

North Kesteven School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120708
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	358825
Inspection dates	10–11 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Nada Trikic HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1440
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	495
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony Gamble
Headteacher	Martin Connor
Date of previous school inspection	8 May 2008
School address	Moor Lane North Hykeham LN6 9AG
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 39 lessons and 39 teachers including ten joint observations with members of the senior leadership team, and held meetings with representatives from the governing body, staff and groups of students. Joint meetings were conducted with senior staff from both partner schools regarding the joint sixth form. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including improvement plans, the analysis and tracking of students' progress, records of classroom observations, attendance and exclusion data, and monitoring information. They analysed and considered 139 student, 79 staff and 382 parent and carer questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How effectively do teachers plan and deliver lessons to meet the needs of higher-attaining students, particularly boys?
- How effective are the approaches adopted to reduce variation in attainment and progress between subjects and courses?
- Is the information gathered to monitor the sixth form sufficiently robust to support accurate self-evaluation, to drive improvement?
- What is the impact of partnership working on the outcomes and provision in the sixth form?

Information about the school

North Kesteven School is a larger than average comprehensive school serving the south west of Lincoln, and surrounding area. The school population is predominantly White British with a very small proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The percentage of students identified by the school with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. Most of these students have moderate or severe learning difficulties. North Kesteven is a Training School and has specialist status for the performing arts. The school holds a number of awards including Investors in People, International Schools Award, Healthy Schools Award, Sports Mark Gold and Arts Mark Gold.

The North Hykeham Joint Sixth Form is an arrangement between North Kesteven and the Robert Pattinson School. A sixth form committee includes representatives of the governing bodies from both schools. Separate inspection teams inspected both schools and their joint sixth form simultaneously.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

North Kesteven is a good school. A strong team spirit, high expectations and driving ambition has led to notable improvement since the previous inspection. This is evident in the vibrant learning environment, highly respectful and harmonious relationships, and the shared focus on learning. Staff have created an exceptionally safe learning environment which is highly praised by students, parents and carers. Significant strengths in the performing arts contribute to outstanding community cohesion. Students are enthusiastic about the extensive opportunities to develop their skills in drama, dance and music enhanced by specialist facilities and strong links with professional theatre artists and performers. Students relish the challenge of performing and the opportunities this brings to share their achievements in lessons, within the school and the wider community. A good range of partnerships linked to the specialism, sport, sixth form and teacher training establishments extend opportunities and experiences for students and staff.

From broadly average starting points, students reach standards that are above average overall, and make good progress. In 2010, there was a significant increase to 95% in the proportion of students who gained five or more high grade GCSE passes, well above average. This is supported by well-developed curriculum pathways and a wider range of courses that motivate and interest the students. These overall outcomes disguise some variation between subjects and groups of learners. Standards in English continue to be above average while the proportion of students gaining an A* to C grade in mathematics was below average. Leaders have taken decisive action to make improvement in mathematics through additional teaching time, smaller classes, closer monitoring of progress and early entry for examinations. Stronger systems for the tracking and analysis of students' progress are leading to greater rigour in identifying groups of learners at risk of not reaching their potential, and in tackling variation between subjects. The introduction of progress managers is a successful initiative to support targeted interventions, such as those to challenge more-able students to reach their potential. Tracking records show an improving picture for current students.

The quality of students' learning experiences is good overall but can vary across lessons. Students become thoroughly engrossed when tasks stimulate their interest, such as in drama and history where excellent support and dialogue ensure that learning is reinforced and celebrated. Strong relationships, good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning make a strong contribution to progress in most lessons. The use of assessment is less well embedded in lesson planning and delivery although there are examples of excellent practice. In some lessons, plans do not take into account the needs and capabilities of students, particularly those of higher ability. In a small number of lessons, a lack of engagement leads to low-level

disruption to learning which is a concern raised by a few students, parents and carers. In the satisfactory lessons and in the sixth form generally, teachers do not always ensure that students learn independently. Care, guidance and support are underpinned by the new 'student services' team, for which students are full of praise, appreciative of the time given to listening to their concerns, and the atmosphere of trust which is created. Highly effective leadership for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities ensures that staff receive detailed information on students' specific needs and strategies to help support their good learning and progress.

Achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory and improving. The school recognises that further improvement of sixth form outcomes are necessary and has identified this as a high priority. As a result, action has recently been taken to enhance the teaching, and to widen and to improve the curriculum. The full impact of these actions is to be expected in improved examination results in future years. However, the current arrangements for leading and managing the sixth form do not secure the co-ordination or strategic overview required to take it forward as joint provision with its partner school.

