

Northgate High School

Cemetery Road, Dereham, NR19 2EU

Inspection dates 10–11 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students' GCSE attainment has risen rapidly over the past two years and, overall, students reach average standards from below-average attainment on entry to the school.
- English results in particular have improved considerably at GCSE.
- The sixth form is good. Standards and progress in the sixth form have maintained consistently good levels.
- Students' behaviour is good overall, and sixth form students have mature attitudes to learning.
- Teaching is good in most subjects. Staff use their extensive subject knowledge to build on what students have learned previously.
- Leaders and managers at all levels have a clear focus on tracking students' achievement, and the importance of this is understood well by staff.
- The monitoring of teaching is accurately based on a wide range of evidence, so that staff training needs are identified clearly.
- The school uses a good range of data on students' progress and attainment very effectively to identify areas for improvement.
- Leaders' and governors' plans to raise students' achievement and the quality of teaching are detailed, well targeted and effective.
- Governors have a clear understanding of the school and offer a good level of challenge to school leaders, so that standards have risen rapidly.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some teachers do not set targets that are challenging for younger students, especially in mathematics.
- The arrangements for supporting a few individual disabled students and those who have special educational needs are not promoting their learning well enough.
- Not all teachers explain what is expected for students to achieve a high examination grade.
- Students are not always given enough guidance in lessons or in their written work about what they need to do to improve.
- Numeracy is not used consistently well across a range of subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 44 lessons, including 11 joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. In addition, inspectors made short visits to other lessons and tutor periods, and looked at samples of students' work.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team, heads of subject departments, teachers, members of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a variety of school documents, including: the school's self-evaluation, school-development plans, behaviour records, safeguarding records, governing-body documents, and documents relating to the management of teachers' performance.
- Inspectors also considered the views expressed in 65 questionnaires returned by school staff, together with the 152 responses submitted by parents to the online, Parent View, survey.

Inspection team

Roger Waddingham, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Piers Ranger	Additional Inspector
Clive Allen	Additional Inspector
Alan Brewerton	Additional Inspector
Rachel Hobson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Northgate High School is a larger-than-average secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is below average. This is additional funding allocated by the government for groups of students, including those looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Most students are White British.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs receiving extra support through school action is well-below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of students by the end of Year 11.
- The sixth form is amalgamated with that of another school and they are taught together in the Dereham Sixth Form Centre. The centre is staffed by teachers from both schools as well as staff employed directly by the centre.
- Support to local schools is offered by specialist staff in physical education and careers advice.
- The school offers work-related training to a small number of Year 10 and Year 11 students through provision from Norfolk Training Services, City College, and Easton College.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - making sure all students understand what is expected of them to achieve a high examination grade
 - using regular marking and a wider range of questioning techniques to give students more opportunities to consider what they need to do to improve.
- Further raise achievement by:
 - setting more challenging targets for younger students, especially in mathematics
 - developing more opportunities for students to apply their knowledge of number across the curriculum
 - improving the arrangements for teaching and supporting the few disabled students and those who have special educational needs who are not achieving as well as the others with special educational needs.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The proportion of students achieving five GCSE grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has risen from below average to above average over the past three years. The school's detailed and reliable monitoring evidence predicts that the 2014 GCSE results should be at least in line with the national average. This represents good achievement because these students had lower-than-average starting points on entry to the school, but have positive attitudes to their studies.
- In English, the proportion of students making good or better progress has risen sharply in 2013. The effective measures that the school has taken to ensure this improvement are sustaining better performance in the current year. This was confirmed by inspectors' own evidence of students' achievement seen in lessons.
- Attainment in mathematics has been broadly average over several years, representing good progress from these students' starting points. Performance dipped in 2012, but the results for 2013 were above the 2012 national average. Actions to improve management and teaching in this subject have led to improved progress for current GCSE students.
- Early entry to GCSE has been helpful to more-able students getting the results they should. Science results at GCSE have been above average for the past three years, and students make good progress overall in both the separate sciences and the combined courses.
- Progress of students in Key Stage 3 is not as strong as at GCSE, particularly in mathematics. Teachers do not always have high expectations or set high enough targets for what these students can achieve.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs generally make good progress. Students given individual support in English and mathematics lessons were seen to progress at the same rate as others in the class. Many staff used their good knowledge of individual student needs to match tasks well to their previous learning. However, a few lower-attaining students have been placed together in one group in several subjects and their progress is sometimes slowed because they do not receive enough individual support.
- Students supported by the pupil premium have made good progress over 2011 and 2012, and the gap in attainment between them and their classmates decreased to one third of a GCSE grade in English and half a grade in mathematics and science. The gap continued to narrow in science in 2013, but increased in mathematics. However, the progress of these students in mathematics was in line with the national average for eligible students.
- Year 7 funding to help students who are behind in English and mathematics on entry to the school is used effectively. The students are helped individually to raise their achievement through the work of a dedicated 'intervention coordinator', who identifies weaknesses in students' achievement and arranges class support, booster sessions, summer schools and other activities to encourage students to raise their expectations and attainment.
- Weaker readers are helped to make good progress through the effective use of phonics (the sounds that letters and words make). Teachers usually plan well to develop students' vocabulary, and literacy across the school is developing well as a result. The promotion of numeracy skills throughout the curriculum is limited by staff sometimes missing opportunities to

challenge students to apply what they have learnt.

