completed questionnaires that inspectors received showed that parents are equally positive in their praise for the school. Their comments include 'kind and friendly staff', 'my son struggles with his lessons but staff make him feel so comfortable that he really enjoys going to school' and 'problems are dealt with immediately and sensitively'.

Students reach standards that are above average; test and examination results and inspection evidence confirm that they achieve well. Students enter Year 7 with broadly average standards. They make good and accelerating progress as they move through Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 to reach above average standards by the end of Year 11. GCSE results show an upward trend and the numbers of students gaining five A* to C grades including English and mathematics improved markedly in 2006. However, the school recognises that there are marked variations in students' achievement in different subjects at the end of Year 11 and strategies are now being put in place to address these inconsistencies.

Students' achievement is good because they respond well to the good teaching they receive. In some lessons, teaching and learning are outstanding. Most teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subjects and provide a range of interesting activities, which motivate students to learn. In some lessons, work is not matched closely enough to the needs of all students, particularly the higher attainers, to enable them to reach the very best standards they are capable of. The curriculum meets the needs of all students well. Specialist Sports College status greatly enhances the work of the school and has provided a stimulus for the school to forge valuable links with a wide range of partners. The outstanding provision for sport and the excellent programme of extra-curricular activities contribute greatly to students' achievement and their enjoyment of school.

Leadership and management are good and enable students to achieve well. The newly appointed headteacher has made an excellent start. He has articulated a vision for the school, which is shared by staff and governors. The school ethos is very positive, with an air of optimism and excitement about the future, indicating a good capacity for further improvement. The school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards further by matching work more closely to the needs and abilities of all students, particularly the higher attainers.
- Improve the performance of subjects in which students are achieving least well in national examinations.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average and achievement is good. All groups of students, including those with English as an additional language, achieve well. Although there are minor fluctuations from year to year, attainment on entry to the school, whilst broadly average, is now rising. However, there are more students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities than is usual.

In 2005, standards reached in Year 9 were above average and students made good progress from their starting points. Students performed best in mathematics and science. In 2006 unvalidated Year 9 tests, results have dropped slightly but school data indicate that students' achievement remains good given their lower starting points when they entered the school. Students, particularly higher attaining girls, achieved least well in English and the school rightly identified this as an area for concern. Following a period of turbulence, staffing in the English department is now stable and standards are rising.

GCSE results for 2005 were average overall, although the numbers of students gaining five or more higher GCSE grades including English and mathematics was below average. However, value added data show that students' achievement was high given their capabilities and starting points. The school identifies above average numbers of students as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These students achieve well and make a significant contribution to the school's value added score. In 2006, unvalidated GCSE results showed a further improvement; standards were above average and challenging targets were met. However, the school's careful analysis of examination data highlights marked variations in students' achievement in different subjects. Students performed best in mathematics, business studies and sport and least well in information and communication technology (ICT), health and social care, geography and graphics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development and well-being of students are outstanding. Their strong desires to learn and succeed in life are a real credit to all the adults who work with them. They enjoy school where the atmosphere is one of calm, order, interest and industry. Attendance is above average and rising. Behaviour when students are in lessons, having meals and moving around the site is good overall. Frequently it is exemplary. Exclusions for unacceptable conduct are falling quickly because the school's

alternative internal arrangements are becoming increasingly effective. Students feel very safe in school and know that genuine support would be on hand should they request it.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Their personal horizons are extended effectively through the superb range of sporting activities, cultural visits and opportunities to take real responsibility. Older students speak enthusiastically about the multitude of opportunities they have to help, guide and support the younger ones. Charity fundraising and involvement in activities provided for the wider community, such as dance and drama performances, effectively help to improve students' talents and confidence. An extremely strong focus on healthy living and participation in sport and exercise gives students an excellent base for making informed choices about lifestyle and physical activity.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Typically teaching is good-humoured and knowledgeable, and classes are well managed. Relationships between students and teachers are positive and supportive. Teachers use praise well so students enjoy learning and participate in lessons conscientiously. In most lessons, teachers use an effective mix of explanation and interesting activities that help students make good progress. In the best lessons, students are given time to think and reflect on what they have learned and discuss their ideas with others. Consequently, students are clear about what needs to be tackled in each lesson and are increasingly involved in deciding if they have been successful. Students know what to do to improve their work and how to reach the next level or GCSE grade. In a small number of less effective lessons, planning is weaker and lesson activities are less interesting and varied.