Senior leaders have an accurate view of strengths and areas for improvement. Strengths in the curriculum, an emphasis on improving the quality of teaching, and a sharper focus on students' progress have been instrumental in raising standards. These features demonstrate a good capacity to improve. The school is highly regarded by parents and carers who value the well-rounded education their children receive.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards and improve rates of progress in mathematics through:
 - continue with regular checks on standards and progress against explicit milestones for individuals and groups of learners
 - a higher proportion of students gaining A* and A grades.

- Achieve greater consistency in the quality of learning and progress by increasing the proportion of securely good and outstanding teaching through:
 - effective use of students' prior learning and assessment information in all lessons
 - greater challenge for higher-performing students
 - continue with regular checks on students' learning during lessons
 - increased opportunities for students to discuss their learning in pairs and groups
 - rigorous monitoring of teaching quality.

- Improve retention rates, standards and rates of students' progress in the joint sixth form by:
 - reviewing the current leadership and management structure to better serve the needs of the joint sixth form
 - strengthening the joint monitoring and evaluation of students' performance

- comparing outcomes against national expectations to drive priorities for improvement
- strengthening the role of the joint sixth form governors' committee to monitor progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

In the vast majority of lessons, students display a strong desire to learn and this contributes effectively to their good learning and progress. Strong relationships support collaborative learning which the students enjoy. Self and peer assessment is used very effectively in the best lessons and helps students to identify where they need to focus their attention. Where learning is less effective, tasks do not take account of students' different needs and interests, or challenge them to do their best. The needs of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are clearly identified and shared with staff. There is evidence of exceptional progress made by some students with special educational needs and/or disabilities where their needs are incorporated into lesson plans.

Other features of student outcomes include the following:

- Students have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Incidents of bullying are relatively few and promptly dealt with.
- Students are careful, friendly and considerate of one another as they move around the school, and courteous and helpful to visitors.
- Students relish the many opportunities to take on responsibilities such as dance and sports leadership.
- Students have a good understanding of healthy eating and an awareness of the health aspects of smoking, drugs and alcohol. Large numbers of students take part in sporting activities, and support physical education in primary schools.
- Students have a good awareness of multicultural, human rights, local and world issues and are able to discuss their views openly and maturely.
- Students are represented by an energetic and forward-looking group of students who are the 'student voice'. The group leads successful charity events.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2

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

The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

High expectations and challenge characterise the strongest teaching, supported by a good range of strategies to engage and interest students. In the best lessons students are active learners and inspired by teachers' energy, enthusiasm and expertise. Some teachers use assessment information to plan effectively for students' diverse needs but this is not typical of all lessons. In the best lessons assessment is seamlessly woven into activities to accelerate and consolidate learning, but in others students are not made aware of the progress they are making. In some satisfactory lessons there are too few opportunities for students to discuss and share learning.

The curriculum is broad and balanced with a good range of courses in Key Stage 4 to meet the interests of students, and to support progression. Effective changes in the arrangements for modern foreign languages are beginning to boost the numbers of students who continue their studies in Key Stage 4. Greater use of performance data is enabling progress managers to discuss appropriate routes with students at an early stage so that students can identify options through and beyond the school. Flexible learning days are a popular innovation that allow students to focus on specific themes to extend their awareness and understanding, for example, of asylum seekers. The virtual learning environment is developing to provide an additional route to promote learning. This is a particularly strong feature for learning in history. An extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities and links through the performing arts and sport enhance provision for all students, which they value. This also enables students to make connections with the wider community.

Transition procedures from primary schools are carefully planned to ensure that new students get off to a good start. Special care is taken of students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable through extra visits and personal contact. There is a firm commitment to each individual with a range of interventions to meet academic needs, such as literacy, or courses in anger management or self-esteem to support personal needs.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders have been successful in raising aspirations and instilling a strong sense of purpose and belonging. The headteacher provides strong leadership and students value and appreciate the time given to listen to their views. Recent appointments have consolidated attention to, and the quality of, the leadership and management of teaching and learning. Leaders are aware of small pockets of weaker teaching and have clear plans to support improvement. There is an effective and understood system for monitoring the quality of teaching and an associated programme of professional development. This, alongside, the sharper analysis of progress data is helping to tackle variation across subjects so that all departments achieve the standards of the best. Improvement plans identify priority areas, although measurable success criteria and monitoring arrangements are not routinely included to allow progress to be rigorously checked and reported. Middle leaders are increasingly effective as they share best practice in progress tracking and teaching. Safeguarding procedures are effective and the school has robust measures to ensure students' safety.

