

# York High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	133946
<b>Local authority</b>	York
<b>Inspection number</b>	381572
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 March 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Michael Maddison 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>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	780
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Tricia Miller
<b>Headteacher</b>	David Ellis
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 June 2009
<b>School address</b>	Cornlands Road Acomb York YO24 3WZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01904 555500
<b>Fax number</b>	01904 788998
<b>Email address</b>	reception@yorkhighschool.co.uk

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## Introduction

### Inspection team

Michael Maddison  
Michael Hill  
Tanya Harber Stuart  
Pamela Hemphill

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

The inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors undertook 31 formal lesson observations. One inspector undertook a learning walk which comprised a number of short visits to lessons to look at the provision for students who have special educational needs. Discussions were held with groups of students, senior staff, middle leaders, classroom teachers, six members of the governing body, and the School Improvement Partner. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, looked at safeguarding arrangements, and a variety of documents provided by the school, including policies, data analyses, and the school's self-evaluation. They analysed 180 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, as well as 111 questionnaires completed by a sample of students from each year group and 59 questionnaires completed by staff.

## Information about the school

York High School is a smaller than average-sized secondary school. There are more boys than girls. Most students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well below average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of students at School Action is above average and the proportion at School Action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average. Most of these students have moderate learning difficulties or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The number of students who start or leave the school at different times of the school year is in line with the national average. The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress. The school has specialist status in sport and in December 2011 it was awarded the Youth Sport Trust Gold Partner status.

**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

- This is a good and improving school. It is not outstanding because teaching across the school is not yet strong enough to ensure that students make exceptional progress across all subjects. Pastoral care is a strength and the school provides students with a safe and caring environment which promotes their personal and academic development well. The school's specialism in sport is having a highly positive impact on raising attainment, as well as improving the health of students and bringing the community together.
- The quality of teaching is good. Senior leaders have a good awareness of strengths and areas for development in teaching and there is a determined effort to raise its quality to outstanding. Lessons are characterised by positive relationships between teachers and students. However, in some lessons, tasks set are not matched well to the needs of learners.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Students say they feel safe and their parents and carers agree. Whereas inspectors observed no inappropriate behaviour around the school, they did see poor behaviour in a small number of lessons. Disruption in these lessons was linked directly to teaching and learning activities which failed to engage the students fully and to inconsistent application by some staff of the school's behaviour management procedures.
- Leadership and management are good. Although the role of some middle leaders, especially subject leaders, is not yet fully developed, the highly effective headteacher and the senior staff are extremely well focused and are clear about the school's strengths and weaknesses. Much has been achieved since the last inspection. The focus on accelerating achievement, strengthening teaching and learning, improving behaviour, and sharpening leadership and management at all levels has helped to drive up attainment and embed recent improvements in examination results. The school is increasingly living up to its motto of 'Inspiring people; achieving excellence'.

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

- Raise students' attainment and accelerate their progress, particularly at Key Stage 3 and especially in English, mathematics and science, by ensuring that the quality of teaching is consistently good or better throughout the school, by:
  - strengthening the use of dialogue and probing questions in lessons further to give students more opportunities to participate actively, develop their ideas fully, deepen their thinking and drive learning forward
  - using the increasingly robust assessment data available to ensure that there is greater expectation and challenge in all lessons to meet the needs of all learners
  - improving feedback to students so that they understand precisely the subject-specific actions for improvement and how to achieve them
  - embedding a consistent approach to behaviour management in all lessons.
- Develop the role of middle leaders, especially subject leaders, by ensuring that all their monitoring activities:
  - are undertaken with greater consistency
  - are evaluated more effectively
  - lead to prompt action to improve the quality of teaching and learning and, as a result, drive up attainment and achievement.

