

# Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119809
<b>Local authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	379896
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 January 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Shirley Gornall HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,254
<b>Of which number on roll in the sixth form</b>	504
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	David King
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alan Porteous
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 March 2007
<b>School address</b>	Glen Road Waterfoot Rossendale BB4 7BJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01706 234500
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## Introduction

### Inspection team

Shirley Gornall  
Bimla Kumari  
Peter Mather  
Kathryn Pink  
Charles Lowry

Her Majesty's Inspector  
Additional inspector  
Additional inspector  
Additional inspector  
Seconded Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed 49 teachers teaching 49 lessons, of which eight were joint observations with members of the school's senior management team. Meetings were held with five groups of students, two members of the governing body school senior leaders, heads of department and newly qualified teachers. The inspectors observed the school's work and considered a wide range of documents, including the school improvement plan, school self-evaluation, safeguarding and equality policies and minutes of governing body meetings. They analysed 511 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, 151 received from students and 150 from staff.

## Information about the school

This selective school serves communities from the Rossendale Valley and surrounding area and is larger than the average-sized secondary school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is much lower than average. A few students have disabilities and special educational needs. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion whose first language is not English are broadly average. The number of students entering or leaving the school other than at the usual times is much lower than the national average. The school, consistently, exceeds the current floor standard.

The school is a specialist mathematics and computing college and a designated Training School, with a strong commitment to initial teacher training. Since the previous inspection, there have been several changes to the school's senior leadership team. A new headteacher took up post on January 1 2012.

**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

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key Findings

- This is a good school in which students attain high academic standards and develop excellent personal skills and attributes. Results at GCSE have risen since the previous inspection and the proportion of students making exceptional progress has increased. Progress in mathematics is particularly strong.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Achievement at A level has risen since the previous inspection and the proportion of students attaining the highest possible grades has increased. The vast majority of students are accepted at universities of their choice.
- Teaching is good overall, with some that is satisfactory and some that is outstanding. Teaching in the sixth form is of a consistently high quality. Teachers are knowledgeable and dedicated. Students in the main school have very positive attitudes to their learning, however, they are not consistently challenged to participate actively and learn independently.
- Behaviour in classes and around the site is exemplary. Relationships between staff and students are mutually respectful, enabling the school to operate as a harmonious, orderly and safe community.
- The school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very effectively, including through its extensive extra-curricular programme and any opportunities for students to serve their school and wider community.
- The ethos of the school is palpable and its traditions proudly observed. Leaders at all levels are ambitious for the school's future development. Quality assurance processes to monitor teaching are under-developed. Good practitioners have been identified, but procedures for using their practice to support others have not been implemented fully.
- The governing body has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and priorities and provides insightful support and challenge. The recently appointed headteacher has secured the support of staff and students and is working closely with the senior team

to review and strengthen management systems. There is good capacity for improvement.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is good and outstanding by:
  - providing additional challenge for the most-able students to support the development of higher-order thinking skills
  - ensuring that teachers' questioning engages all students and demands their active participation in lessons
  - ensuring that marking is of a consistently high quality in order that students know how to improve their work.
- Ensure that quality assurance processes are implemented consistently so that leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching across the school and can use this to share, develop and celebrate best practice.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

Students enter the school with attainment that is much higher than the national average, make outstanding progress in most subjects and gain GCSE results which are well above average. Their progress is particularly strong in the school's specialist subject, mathematics. Progress has been weaker in French, but is now accelerating. Achievement at A level is outstanding for all groups of students, including those who join the sixth form from other local high schools, and the proportion of students who complete the courses on which they embark is much higher than the national figure. The percentage of students attaining the highest grades at A level has increased over recent years at a faster rate than found nationally. Students with disabilities and those with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers at all key stages and they are integrated fully into the life of the school. There is no significant difference in the achievement of students from different ethnic groups.

