

Darton High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106651
Local authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	336716
Inspection dates	20–21 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Cathryn Kirby HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community School
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,053
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Sanderson
Headteacher	Simon Hill
Date of previous school inspection	November 2006
School address	Churchfield Lane Darton Barnsley S75 5EW
Telephone number	01226 382568
Fax number	01226 382350
Email address	s.hill@barnsley.org

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0845 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St. Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 0845 404045
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 31 teachers in lessons for periods lasting between 20 and 30 minutes. They observed a further nine teachers for a shorter period, typically for 15 minutes. In addition, inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, other school leaders and managers, governors, staff, groups of students, representatives of Barnsley Children's Services and parents. They observed the school's work, looked at a range of documents and scrutinised students' work. Inspectors looked at the questionnaires completed by 143 parents and those completed by staff and students.

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

- the impact of teaching on the learning and progress of the most able students and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- how the school prioritises, implements and judges the impact of actions identified in its development plans
- the school's strategies for sharing the practice of the strongest departments and the most effective teachers in order to improve the weakest.

Information about the school

Darton High School is a larger than average secondary school. It is situated in an area with some pockets of social disadvantage. The proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs or with other special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. Very few students speak English as an additional language or come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The eligibility for free school meals is below average. The school has specialist status in humanities. Funded by the 'Building Schools for the Future' initiative, a new school building, adjacent to the current site, is due to open in February 2011. The school has recently become part of the Department for Children, Schools and Families initiative, 'Gaining Ground' which is designed to improve progress in 'coasting schools'.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its students an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Students' attainment on entry to the school is average. By the time they leave at age 16 their overall attainment is below that of their peers nationally. Progress between the ages of 11 and 16 is inadequate and has declined steadily over the last three years. This pattern of achievement results from too many lessons where teaching is inadequate and not enough where it is good. Inspection findings identified some successes but insufficient evidence to support the schools claims of sustained improvements. A key weakness of teaching is that it provides insufficient challenge to the most-able students and does not support well enough the learning of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The potential of many staff remains untapped because it has not been developed. Opportunities to share the principles of successful teaching across the school are limited and are a source of frustration for some staff.

Improvement since the last inspection has not happened with the rapidity or the magnitude that could be reasonably expected. The headteacher has not provided the strategic leadership necessary to bring about improvement. The ways in which the school prioritises and evaluates actions taken to improve outcomes for students are ineffective. The governing body has not been robust in its challenge of endemic underachievement. Beyond the humanities curriculum, specialist status is not reflected strongly in the school's ethos.

Students appreciate the efforts of some of their teachers, but recognise the wide variability in lesson quality. Where parents voice concerns about the school, these are most frequently linked to their children's learning and progress, and behaviour management. Students respond well to good teaching and enjoy the challenge it brings. This experience is infrequent. Consequently, the curriculum is not of sufficient breadth to accommodate the learning needs of all and has too little impact on improving life chances. Students are excited about the new school building which is fast taking shape and are pleased to have been consulted about developments.

Provision caters better for pupils' personal development where the outcomes are satisfactory in some areas. Students generally feel safe and procedures for safeguarding them are satisfactory. The school recognises that it has not been rigorous enough in tackling low attendance, or quick in making the link between absence and attainment. Inspectors found inconsistencies in teachers' management of inappropriate behaviour in lessons.

The school has worked to build relationships with parents following protracted industrial action by teachers in 2007/08. A school newspaper, a governors' forum to engage with parents and carers and rejuvenating parental participation in governance are all steps forward. However, feedback from parents confirms more remains to be done in order for the school's engagement with parents to become a productive partnership.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and accelerate progress by:
 - developing teachers' skills in the application of strategies to support learning
 - planning and delivering lessons which offer appropriate levels of challenge to all students
 - making better use of the effective practice that exists within the school
 - improving the quality and usefulness of marking and the standard of work in students' books
 - managing more effectively the time allocated to additional subject support so that it has greater impact on students' achievement.

- Ensure that leadership and management at all levels has greater impact on the school's effectiveness by:
 - prioritising actions for school improvement and agreeing measurable success criteria
 - increasing the rigour of systems that monitor and evaluate the impact of actions on provision and outcomes
 - making expectations clear and accountability rigorous
 - nurturing the potential of senior and middle leaders through well-targeted professional development
 - increasing the rigour with which governors hold the school to account for its performance.

- Strengthen outcomes in other areas of provision by:
 - reversing the downward trend in attendance by carefully targeted intervention involving students and their parents
 - communicating clearly to students, staff and parents high expectations of behaviour, and applying these consistently.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of students

4

Improvements were seen in 2009 in the proportion of students attaining A* to C grades in English and in mathematics as a result of intervention focused on students

at the grade C/D borderline. The attainment of all students across the wider curriculum tells a different story. Across their best eight subjects, and in English and mathematics, the overall attainment of 16-year-olds is lower now than at the time of the last inspection. Variability between subject outcomes is considerable. Students' attainment is above average in expressive arts subjects which they clearly enjoy. In science it is unacceptably low. Attainment in core subjects has been below, or well below average for the last three years. Few students gain A* and A grades. In too many lessons inspectors observed students making inadequate progress because of widespread weaknesses in teaching and learning.

Across the curriculum there are suitable opportunities for students to reflect on spiritual matters and develop their personal values. The citizenship curriculum develops their understanding of what it means to be a responsible member of society in a local and national context. The house system promotes a sense of school community reflected in the positive social interactions observed by inspectors in the dining hall. Food choices at lunchtime show many are keen to adopt a healthy lifestyle, but students say a narrow range of sports clubs restricts choice.

