

# Huntcliff School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111726
<b>Local authority</b>	Redcar and Cleveland
<b>Inspection number</b>	378345
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 February 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Andrew Johnson HMI

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	511
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Dunn
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ruth Mayes
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 January 2007
<b>School address</b>	Marske Mill Lane Saltburn-By-the-Sea TS12 1HJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01287 621010
<b>Fax number</b>	01287 621011
<b>Email address</b>	slc@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk

---



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

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 assesses 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 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto: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.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



© Crown copyright 2012

---

## Introduction

### Inspection team

Andrew Johnson  
Patrick Hargreaves  
Peter Bannon  
Christine Cottam

Her Majesty's Inspector  
Additional inspector  
Additional inspector  
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 28 lessons taught by 27 teachers and spent approximately 18 hours observing teaching. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors, representatives of the local authority and staff. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a variety of documents including the school's evaluation of its own work, development plans, minutes of meetings and procedures in relation to equality and safeguarding. In addition, the 197 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, 51 from staff and 122 from students were analysed.

## Information about the school

Huntcliff is a small comprehensive school which has specialist status in humanities subjects. The school serves a socially and economically diverse area. Most students are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is well-below average. The proportion of students with special educational needs or a disability is higher than average, including those with a statement of special educational needs. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals has risen in recent years but is below average. The school shares a site with Saltburn Primary School and is part of the Saltburn Learning Campus, which includes a Children's Centre. Its new building opened in September 2008. A higher than average proportion of students join the school other than at the start of Year 7. The school holds several national awards including, the Eco School award, Healthy School status and the Anti-bullying Charter mark. Government floor standards were met last year.

**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>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key Findings

- Huntcliff is a thoroughly good school with a very inclusive philosophy. Standards of attainment are above average and improving as shown by rising GCSE results. Students' progress in the school's specialist subjects is particularly impressive, although inspectors observed them learning well in most lessons.
- Most students join the school having attained well in primary school and the proportion that attain good grades in GCSE English and mathematics is above average. Students make good progress in most subjects. Increasing the proportion that achieve the highest grades, particularly among boys, is a key area for improvement.
- Almost all students' behave well and show respect for each other and their teachers. The development of good spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding prepares them well for life after school. Attendance has risen to slightly above average and the small proportion of students who were persistently absent from school has been reduced. Students say they feel very safe in school and incidents of bullying are rare. Parents and carers are confident that their children are kept safe in the school. A few commented that there was very occasional weaker behaviour in lessons. Inspectors agree, but this is dealt with quickly and effectively.
- The quality of teaching is good and sometimes better than that. As a result, students develop good knowledge, skills and understanding across a wide range of academic subjects. However, in some subjects, teaching does not cater for more-able students so they do not attain the grades of which they are capable. The curriculum is good and provides a challenging range of academic subjects and extra-curricular activities that is carefully matched to students' needs and interests.
- Leadership is good. The leadership team has brought about many improvements. However, if the school is to reach its ambition to become outstanding, challenges remain; particularly in the way self-evaluation and planning are used to bring about improvement.

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

- Increase the proportion of students, particularly boys, who achieve the highest grades at GCSE by:
  - ensuring that lessons always provide sufficient challenge for the more-able
  - giving more-able students better opportunities for independent study
  - ensuring teachers have consistently high expectations, especially when marking written work.
  
- Improve the links between self-evaluation and planning to maximise the measurable impact these processes have by:
  - ensuring that a clear correlation is drawn between the attainment of different groups, the assessment of the quality of teaching and the targets identified in the development plan
  - ensuring the self-evaluation process results in a less descriptive, more evaluative report, from which leaders will be able to more accurately measure performance.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

Inspectors observed students making good progress in the development of skills, knowledge and understanding in the large majority of lessons they visited. The unusually high proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs make particularly good progress. Additional support is given by teachers to tackle any weaknesses in literacy skills, although this is not equally effective across all subjects. For example, grammatical and spelling errors are not consistently identified by teachers when marking students' books. When errors are identified, strategies for improvement are not always provided. Teachers develop good relationships with students and as a result, most pupils are keen to learn and enjoy school.

Assessment information is used well to identify and provide effective targeted support for students, particularly those younger students who have not reached the expected standards in primary school. This means that these groups catch up in English and mathematics and reach the expected levels by the time they leave school. Students who are known to be eligible for free school meals make particularly good progress. There are a few gaps between the attainment levels of other groups of students but they are closing significantly. A large majority of parents and carers who returned the questionnaires were justifiably pleased with the academic progress of their children.

Students' attainment in GCSE subjects including English and mathematics has been above average for the last three years. In 2011, the proportion of pupils reaching five A\* to C including English and mathematics was much higher than at the time of the previous inspection. Performance is very strong in the specialist humanities subjects and recently examination results in modern foreign languages have been good. The school is less successful in ensuring that a higher than average proportion of students gain the highest grades in all subjects.

## Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is consistently good and ensures that most students develop good levels of knowledge, skills and understanding. In a minority of lessons, teaching is outstanding, particularly when students are pushed to extend their understanding and learn in more depth. In these lessons, teachers personalise activities to match students' capabilities and allow them to learn more independently. In a few lessons where learning is only satisfactory, teaching is more focused on simply giving information and ensuring students complete tasks, rather than enabling them to develop genuine understanding. Students are kept busy by this approach and they comply with instructions, but there is a tendency for them to be too passive and not fully involved in their own learning.

In the best lessons, teachers use their passion for their subject to engage students and promote high levels of interest. Teachers ask questions to test students' understanding and promote discussion; they do not accept answers that are too superficial. For example, in a history lesson the teacher probed the precise reasons for the development of the Domesday Book; students developed their own understanding without being spoon-fed knowledge. In a languages lesson the teacher insisted on speaking French throughout the lesson and expected all students to do the same. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Students are clear about their targets. Their work is marked frequently and comments from teachers usually explain what it is they need to do to improve. However, the marking of basic spelling and grammatical errors and of general presentation varies widely between teachers. The recently introduced key skills policy has yet to have sufficient impact on students' learning. The school has an excellent library that is used to develop students' interest in reading and books. It is also very popular among students as a general social area and somewhere they can go to work independently.

## Behaviour and safety of pupils

Inspectors observed much good behaviour. The atmosphere around the school was calm and students were polite and friendly. There is compelling evidence that this is typical of behaviour over time. The behaviour management policy is implemented consistently by all staff and this promotes good behaviour. Respectful relationships between staff and students are evident in almost all lessons and around the school. Students told inspectors that behaviour is usually good, but on rare occasions when low-level disruption does occur, it is dealt with successfully by teachers. There have been no permanent exclusions in recent years and the number of fixed term exclusions has been greatly reduced. The reason why behaviour is not outstanding is that too many students are passive in lessons and not fully engaged by learning activities.

Almost all of the parents and carers who replied to the inspection questionnaire said students were kept safe within the school site; this was also reflected in the student return. A few parents and carers expressed concern about the traffic around the school. Inspectors observed students being well supervised at the end and beginning of the school day and at lunchtime. During the inspection, students told inspectors that they were happy in the school and there was very little bullying, almost all students who responded to the questionnaire agreed. The curriculum provides students with many opportunities to understand how they can keep themselves safe. For example, during the inspection there

were several sessions to explain the importance of good sexual health. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

## **Leadership and management**

The leadership team is very ambitious for the future and wants Huntcliff to be outstanding in every respect by the time of the next inspection. The school's leadership has a good track record of improving pupils' attainment, developing partnerships and reducing the proportion of persistent absentees. The headteacher and leadership team have successfully managed the quality of teaching to ensure it is good. Similarly, a good curriculum is provided which is tailored to meet the needs of particular groups and individuals. Professional development opportunities are good.

Based on this track record the school has developed a firm foundation for continuous improvement and demonstrates a good capacity to improve. However, making the move between good and outstanding is proving to be a challenge. Leaders, including the governing body, know the school's strengths and weaknesses and have a clear strategy for further improvement; however, this is not linked clearly enough to a measurable plan of action. The summary review for governors is too descriptive; this means that governors are not in the best position to monitor performance. The governing body makes a strong supportive contribution to the life of the school; however, it needs to be even more proactive in ensuring that its ambitious targets are met, if the school is to become outstanding.

A wide range of extra-curricular activities is in place, providing students with enjoyable learning experiences and ensuring that their spiritual, moral and social development is good. Visiting representatives of different faiths are welcomed and students take part in visits to places of worship. A partnership with a school in China helps students gain a good understanding of the diversity of different world cultures, although their understanding of the nature of Britain's multicultural society is less well developed. Staff morale is high and they are very supportive of the leadership team.

The school uses many successful strategies to engage parents and carers and support their children's learning. It is strongly committed to promoting equality and tackling discrimination. A real strength is the promotion of Huntcliff as a family school that is truly comprehensive. An increasing number of students join the school throughout the year and in recent years the numbers joining Year 7 with lower levels of prior attainment has increased; this process has been well managed. Students with special educational needs and students with disabilities are particularly well supported and included in the life of the school. Safeguarding policies and procedures are appropriate and meet government 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.**



10 February 2012

Dear Students

### **Inspection of Huntcliff School, Saltburn-By-the-Sea, TS12 1HJ**

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to thank you for the warm welcome you gave us and to explain our findings. We think Huntcliff is a really good school. There are several reasons for this, including the above average standards most of you achieve at GCSE. The quality of teaching is good and you behave well and feel safe. The school is well led and managed.

We know that you and your parents and carers agree with us. The great majority of questionnaires were positive and when we talked to you, you told us you were happy at school.

The leadership team is very ambitious for the future and wants Huntcliff to be outstanding by the time of the next inspection. We have left it with the following suggestions that we believe will help. They are:

- increase the number of students, especially boys, who achieve the highest grades at GCSE, by ensuring teaching is always matched to individual students' needs
- improve on the self-evaluation and planning processes to ensure the challenging targets are always closely monitored and met.

You can continue to play your part by working hard and attending regularly. We would like to send you our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Johnson  
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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone **0300 123 4234**, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).