The vast majority of students enjoy school and relish learning. They demonstrate maturity and perseverance and are eager to fulfil their ambitions. They, particularly, enjoy active learning and progress well when presented with opportunities to discuss ideas and apply concepts. Learning is well-paced and progress is strong in most lessons, although, for some students, progress diminishes when they are required to listen to their teachers' exposition for extended periods of time or when they are not given opportunities to extend their thinking. Students make extensive use of the school's virtual learning environment to complete independent homework and demonstrate high levels of motivation to direct their own learning out of school hours. Their enthusiastic attitudes have a strong impact on their academic progress. They have excellent skills in reading, writing, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) that they apply confidently in different situations and that equip them well for the next stage in their education. Most of the parents and carers who completed inspection questionnaires agreed that their children achieve well. A member of staff commented that 'the ethos of the school supports development of students both academically and as whole individuals' and inspectors endorsed this view.

## Quality of teaching

Teaching is good overall, with some that is outstanding and some that is satisfactory. Teachers are committed to their work, have excellent subject knowledge, and establish strong relationships with their classes. As one student put it, 'they are interested in us as individuals and support us in academia and beyond.' The best teaching stimulates students' thinking in varied contexts and engages them in a learning dialogue. This was the case in an extremely effective, highly interactive German lesson, in which students rehearsed and improved sentences with their peers, supported by excellent questioning from the teacher. Teachers plan their lessons well, although they do not consistently consider how the most-able students can be challenged to extend their thinking. In a few lessons, teachers tend to talk too much and this slows the learning of some students, although their engagement remains high.

There is a tendency in satisfactory lessons for questioning to be predominantly directed to the whole class and answers supplied by volunteers, leading to some passivity among students. In better lessons, teachers use a range of questioning styles and direct students to deepen their thinking by evaluating each other's responses. Students' work is generally marked regularly and constructively and there is some excellent practice, in English and other subjects, where teachers provide a balance between focused praise and useful advice. However, in some cases, teachers' comments do not provide sufficient guidance on how work might be improved and there is inconsistency in teachers' expectations as to how students should address errors in grammar or spelling.

Teaching in the sixth form is of a consistently high quality and is characterised by effective collaborative learning. This was the case in an outstanding law lesson, in which students challenged their peers' thinking about scenarios that required them to explore motives and mitigating circumstances. They refined their thinking in response to feedback from each other and deepened their understanding of the principles observed in courts when determining guilt. Students receive personalised academic guidance from their teachers and are well equipped through various programmes, including mock interviews led by members of the governing body, to progress to university. The vast majority of parents and carers agree that their children are taught well and several commented on the effectiveness of additional support provided by individual teachers.

## Behaviour and safety of pupils

The outstanding behaviour of the overwhelming majority of students is a significant strength of the school. Students demonstrate respect for each other and adhere closely to the school's rules. They move sensibly around the school buildings and play their part in ensuring that it remains well-presented and free of litter. Students are proud members of the school community and willingly take on posts of responsibility to ensure that it runs smoothly and harmoniously. They are conscientious about their learning and virtually no lessons are disrupted by students not doing as their teachers ask. On the unusual occasions when inappropriate behaviour occurs, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively. Students are adamant that all forms of bullying are extremely rare and that the school deals with any instances immediately. Issues such as cyber-bullying have been addressed through the school's effective personal, social and health education programme. Nearly all parents and carers agree that the school manages behaviour very well and keeps their children safe.

Students have responded well to a new behaviour management system and are keen to collect rewards and avoid penalty points. Students' attendance is significantly above the national average for all groups and very few students are persistently absent from school. Students attribute their excellent attendance to their enjoyment of school and to the effective pastoral support they receive, from form tutors and heads of year, which enables them to deal with any problems they may experience.

