

Hylton Red House School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108855
Local Authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	319427
Inspection dates	15-16 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Jim Bennetts

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11-16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	570
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Hodgson
Headteacher	Mr Mick Brady
Date of previous school inspection	1 July 2007
School address	Rutherglen Road Sunderland Tyne and Wear SR5 5LN
Telephone number	0191 5535511
Fax number	0191 5535515

Age group	11-16
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Introduction

The school was inspected in by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Hylton Red House School is a smaller than average comprehensive school located in the north east of Sunderland. The school takes its students from the surrounding area. The great majority of students are of White British heritage; all students speak English as their first language. The number of students known to be eligible for free meals is high and the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above the national average. The school will become an academy in September 2009, in new premises which are under construction on the present site. The substantive headteacher of the school took up post as Principal Designate of the academy, Easter 2008. An acting headteacher, supported by the principal designate, has been in place since the summer term. At the time of the last inspection the school was given a Notice to Improve.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. Over the last few years the school has been unflinching in tackling underachievement and weaknesses in its provision. It now provides a vibrant curriculum and very effective care and support for its students. Teaching is improving and students are positive in their efforts. Consequently, standards are rising. The school has much to be proud of.

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are now average. Unvalidated data indicates that standards improved this year in national assessments at the end of year 9 in English, mathematics and science. There was substantial improvement in GCSE results in 2007, with 53% achieving at least five good passes A* to C. Provisional results indicate that this improvement was maintained this year: again 53% achieved this standard. The Key Stage 4 curriculum provides an ample range of vocational subjects such as health and social care, hair and beauty, manufacturing and information and communication technology (ICT) to which students respond well. There was improvement in the provisional GCSE results in English and science in 2008. The school's assessment data shows that students at present in Year 11 are on track for further improvement in these subjects, and in mathematics, in 2009. However, the school is aware of the need for unstinting effort to raise achievement in these core subjects. Students of all abilities and backgrounds are making satisfactory progress.

Teaching has improved. It is satisfactory overall, with much that is good and some that is outstanding. This improvement has been facilitated by diligent monitoring and coaching to remedy weak practice. Improvement in teaching in the core subjects has been handicapped by staff changes and difficulties in recruiting staff. Whilst there are frequent checks on teaching and learning in these subjects, subject specific weaknesses in learning in the core subjects are not always picked up.

Students' personal development is good. They want to put their 'best foot forward' and make the most of their opportunities. Students' attendance has improved. It is now satisfactory and they enjoy school. They have positive attitudes and behave well; they are sociable and considerate. They take seriously the need to look after themselves and to adopt healthy lifestyles. They make a strong contribution to the school community through the school council and by acting as peer mentors. Relevant courses, workplace learning and satisfactory achievement provide a sound basis of capability as they move on beyond age 16.

Senior staff have been relentless in driving improvement in all aspects of the school's work. Resolute leadership and efficient management have carried the school forward to much recent success. Staff at all levels are willing to give of their best. Staff and governors can be congratulated on what has been achieved. There is strong capacity for ongoing improvement this coming year, and as the school looks forward to the opportunities of the new academy.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science.
- Improve the precision with which teaching and planning in the core subjects are evaluated and developed.

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.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students joining the school at age 11 have standards which are lower than average. In 2007, the national assessments at age 14 in English, mathematics and science showed standards which were well below average. Provisional data indicates an improvement in the results in each of these subjects in 2008. From 2006 to 2007 the proportion of Year 11 students achieving five or more GCSEs at grade C or above rose from 36% to 53%. This improvement was sustained in 2008, with again 53% achieving that standard. Achievement is particularly strong in vocational courses such as health and social care, hair and beauty, and manufacturing, which engage students' interest, enthusiasm and commitment. There has been strong improvement in ICT.

Achievement in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is weaker than in other subjects, but unvalidated data indicates there was marked improvement in the proportion gaining at least grade C in the 2008 GCSE examinations in English and science. Difficulties in preparing students for mathematics GCSE with a new syllabus in 2008 led to disappointing results for those at the grade C/D borderline. In consequence, the proportion of students achieving at least five good GCSE results, inclusive of English and mathematics, was below the school's target.

Students' work, the capabilities they demonstrate in lessons, and the school's assessments indicate that improvements in achievement continue throughout the school. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress as rapidly as others.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development is good. Attendance was below average last year, but it is rising and is average this term. The school has worked successfully with parents and made good use of rewards to ensure that students attend school regularly. Students enjoy school; they have good attitudes to learning and behave well in lessons. Outside classrooms, behaviour can occasionally be boisterous, but students say that teachers quickly sort out any minor disagreements. Most students talk knowledgeably about staying safe and eating healthy food and most enjoy keeping fit through taking part in sport.

Appropriate opportunities promote students' spiritual development effectively; their moral, social and cultural development is good. The school council is influential. For example, it has steered changes in the school uniform. Students have a clear sense of right and wrong and are keen to take on responsibilities. For example, peer mentors and prefects take seriously their responsibilities for looking after younger students, and this is very effective in minimising unpleasantness between individuals. In addition, a panel of students influenced the appointment of the principal designate of the new academy. Students work well together in groups and pairs, sharing information and discussing ideas sensibly. They develop teamwork skills which will serve them effectively in later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall; much of it is good and some is outstanding. It has improved over the last few years. Classroom relationships are good across the school and students are generally well behaved and well disposed to learn. Where learning is good, teachers capitalise on students' willingness to learn by providing an interesting variety of activities carefully matched to the needs of individuals and groups within the class.