The majority of students feel safe in school, although a few say that teachers are inconsistent in their expectations of behaviour. Inspectors saw inadequate behaviour in a small minority of lessons. Although this was closely linked to the quality of teaching, over-tolerance of occasional inappropriate behaviour was more widespread. Inspectors also saw examples of good attitudes to learning and respect for others. Attendance remains stubbornly low.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Students' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Students' attainment	4
The quality of students learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
The extent to which students feel safe	3
Students' behaviour	4
The extent to which students adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which students contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which students develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account:	
Students' attendance	4
The extent of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Provision is inconsistent in quality and does not adequately meet students' needs. Pockets of good practice exist where imaginative activities provide challenge and encourage thinking. Students value these opportunities and especially enjoy the stimulating experiences provided through the expressive arts. They enthusiastically described to inspectors the 'brilliant' talent shows in which many of them participate. This contrasts markedly with their experiences elsewhere, for example, in science and after-school learning support. The impact of a broad curriculum with the

potential to meet the needs and interests of all is too often diminished by inadequate teaching. The school has not capitalised on the small amount of good teaching to further develop the skills of satisfactory teachers and eliminate inadequate practice. Lessons do not often challenge the most able. The special educational needs of other students, usually identified in lesson plans, are rarely reflected in learning activities. Effective marking and helpful feedback are valued by students but are infrequent.

A high staff presence focuses on tight control of behaviour around the school site. In lessons, management of behaviour for learning is inconsistent, so students do not have clear boundaries. The curriculum provides suitable opportunities for students to reflect on spiritual and moral matters. Mixed-age tutor groups promote healthy social interaction between students of different ages. Suitable guidance and support ensure a smooth transition into Year 7 and into further education. Opportunities to understand and experience the cultural diversity found in Britain are presented through the citizenship curriculum. Partnerships with other agencies adequately support the well-being of vulnerable students. However, these students do not thrive in mainstream lessons as a result of shortcomings in the monitoring of their progress. New management arrangements have recently recognised these weaknesses and a review of provision is underway.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets students' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	4

How effective are leadership and management?

The efforts of the senior leadership team have not secured sufficient improvement since the last inspection. The headteacher does not provide a clear direction for the work of other leaders and managers. Priorities are not well understood. Around half of those staff who responded to the questionnaire had concerns about the school's approach to behaviour management.

The school development plan and other improvement plans lack coherence. As tools to bring about sustainable improvement they are not fit for purpose. Systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's work are not well established. The impact of initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and learning has been limited. For example, work scrutiny carried out by middle and senior leaders has failed to tackle the highly variable quality of marking or low standards of work in some students' books, even where shortcomings are clearly evident. Accountability is weak. Expectations of staff and students are not high enough. This reinforces low aspirations. Members of the wider senior leadership team have recently begun to review the way that school manages attendance and supports special educational needs. Work to develop progress tracking systems is also in the early stages. All these initiatives represent a step in the right direction.

The governing body has failed to see the lack of impact of work to raise achievement. In the face of overwhelming evidence following the 2009 examination results, it has not acted decisively. Inadequacies in provision to support students' academic achievement do not promote equality of opportunity. The school does not provide satisfactory value for money when judged against the outcomes for students.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	4
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	4
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Views of parents and carers

The feedback from parents shows that a small proportion has concerns around most aspects of the school's performance. Around a quarter of parents shared concerns about: the quality of teaching and their children's progress; the school's willingness to listen; and the management of unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors had similar concerns. Around a third of completed questionnaires contained negative written comments about the school. This is a high proportion. The proportion containing positive comments was considerably smaller.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of students registered at Darton High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 143 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,053 students registered at the school. Not all questionnaire response answered every question.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	30	21	88	62	16	11	5	3
The school keeps my child safe	25	17	99	69	15	10	2	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	18	13	101	71	15	10	7	5
My child is making enough progress at this school	18	13	93	65	21	15	6	4
The teaching is good at this school	13	9	91	64	22	15	8	6
The school helps me to support my child's learning	10	7	88	62	32	22	4	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	11	8	89	62	28	20	2	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	19	13	92	64	19	13	6	4
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	13	93	65	23	16	4	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	13	79	55	23	16	15	10
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	12	79	55	24	17	10	7
The school is led and managed effectively	22	15	81	57	21	15	11	8
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	17	89	62	17	12	11	8

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

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.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>the following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school



22 January 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Darton High School, Barnsley, S75 5EW

I write to you on behalf of the inspection team to share our main findings.

Thank you to those of you who took the time to talk to inspectors about your experience of school. You told us that you enjoyed the expressive arts subjects and the talent shows that your teachers organise. You were less content with other aspects of school life, for example, with your experiences in some subjects.

GCSE results show that by the age of 16 many students at your school do not achieve the GCSE grades of which they are capable. Inspectors found that the quality of teaching varies too widely so that in some lessons you do not make enough progress in your learning. Some of your parents share these concerns. Attendance is low compared to other secondary schools and this means too many lessons are missed. The inappropriate behaviour of a small minority of you slows down your learning and that of other students.

Inspectors judged that your school needs some additional support to help it improve. We have placed your school in special measures. This means the senior leadership team and other staff will get the support needed to make your school a better place to learn. We have asked them to make improvements in:

- the quality of teaching so that all of you are able to make good progress-this will include sharing the best things from the good lessons that already happen
- the way that they check to make sure that actions taken to improve your experiences of school life really do make a difference
- attendance, by working with those of you who are frequently absent and involving your parents to help encourage your regular attendance
- the way behaviour is managed by making very clear to you, your parents and teachers what is expected of you in all lessons.

You can all help your school in its journey out of special measures by taking individual responsibility for your own attendance and behaviour. Together, your school community can make the wonderful new building a place to be proud of. Inspectors will return to your school soon to check how things are going.

Yours sincerely

Cathryn Kirby

Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0845 404045**, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.