## **Leadership and management**

There have been several changes to the school's senior leadership team since the previous inspection. A new and experienced headteacher has taken up post. He is supported ably by an enthusiastic and skilled senior team who share a strong vision for the school's future development. The school's quality assurance processes, particularly with regard to the monitoring and evaluation of teaching, are at an early stage of development. Leaders recognise that this is a priority and are developing plans to ensure a more systematic and consistent approach to lesson observation and scrutiny of students' work. There is some excellent teaching practice in school that has been shared in part through the school's continuing professional development programme. However, the impact of this good practice on developing the work of colleagues has not been evaluated and both staff and students recognise that there is inconsistency in how lessons are taught and how students' work is assessed. The impact of the school's mathematics and computing specialism is evidenced in students' outstanding achievement in mathematics. The effect of Training School status on the school's performance has not been clearly evaluated.

A member of staff commented that 'the ethos of the school is very strong and makes the school special.' Inspectors agree. Students, readily, identify the values the school espouses and have a strong commitment to its traditions. The quality of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, promoted through assemblies that enable reflection, encourage aspiration and foster empathy. Students debate ethical issues with mature insight. A parent remarked on the way in which the school's cross-curricular Holocaust project had 'totally immersed and affected' their child.

A rich extra-curricular programme, including sporting, artistic, cultural and academic activities, gives students opportunities to pursue individual interests and contribute to their community; a very high number of students participate in the Duke of Edinburgh's awards scheme. The school's policies and practice promote equality of opportunity, for instance, in ensuring access to residential experiences for students from different groups. Sensitive support is provided to enable students with disabilities to engage in all that the school has to offer. Particular care is taken to ensure the rapid integration of students who join the sixth form from other high schools.

The curriculum is of good quality, offering students a suite of courses that equip them with the skills, knowledge and qualifications to progress to their next stage in education. A curriculum review is underway to improve the balance of time provided for different subjects. A learning skills programme has been introduced in Year 7 to support students' independent learning, but its principles have not been applied consistently across subjects. Some teachers make very good use of form time to develop a reading culture by giving students opportunities for personal reading, but this practice is not widely shared and, on some occasions, valuable learning opportunities are missed at the beginning of the school day.

The governing body provides effective support and challenge and its work is appreciated greatly by school leaders. It has managed the appointment and induction of the new headteacher effectively and has a strong presence in the school. The school improvement plan identifies the school's main priorities, but does not indicate milestones as to how these will be achieved. The school has maintained improvement since its previous inspection and has good capacity to improve. School leaders and the governing body work assiduously to ensure the safety of the school's complex site. Appropriate adaptations have been made to meet the needs of individual students who have disabilities. Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.



## 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	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



23 January 2012

Dear Students

**Inspection of Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School, Rossendale BB4 7BJ**

Thank you for the help that you gave to the inspection team when we visited your school recently. Particular thanks to those of you who gave up your time to join discussions with the inspectors and to those of you who completed the questionnaire. We have judged your school to be good overall and your sixth form to be outstanding.

Your achievement is outstanding and most of you make excellent progress from your starting points. Results at both GCSE and A level have risen since the school's previous inspection. You benefit from good teaching in most of your lessons, with some that is satisfactory and some that is outstanding. The excellent relationships you have with your teachers and with each other make the school a very pleasant learning environment in which everyone wants to succeed.

Your outstanding behaviour is a strength of the school. You strike the right balance between working hard and having fun and most of you behave courteously and respectfully. You make a strong contribution also to the running of the school, including through the active council. You told us that you value particularly the varied extra-curricular activities provided for you, including those that you instigate. A large number of you participate in programmes, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme and charitable work, that allow you to support the wider community.

The school's leadership has undergone significant change and we enjoyed hearing about your involvement in the appointment of the new headteacher. We think the school is well placed to improve. In order to make your school even better, we have asked that leaders improve quality assurance so that best practice in teaching is shared and developed. We have also asked that the proportion of outstanding teaching is increased through improved questioning, more opportunities for all of you to participate actively in lessons, and more consistent marking of your work. We have every confidence that you will support the staff fully in responding to these challenges.

On behalf of the inspectors, very best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely

Shirley Gornall  
Her Majesty's Inspector

