

Horbury School - A Specialist Language College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108280
Local Authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	356337
Inspection dates	9–10 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Jan Bennett HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1048
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Richard Dennett
Headteacher	Ms Miriam Oakley
Date of previous school inspection	18 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The team observed 32 lessons, taught by different teachers, and held meetings with groups of students, governors and staff. The team observed the school's work, and scrutinised documentation including the school's self- evaluation form, development plan and an analysis of achievement data. Inspectors also looked at the 312 completed questionnaires received from parents and carers plus questionnaire responses from staff and students.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- Attainment data and students' progress in all subjects, especially English and mathematics.
- The effectiveness of teaching, particularly the use of assessment, in improving outcomes for students.
- The impact of recent changes to the curriculum.
- The effectiveness of strategies to improve attendance.
- The capacity of leadership and management to drive and sustain improvement.

Information about the school

Horbury School is a medium-sized secondary school and is housed in a new building that was opened in phases and became fully operational in September 2009. Its students come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds but most are White British and the vast majority speak English as their first language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is slightly below the national average. The proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is average but the proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities has increased markedly since the last inspection and is well above average. Horbury School holds awards for Investors in People and has achieved Healthy School status. It is a specialist language college and has Full International School 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

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Horbury School is good and improving quickly. The headteacher was appointed in September 2009 and she has revitalised the school. There is energy and optimism among staff and a new sense of purpose. A new deputy headteacher was also appointed at the same time and she has introduced much needed systems to monitor performance. Almost all parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire believe the school is well led and managed. One parent said: 'We feel the new headteacher and deputy headteacher are making great improvements to the school and the school can only get better with their joint expertise and approach.'

The impact of the improvements can already be seen in better outcomes for students. Behaviour has improved to good, attendance is now above average and achievement is good and improving. Very robust target setting and review procedures track students' progress and enable staff to target interventions much more effectively. Systems for monitoring the quality of teaching have been strengthened and achievement targets now form part of the performance management of teachers.

The quality of teaching is more consistent than at the last inspection and has improved to good. Teachers are making better use of assessment to enhance learning but there is room for further development. Marking is not of a consistently high standard and not all teachers are using the extensive information they have about students to plan lessons that meet the needs of everyone in the class.

The curriculum is now good in both key stages. Partnerships are used well to strengthen the curriculum and offer more choice in Key Stage 4. Effective action has been taken to ensure that all students, including those going off-site for part of the week, spend enough time on English and mathematics. Teachers across the curriculum are not doing enough to support the literacy and numeracy development of students, however, and achievement in English and mathematics is not improving as quickly as in other subjects. A wide variety of modern foreign languages is on offer and there is a very strong global element to the curriculum with a good range of international trips, largely as a result of the specialism. Attainment in modern languages was low in 2009 but there has been a very marked rise in pass rates in French and Spanish this year partly due to changes to the curriculum.

Strategic leadership is strong and operational management is very efficient. Members of the governing body challenge and support the leadership team very well. They have effective links with curriculum areas and a very good grasp of issues affecting the school. Leaders at all levels know the strengths and weaknesses of their areas and self-evaluation is robust if a little harsh. There is a constant drive for improvement throughout the school and high expectations are the norm. There has been considerable improvement in many aspects of the school's work that demonstrate a good capacity for sustained improvement.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics by:
 - creating more opportunities to apply literacy and numeracy across the curriculum
 - strengthening the quality of teaching and learning in English and mathematics.
- Improve assessment to support learning by:
 - consistently using tracking data to tailor learning to match the needs of every student in the class
 - reviewing and adjusting lesson plans in response to students' needs
 - improving the consistency and quality of verbal and written feedback given to students.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students enter the school with Key Stage 2 results slightly above average. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 has risen considerably over the last few years. In 2009, the proportion of students achieving five or more high grade passes at GCSE was 80%, which is well above average and represents a rise of 11% from the 2008 figure. There has been a similar rise in 2010. The pass rates in GCSE English and mathematics have not risen as quickly. They were around average in 2009 and improved further this summer. The wide gaps in performance between different subjects are narrowing. The school's internal tracking data show that attainment is above average and rising in Key Stage 3 but too few students are reaching the highest levels in English and mathematics. Students make good progress in most lessons. The vast majority are keen to do well, enjoy learning and work at a brisk pace. Tracking data show that students are increasingly meeting challenging individual targets and, although they have made better progress in English and mathematics in the last couple of years, there is room for further improvement. Well-targeted support, fewer exclusions and personalisation of the curriculum are ensuring that students with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve in line with their peers.