Students' progress is tracked well against their individual targets. However, teachers do not always plan activities tailored to individual students' differing abilities. This means that some students, particularly higher attainers, are not always challenged to achieve as well as they could. Students' work is marked regularly and students say they value the advice teachers provide to help them make good progress. Teaching assistants provide effective support to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and help them achieve well in lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. Specialist status continues to have a positive impact on the work of the school and the provision for sport is outstanding during and outside of the school day. All students study a vocational subject and have a good choice of academic courses. The school's alternative and flexible curriculum arrangements provide good work-based learning, which meets the particular needs of a small group of

students well. Provision for basic skills is good in literacy and numeracy and satisfactory in ICT.

The 'Fit for Life' programme makes a good contribution to students' understanding of citizenship issues and helps prepare them well for the world of work. However, not all students in Years 7, 8 and 9 receive all the Fit for Life lessons. A high proportion of students participate in and really enjoy the outstanding range of enrichment activities which the school provides. These include many visits in the UK and abroad and an excellent range of sporting, dramatic and cultural activities. The school's outstanding links with a wide range of partners including schools, colleges, universities, and health and sporting professionals all add to the richness of the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Very good levels of commitment to all aspects of welfare and guidance ensure that students' personal development is of a high order. Excellent procedures for the vetting of staff working directly with learners, child protection, health and safety and risk assessment are all in place. Students feel very safe in school and enjoy it. They speak highly about the quality of all of the support and help that they receive.

Procedures for monitoring students' academic and personal development are excellent. Vulnerable students, those with learning difficulties and any causing concerns about progress or attitude are all supported systematically and very effectively. The way that the school monitors and improves students' behaviour is particularly good. All students receive guidance of good quality when they join the school, choose GCSE subjects, consider careers and transfer to the next stage of education. Guidance on healthy living is outstanding.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good overall. There are, however, pockets of excellent leadership, which have led to outstanding provision in students' personal development and in the way students are cared for, guided and supported. New appointments, and a reshaping of roles and responsibilities, have invigorated the senior leadership team. The role of middle managers is being developed well through relevant training and sharing of good practice, and so monitoring is at least good in most, but not all, subjects.

The school's view of its strengths and weaknesses is accurate, and planning to improve weaker areas is good. A cycle of self-review is well established, involving staff and governors at all levels. Students' and parents' views are regularly sought and changes made as a result of feedback, for example, in changing the way parents' evenings are organised. The school has a wealth of data on students' attainment, which it recognises

needs to be streamlined so that teachers in classrooms can use it more effectively to plan work for the different ability groups in the class.

Governance is good. Governors have a wide range of experience and skills, which are put to good use in supporting the school's development. Sports college status is making an outstanding contribution to students' academic standards and personal development. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Accommodation in some areas is inadequate, for example, mathematics.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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
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?	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
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	2
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

John Spence Community High School

Preston Road

North Shields

Tyne and Wear

NE29 9PU

16 November 2006

Dear Students

Thank you for making us welcome to your school and for the valuable contribution that many of you made to this inspection. We were impressed with your positive attitudes and enjoyed our discussions with you.

What we have said about your school in the inspection report:

- John Spence is a good school with outstanding features
- you reach standards in your work which are above average and you achieve well
- teaching and learning are good
- the school provides excellent personal development and outstanding care, support and guidance for you
- your school is well led and managed
- you attend regularly and behave well.

What we have asked your school to do now:

- further improve the standards you reach by making sure that work in lessons is closely matched to your needs and abilities (particularly for those of you who are aiming for the highest grades)
- improve the performance of subjects in which you are achieving least well in national examinations.

You are fortunate to go to such a good school. Please help your school to improve further by continuing to attend regularly and aiming for the highest standards in all that you do.

Yours sincerely

Ann Wallis

Lead Inspector