## Main Report

### Achievement of pupils

Since the last inspection, attainment has improved and in 2011 the school gained its best ever results. Students attained particularly well in some of the vocational courses and the proportion of students who gained five subjects at the higher grades was well above the national average. However, attainment is broadly average overall, not least because, when results in English and mathematics are considered, the proportion of students gaining five higher grades including these subjects is about the same as the national average. The school is working hard to improve results in all subjects, but especially in English, mathematics and science. Systems for monitoring progress and attainment are robust and current analyses of students' academic performance show that results at GCSE are on course to improve again this coming summer. Attainment on entry is below average and, in some years, well below average. Many students have poor literacy and numeracy skills, especially in relation to speaking and listening. Such weaknesses slow their progress across all subjects. Although strategies have been introduced to improve basic skills across the curriculum, these are not yet embedded systematically or consistently enough to have a substantial impact on students' learning.

Overall, students make good progress in their learning and some make outstanding progress. They also make faster progress at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3. In the best lessons observed, students made at least good progress because learning was challenging and it captured their interest. In the lessons where least progress was

made, teaching and activities failed to engage the students sufficiently. Here, the challenge was insufficient and there was too much emphasis upon completing tasks rather than embedding learning. In addition, students had insufficient opportunities to discuss and reflect upon their learning. In some of these lessons, behaviour also started to deteriorate as students became less focused. As a result, in some lessons progress is not rapid enough and in these weaker lessons teaching does not consider carefully enough the needs of all students, particularly the most able.

Disabled students and those with special educational needs make good progress. Some make outstanding progress. This is because of the highly effective support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants and because of the effective programme of interventions. The school is successfully closing the gap between girls' and boys' performance at GCSE, but it recognises that, in recent years, the more able have underachieved. Through the questionnaires, most parents and carers noted that their children were making good progress at the school. Inspectors judge that students are making good progress. However, there is underachievement in some lessons, especially where there is less effective teaching and insufficient challenge.

### **Quality of teaching**

Attainment is improving because the quality of teaching is good and improving. Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire believe that their children are taught well at the school. Inspectors observed some satisfactory and a small amount of inadequate teaching. However, inspection evidence indicates that the quality of teaching is good and improving, with some examples of outstanding practice. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan stimulating lessons that engage and enthuse learners. Good relationships between students and adults, underpinned by the strong ethos of the school, lead to a purposeful atmosphere in the vast majority of lessons. In the best lessons, teachers provide plenty of opportunities for students to listen to each other, discuss, and debate. As a result they help students to develop their own ideas fully, extend their thinking and drive their own learning forward. However, this is not yet a consistent feature of all lessons.

A culture of learning is developing in which students are increasingly motivated to work hard and which is having a positive impact on their spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development. Some particularly effective learning was observed when teachers' expectations were clear and when activities were adapted enough to challenge all students of all abilities. However, this is not consistent practice. When students were expected to be passive learners and were not given a variety of activities which provided sufficient challenge, their interest soon waned with a corresponding decline in their behaviour. Curriculum planning is helping to ensure that students' needs and interests are being met well. However, the promotion of students' literacy and numeracy skills is not yet consistently effective across all subjects. The quality of marking and written feedback is variable. There is much effective marking which gives students a good understanding of how well they are doing and how they can improve. However, this practice is not yet consistent across the school, especially at Key Stage 3. Where practice is weaker, guidance is of limited value because subject-specific actions for improvement are missing.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Behaviour and safety are good. Students behave well around school, but there is disruption to learning in a small number of lessons due to inappropriate behaviour. This is linked directly to the level of expectation, challenge and engagement provided by the teaching. Some parents and carers who completed the questionnaires expressed concerns about students' bad behaviour in lessons. However, these parents and carers may be reassured that senior leaders are focused well on ensuring good behaviour and that incidents of misbehaviour in lessons are declining. Although in general students have engaged positively with the school's behaviour management system, the procedures are not yet being applied consistently by all staff across the school.