- The achievement of students educated off-site for part of the week is monitored carefully by the school. The provision has resulted in improved motivation and attendance for identified students, who generally achieve well.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good. Pass rates are average at A level and above average for many subjects at AS level. Higher grade passes are above average at both A level and AS level. Students make good progress from, sometimes, below-average starting points. Progress in the applied GCE subjects is strong.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching has developed well since the previous inspection as a result of the school's careful monitoring procedures and the training that has been given to individual staff. Teaching is good in most subjects, with outstanding examples seen, particularly, in English, physical education and history. Consequently, students achieve well.
- Staff use their subject knowledge well to plan appropriately challenging lessons, so that students of all abilities, including the more able, achieve well. They use the school's planning guidance, the 'Northgate lesson' to help make sure that they set tasks that build on what students have learned previously. In many lessons, teachers explained clearly what was expected of students to achieve a high examination grade. However, this good practice is not followed consistently in all examination groups.
- Learning in most lessons is well managed and students show positive attitudes to their work as a result. There are positive relationships between students and staff, a good pace to the learning and the effective use of visual resources and teaching assistants.
- Questioning is often used well to encourage students to think about what they are learning, and students of all abilities give explanations of their ideas in discussion. However, some lessons had limited opportunities for students to be actively involved in considering what they should do to deepen their understanding and improve their standards.
- The marking of students' work has been a recent school focus and students appreciate the good quality of written guidance they receive on what they need to do to make further progress. In some classes the frequency of marking is not high enough, so that students felt that they had moved on to new work before being given guidance on what they had done previously. Consequently, their confidence in their understanding of prior work was sometimes insecure.
- Where progress in some mathematics lessons was not strong, this was often linked to teachers not assessing students' progress in enough detail to help them set appropriately challenging work and targets to achieve.
- Teaching in the sixth form is a strength of the school. Teachers use their impressive subject knowledge to explain clearly what students are to learn. They then draw out students' understanding through probing questioning that builds well on previous knowledge and understanding. Students appreciate the challenge offered to them in these lessons and they take a mature and responsible attitude to their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour in the school is good and students show increasingly mature attitudes to their learning as they move through the age range. They have positive attitudes towards the school; they are attentive in lessons and respectful towards staff and other students.
- Students arrive at lessons promptly and settle to their work with little time wasted, so that most lessons have a good pace. Behaviour in most lessons is good and, sometimes, outstanding when students sustain high levels of concentration and interest in their independent tasks.
- Both staff and parents reported that students like coming to school and this view was confirmed by the students themselves. They felt safe in the school, and reported that bullying was rare and dealt with effectively. Students said they were well supported in other matters of social development, such as e-safety, and personal development through mentoring sessions.
- Attendance is broadly in line with the national average. The school is successfully applying rigorous monitoring procedures to reduce the levels of persistent absence which are now similar to those found nationally.
- Sixth form students develop outstanding attitudes to their work and speak highly of the school's provision for their personal development.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors share a clear commitment to raise standards and achievement through setting high expectations, regular tracking of students' progress and promoting improvements in teaching. These measures have successfully ensured a rise in standards at GCSE and maintained high standards in the sixth form.
- The school has an effective system of school and departmental reviews, so that self-evaluation and the resulting planning for improvements are well founded. The current school plan for raising achievement is clearly set out, has a well-chosen set of action points and appropriate criteria for monitoring progress with the plan.
- Arrangements in the school for evaluating and developing teaching are understood well by leaders and managers at all levels and are having a positive impact on classroom practice. Senior leaders are well aware of the key features of good teaching, and hold departmental leaders to account for teaching quality in their subjects on a regular basis. Subject leaders have been given good opportunities to develop their roles in raising standards through training courses, visits to other departments and external courses.
- The use made of tracking students' attainment and achievement is a strength of the school. Managers have ready access to detailed information about students' attainment, achievement and targets. The school's system for target setting has recently been improved and departmental leaders show good initiative in using this information to monitor standards and teaching in their departments.
- Students are offered a good range of subjects to choose from at GCSE, including both academic and work-related pathways. They appreciate the good range of after-school activities available to extend their experiences in sport and the arts in particular. There are good opportunities for students to develop their spiritual and cultural awareness in a wide range of school trips and visits, through European and community links, and through lessons in the arts and in English.

- School specialist staff give helpful individual advice to students on career pathways as students move through each stage of education at the school. Information evenings, personal interviews and a wide range of guidance material are made readily available.
- The provision of support for disabled students and those who have special educational needs is not fully consistent. These students are appropriately supported by an extra staff member when they are in larger classes. However, a small number of low-attaining students are taught in one group together, so that they have little opportunity to see work of a higher standard and support staff have less time for them individually.
- The local authority is supportive. It works closely with the school in providing programmes for staff development.
- The sixth form centre is well led and managed. The range of subjects offered is extensive, the tracking of students' progress is highly effective and students are very well motivated.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is experienced and well trained. Governors offer good support and challenge to the leadership team through an effective arrangement of regular committee meetings and visits to the school, when they pay close attention to progress with school improvement priorities in particular.
- They understand the data on students' attainment and achievement and analyse the successes and weaknesses in performance. They commission regular reports from school managers for further clarification.
- Governors know what the quality of teaching is and what the school is doing to develop teaching and to tackle any underperformance. They are well informed about the targets that are set for the management of teachers' performance, and oversee the arrangements for teachers' pay progression.
- Priorities for expenditure on the pupil premium for eligible students are well maintained and governors know how well these students achieve.
- Governors make sure that the school meets its statutory responsibilities. Statutory safeguarding requirements are met and policies are reviewed regularly. The governing body ensures that all staff have been vetted and check that new staff are given appropriate training on safety and child protection.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	121151
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	427176

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1206
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	216
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Salt
Headteacher	Glyn Hambling
Date of previous school inspection	29 May 2012
Telephone number	01362 697033
Fax number	01362 698484
Email address	office@northgate.norfolk.sch.uk

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