Other aspects of leadership and management:

- Leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to inclusion and the promotion of equal opportunity. This is evident in high quality relationships and respect for different cultures, beliefs or needs. Leaders are increasingly taking steps to tackle identified difference in performance between groups of learners such as the most able, and to identify different intervention and support strategies to help, such as mentoring.
- Community cohesion is extremely well promoted in assemblies, through the curriculum and national and international visits. Work linked to the specialism, and sport, provide excellent opportunities to meet with others in the local area, and to take part in shared activities, for example, wheelchair basketball. Successful activities, such as musical concerts at local care homes, complement the numerous links with primary schools to lead and share activities. Thorough records are kept of activities that promote cohesion including an evaluation of their impact.
- Governance is good. The governing body has a comprehensive awareness of the school's strengths and areas for improvement through the headteacher's reports, discussion in meetings, and visits to the school. The range of skills, expertise and experience available across the governing body is fully utilised through the committee structure. There are good plans and systems in place to develop a strategic overview of the joint sixth form.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2

The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

The North Hykeham Joint Sixth Form is satisfactory and improving. Students enjoy excellent relationships with their teachers and value the good quality care and support they receive. Students act as positive role models for their younger peers offering support in lessons, working with neighbouring primary schools, and leading charity events. Students enter the sixth form with standards that are broadly average with fewer students than average at the higher levels of attainment. Students have not made the progress expected in recent years and the proportion that remains in the sixth form over two years has been below average. Leaders identified that the curriculum was not meeting the needs of students, and that some students embarked on courses that proved to be too challenging. Significant changes have now taken place and provision is good. The curriculum provides a good range of vocational and academic courses across the two schools, supported by a popular range of extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities. The quality of guidance has also improved to ensure that students study appropriate courses. The full impact of the changes are yet to be seen but retention rates are improving and students are now making at least satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management arrangements of the joint sixth form are evolving. Staff from both schools are working hard to implement quality assurance activities to reduce the variation in standards between subjects, and to monitor and evaluate students' progress more closely. This positive development is not fully embedded across all subjects and courses. The joint sixth form governors' committee endorses this drive for improvement. The committee has had less involvement in monitoring the progress of students in order to support self-evaluation.

These are the grades for the sixth form

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

Views of parents and carers

The school has the overwhelming support of parents and carers. They appreciate and value the wide range of opportunities and experiences provided for their children, and the extent to which the school keeps them safe. Responses from parents and carers to the questionnaire indicate a high level of satisfaction with the leadership and management of school. However, a very small minority report that the school does not take account of their suggestions and concerns. Inspectors found that opportunities for views to be shared, through meetings and at special events, are available. The school also works with groups of parents and carers. The headteacher acknowledges that there is more for the school to do to extend this process. A very small minority of parents and carers indicate a concern about the way the school manages unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors were impressed with the friendliness and behaviour of students at the time of the inspection. Inspection evidence did confirm that low-level disruption is a concern in a small number of lessons where students are less engaged in their learning. However, exclusions have reduced dramatically this year, linked to the introduction of the highly-rated student services team.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at North Kesteven 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 382 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1440 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	121	32	242	63	15	4	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	133	35	232	61	8	2	3	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	161	42	205	54	16	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	141	37	222	58	13	3	4	1
The teaching is good at this school	107	28	260	68	10	3	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	98	26	239	63	37	10	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	78	20	259	68	37	10	0	0
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)	103	27	234	61	17	4	3	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	107	28	246	64	21	5	4	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	97	25	215	56	41	11	12	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	78	20	237	62	35	9	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	141	37	221	58	12	3	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	161	42	202	53	12	3	5	1

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. 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.



12 May 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of North Kesteven School, Lincoln, LN6 9AG

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We were very impressed with your behaviour, attitudes to learning and strong desire to achieve. Teachers know you very well; you told us there is always someone for you to turn to for help or advice. You were very clear that school is an extremely safe place to be, and that the student services team support you well. The performing arts specialism is a great strength of the school and, together with sport, provides many opportunities for you to make connections in the local community and beyond.

North Kesteven is a good school and has improved since the last inspection. The headteacher has been influential in broadening the curriculum to provide an interesting range of courses for you to study. This helps you to achieve above average standards by the end of Year 11. There is some variation across subjects. Results in mathematics were disappointing last year but evidence suggests that there will be an improvement this year. We have asked school leaders to continue to raise standards and improve rates of progress in mathematics. We could see that you enjoy lessons where you have interesting and challenging tasks to complete with opportunities to discuss and share your ideas. Not all lessons help you to learn at a fast enough rate, so we have asked leaders to increase the proportion of good and outstanding lessons. The joint sixth form is satisfactory and improving. Achievement at A level is average. You enjoy your time at North Hykeham Joint Sixth Form and work well with your teachers. Staff care for you well and make sure you are prepared for the next stage of your education. In order to improve your results further, we have asked your school to work more closely with Robert Pattinson School to ensure that you receive more good teaching and make good progress all the time.

The headteacher, senior leaders, staff and the governing body are working extremely hard to provide the best possible experiences for you to be successful. We are sure that you will want to make a contribution to these and other areas by working closely with staff to make your school even better. You deserve to feel proud of your contributions so far. We send our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Nada Trikić
Her Majesty's Inspector

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