Students take pride in being at York High School and they are definite that this is a safe school, as are their parents and carers. Students report that there is some bullying, that it is most prevalent in Years 7 and 8, and that it is mostly name calling. When this happens and it is reported, it is dealt with promptly and does not usually recur. The school is rightly proud of its inclusive approach and effective partnerships with a range of outside agencies ensure that strategies to support all students are a strong aspect of the school's work. Potentially vulnerable students feel particularly well supported and the support centre has extended the school's capacity for assisting students who are identified as at risk of permanent exclusion by offering a more flexible learning experience. Students' attendance and punctuality have improved considerably as a result of the school's determined actions to support students who have difficulty in maintaining regular attendance or in arriving promptly each day. Senior leaders recognise, though, that there is more work to be undertaken to ensure that students do not dawdle when they are moving between lessons.

## **Leadership and management**

The school benefits from the highly effective leadership of the headteacher and his well-focused senior team. He has a clear vision and ambitious agenda for the future direction of the school. There is an awareness of where intervention is needed, effective strategies to support students in their learning are being implemented and there is an understanding of what is needed to improve the school. Since the last inspection, learning and progress in classrooms, behaviour, the quality of teaching, and results in examinations have all improved. An accurate understanding of the strengths in teaching of individual staff mean that training and support is focused well on ensuring improvement in their performance. In these ways, senior leaders have shown that they have a good capacity to embed ambition and drive improvement and that their leadership of teaching and management of performance are good. Self-evaluation is largely accurate; it highlights strengths and weaknesses and identifies the key priorities for the school's improvement. Leadership at all levels is being increasingly challenged and held to account. However, not all subject leaders are as effective as they could be because there is too much variety of practice across the school. They are actively engaged in monitoring activities. However, these are not yet undertaken with sufficient consistency, nor are they evaluated thoroughly

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enough to lead to action which will, directly and swiftly, improve the quality of teaching and learning and, in turn, improve attainment and achievement.

Safeguarding practices meet statutory requirements and complement the high-quality care, guidance and support, which is provided in the school. The curriculum is good and it has continued to evolve so that it meets students' differing needs and interests more successfully. It provides well for students' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development. For example, there is a range of opportunities for students to meet people of different faiths and cultures and specific themed days, some of which are linked to the school's specialism, enable students to explore such issues as disability in sport. Students' aspirations are being raised, equality of opportunity is promoted well and discrimination is tackled effectively. Since the last inspection, governance has improved. The governing body has a secure understanding of the issues facing the school and it uses its wealth of knowledge and experience to support and question school leaders at all levels.



## 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.**



9 March 2012

Dear Students

### **Inspection of York High School, York YO24 3WZ**

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome. We greatly appreciated the time you spent talking to us and we found your comments very helpful. As well as coming into lessons and looking at your work, we read the questionnaires completed by you and your parents or carers. We believe your school is good and these are the reasons.

- Results in GCSE examinations are improving and you make good progress in your learning.
- Teaching is good. You have good relationships with your teachers who work hard on your behalf.
- Your behaviour is generally good around school and in most lessons. You told us that you feel safe in school and that if there is any bullying it is promptly dealt with.
- The school is led well. Some aspects of your school are particular strengths, especially the support, care and guidance you are given and the school's specialism in sport which helps you to do well and to keep you healthy.

To improve your school further, we have asked senior leaders and the governing body to make sure that:

- you are given work in your lessons which each of you finds challenging
- your teachers use questions and discussions to check and deepen your understanding and allow you enough time to develop and explain your ideas
- your teachers consistently give you detailed feedback so that you always know how to improve in each subject
- your teachers manage inappropriate behaviour in lessons more consistently and effectively
- middle leaders, especially subject leaders, take effective action to improve your progress and examination results.

The headteacher, senior leaders and teachers are determined to improve the school. However, you all have your part to play by coming to school regularly and promptly each day and working to the best of your ability.

We wish you all every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Maddison  
Her Majesty's Inspector