Explanations are clear, so that students know what they are expected to learn, and links are made with relevant assessment criteria. Subject knowledge is used effectively to stretch students by asking searching questions. Progress during the best lessons is well monitored and, at the conclusion, students have the opportunity to evaluate the progress they have made and assess how well they have learned.

However, students do not make consistently good progress, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, because too many of their learning experiences are only satisfactory. In less effective lessons teachers do not plan sharply enough to ensure that the activities match the students' needs. Occasionally, in the core subjects, the content of the lesson is too complicated for students to grasp, and at times students fail to master key points, but this goes unnoticed. Assessment information is not always used well enough to inform lesson planning. When activities are too difficult or not challenging enough, students, though compliant, lose interest and the pace of learning slows. Very occasionally, this results in low level disruptive behaviour. Marking is regular and usually provides students with a helpful indication of what they need to do to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides its students with a good curriculum, which serves them well. It is carefully planned to interest and challenge the students and is making a positive contribution to their improved achievement. Existing strong provision for those in Years 10 and 11 has been enhanced by taking advantage of newly introduced vocational qualifications to broaden the range of optional courses. This meets local needs well and strengthens the school's links with local providers of work-related learning. Well devised and implemented changes have also improved the provision for students in Years 7 to 9. The creation of a 'transition group' has helped those who find the change from primary to secondary education difficult. Additional cross-curricular sessions, known as 'Applications', are designed to boost self-esteem and confidence. They further develop key academic and workplace skills that are needed for life in the twenty first century. Good numbers of pupils take part in the wide range of sports and other enrichment activities that the school provides.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support provided for students are good. The welfare of students has a very high priority with every member of staff. Many systems exist which respond very effectively to individual students' problems and needs. Child protection measures meet national requirements and are understood by staff. Checks for ensuring the suitability of staff to work

with children are carefully carried out. Systems for risk assessment, including those for out-of-school visits, are thorough. Helpful links with primary schools smooth the transfer of students into their new school. Students are very well known to staff, and most say they feel safe in school. The support for vulnerable students, and for the high number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is both sensitive and successful. Teachers link very effectively with outside agencies to support these students and help them to progress. Students have good access to careers advice and information. The academic guidance they receive is based on reliable assessment information and facilitates well focused intervention for those who are found to be underachieving. Students know the levels and grades for which they are aiming, but their short-term targets are not sufficiently explicit.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Senior leaders have tackled the school's weaknesses with vigour and determination. They have carried the staff with them in this earnest endeavour. This is a school where morale is strong amongst both staff and students. There is a common commitment to doing as well as possible. An innovative curriculum, first in Key Stage 4, and increasingly in Key Stage 3, meets students' needs and aspirations very effectively. Support arrangements for vulnerable students have been reinvigorated. All students get a fair deal. With this enhanced provision, students' attitudes and behaviour have rallied. This underpins rising achievement.

Middle managers have a keen sense of accountability. Challenging targets are set and the school is increasingly close to meeting them. There have been staffing difficulties in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science; there are several new staff, some unqualified teachers and some who teach outside their specialist field. This has limited the thrust for improvement in these subjects. Senior staff have a very shrewd overview of how things stand in the school. There has been frequent monitoring of teaching and lesson planning. In the main, this is thorough, reliable and productive. However, the evaluation of teaching in the core subjects is sometimes over positive because subject specific shortcomings are not always identified.

The school has made great strides forward over the last few years. Its new areas of engagement, with commitment to community cohesion and preparation for specialist engineering status, are taking shape. It has been well supported by its governors and by Sunderland local authority in overcoming weaknesses. As the school looks ahead to its closure, and with that the new beginning in the academy which is rising beside it, the established capacity for ongoing improvement gathers momentum.

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Annex A

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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being**Annex A**

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
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?	2

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

17 October 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Hylton Red House School, Sunderland, SR5 5LN

We enjoyed our visit to your school. Thank you for all the help you gave us when we met you in discussion groups, in lessons and around the school.

We find that your school has continued to improve; it is now satisfactory overall and good in many aspects of its work. At the last inspection in the summer of 2007, standards were not high enough. Since then, test results at age 14 have improved and there has been a strong improvement in GCSE results. The improvement was evident in the lessons we visited and the samples of your work that we looked at. Standards are improving because students are now more keen to learn and because lessons are becoming more effective. You are well looked after and the range of learning opportunities is good. The school has made great strides forward under the leadership of the senior staff.

Though standards have improved overall, there is room for further improvement in English, mathematics and science. We have asked the school to raise standards and achievement in these subjects and to pinpoint ways in which lessons in these subjects can become even more effective than at present. You can help by making sure that you put your very best efforts into work in these important subjects.

We would like to congratulate you, the staff, the governors and Sunderland local authority for the improvements that have been made over the last few years. You have a lot to be proud of. We wish you every success in this school year and as you move across to the new academy next summer.

Yours sincerely

Jim Bennetts

Lead inspector