Students' personal development and well-being are good. The vast majority feel safe in school and the few instances of bullying are tackled quickly. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good as a result of highly effective behaviour management systems that are used consistently for the most part. The restaurant promotes a healthy diet through its range of options and pricing, there is high participation in sporting activities and students know about healthy lifestyles and potential risks. Students have good opportunities to make their views known through a vast array of 'student voice' groups. Students are active fund-raisers and benefit from extensive international links. For example, students from the 'Eco Group' have recently returned from a fact finding trip to Romania. Attendance is above average and punctuality is good. Students are prepared well for life after school but improved literacy and numeracy skills would enhance their opportunities further. Students' social and moral development is particularly strong.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Most teaching seen was good or better and the quality was more consistent than at the last inspection. The school has introduced a rigorous system to monitor the quality of teaching that is beginning to have a positive impact. Most teachers use a good variety of tasks to maintain interest and pace. In an exceptional lesson on 'cloning' an excellent range of activities and resources captured students' interest and led to outstanding learning. The most-able students moved on to discuss ethics while others consolidated learning by revisiting the cloning of Dolly, the sheep. Learning support assistants are deployed well in lessons and give valuable support to students with special educational needs and/or disabilities enabling them to reach their full potential. All teachers have detailed information about their students and it is used well to monitor progress but is not used widely to plan lessons. Assessment is used increasingly to enhance learning. Teachers' questioning techniques are improving but the quality of feedback to students is still too variable.

The curriculum in both key stages is innovative and under regular review. Many changes are recent and have not yet had full impact on outcomes for students but there are early signs of improvement. The curriculum is broad and balanced with a good mix of academic and vocational options, including young apprenticeships, in Key Stage 4. The experience that students receive in Key Stage 3 prepares them for early entry to GCSE which has had a very positive effect on attainment in science. The school works in partnership to offer an

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effective work-related curriculum for students at risk of becoming disaffected. There is an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, including trips and visits, and participation is high. The school takes special care to ensure that vulnerable groups of students take part.

Parents and carers agree that students are well supported in the transition from primary school and receive good impartial advice and guidance about post-16 opportunities as they prepare to leave school. Strategies to reduce persistent absence and raise attendance have been effective. There is a strong commitment to inclusion. Very effective strategies to manage behaviour have reduced significantly the number of students excluded from school and from lessons. Provision for students considered vulnerable, including those at risk of becoming disaffected, is good; consequently, the number of Year 11 students not progressing to further education, employment or training is low and reducing. Mixed-age tutor groups are working well and older students provide support for those lower down the school. Effective multi-agency working provides good support for the most vulnerable students.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The appointment of the headteacher and deputy headteacher invigorated the senior team. The judicious appointment of a number of middle leaders further enhanced leadership and management. Leaders communicate very effectively and support staff well.

Communication with parents and carers has improved considerably with the re-introduction of parents' evenings and use of different communication routes such as email and the parents' portal. Issues around consistency and accountability are being tackled systematically and rigorously. Target-setting and monitoring are used well to challenge and motivate students and to manage the performance of staff. Safeguarding procedures are good. Equality and diversity are promoted well and any gaps in achievement between different groups of students are monitored closely and addressed effectively. Plans for community cohesion are in place but need further review with more attention given to local priorities. The school is building very strong and effective partnerships and is using them wisely to develop staff expertise and enhance the provision. Resources are of a high quality and outcomes for students are good and improving. Value for money is good.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Inspectors received questionnaire responses from around 30% of parents and carers and they were overwhelmingly positive. Almost all said that their child enjoys school, teaching is good and they are happy with their child's experience at the school. Few of those who responded had anything negative to say about the school. A small number had concerns about the way that the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors found that the school has a highly successful behaviour management system but a few staff are not using the system effectively.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Horbury School - A Specialist Language College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 312 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1048 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	135	43	171	55	5	2	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	128	41	178	57	3	1	1	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	142	46	160	51	6	2	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	126	40	170	54	8	3	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	113	36	179	57	10	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	89	29	189	61	20	6	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	90	29	193	62	16	5	3	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	105	34	161	52	12	4	4	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	119	38	169	54	18	6	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	109	35	165	53	21	7	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	68	22	197	63	11	4	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	128	41	162	52	5	2	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	143	46	155	50	8	3	2	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



Dear Students

Inspection of Horbury School - A Specialist Language College, Wakefield, WF4 5HE

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed meeting you, seeing you at work and hearing your views. The school has improved rapidly and is now good. Here is a summary of our findings which we hope will be of interest to you.

- Examination results, the robust monitoring data kept by teachers and the quality of work in lessons show that attainment is above average and you are making good progress.
- Teaching is good. Lessons include a variety of tasks to keep you busy and you obviously enjoy learning.
- The curriculum is good with a wide range of choices in Key Stage 4. There are lots of extra sporting activities, clubs and trips and you participate well.
- Your personal development is good. Behaviour has improved since the last inspection and we were pleased to see that the number of exclusions from school has dropped. Attendance has also improved and is above average.
- The care, guidance and support that you receive are good.
- The governance, leadership and management of the school are good.

In order to improve further we have asked the school to:

- raise attainment in English and mathematics by asking all teachers to help develop your literacy and numeracy skills
- use assessment more effectively to support learning by improving the quality of marking.

The headteacher and her team are working extremely well and know just what to do to improve the school even further. We hope that you give them your full support and wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Jan Bennett

Her Majesty's Inspector

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