

# Conyers School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111730
<b>Local Authority</b>	Stockton-on-Tees
<b>Inspection number</b>	337729
<b>Inspection dates</b>	4–5 October 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Alison Thomson

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>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1343
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	236
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Andrew Cuthbertson
<b>Headteacher</b>	John Morgan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 March 2007
<b>School address</b>	Green Lane Yarm North Yorkshire TS15 9ET
<b>Telephone number</b>	01642 783253
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 35 teachers and 37 lessons, and held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work and analysed 272 questionnaires from parents and carers, 146 from students and 67 from staff. The team also looked at documents and policies including those relating to the safeguarding of students, information the school had collected about the students' progress and the school's records of its monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning.

- How good is the current progress made by students in Key Stage 3 and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- How high is the current attainment in modern foreign languages.
- To what extent are students involved in checking the effectiveness of their own learning.
- How effective is the school's monitoring and evaluation at accelerating improvement, particularly that of teaching and learning.

## Information about the school

This is a much larger-than-average secondary school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is much lower than average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups, including those learning English as an additional language, is much lower than average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those who have a statement of special educational needs, is much lower than average. The school is a specialist school in mathematics and computing. It has a second specialism as a leadership partner school. The school has many awards, including Healthy School status and the International Award for the development of students' understanding of other cultures. The school has an executive headteacher who has a strategic outward-facing role and is seconded part-time to the Association of School and College Leaders, and a head of the school who is responsible for the day-to-day running of the school.

**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?****1****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****2**

## Main findings

Conyers is an outstanding school. Attainment is high and students' achievement is excellent. Many aspects of the students' personal development are outstanding, including the extent to which they develop skills to prepare them for future life. The vast majority of parents, carers and students are very positive about all aspects of the school. Students describe the school as, 'A school which has something for everyone.'

Since the previous inspection, there have been many improvements, increasingly so recently, and an outstanding performance has been maintained in several areas. Attainment has been consistently high over several years and improved further in 2010, including attainment in French and German which had previously been lower than in other subjects. Attendance has remained high, helped by the students' enjoyment of school and the schools excellent care, guidance and support. This care and support has helped to ensure that students, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, all progress well and participate in everything that the school has to offer. Learning and progress are good. They have improved as a result of improvements in the curriculum and academic guidance, both of which are outstanding. Teaching has also improved and is good overall, although at present there are some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and the best practice is not shared well enough. As a result, learning and progress is not as high as it might be. The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good, but it is not as high as in the main school. The school recognises that one of its main areas for development is to improve outcomes for students in the sixth form. It has accurately identified enhancing students' study skills, and more rigorous academic guidance, to match that in the main school, as ways of doing this. Sixth formers, however, were keen to tell us that they very much enjoyed their time in school and appreciated the opportunities provided, such as being involved in leading Focus Days.

Central to the improved success of the school is the highly effective leadership team, under the dynamic direction of the executive headteacher and head of school. Embedding ambition and driving improvements, the effectiveness of partnerships and the equality of opportunity for students are all outstanding. Self-evaluation is rigorous, resulting in significant improvements, although the school agrees that its monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning has not always been focused clearly enough on learning or on the previous areas for development. The school's specialisms impact extremely well on the students' development. For example, attainment in mathematics and in subjects requiring mathematical skills is particularly high and student enjoyment has been greatly enhanced through the use of information and communication technology (ICT). In addition, the specialism in leadership has led to the creation of a highly popular and effective student leadership programme which impacts very well on the students' outstanding contribution to the community. The many improvements and sustained performance, including

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extremely accurate self-evaluation, means that the school's capacity to improve further is good.

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

- Raise the quality of learning and progress to outstanding, by:
  - sharing the best practice in teaching that exists in the school more widely to ensure that all teaching is as good as the best
  - getting students involved in independent learning tasks as soon as possible in lessons
  - providing clear success criteria in all lessons so that students can assess for themselves more easily how well they are learning
  - observing lessons with a closer focus on learning and on the previous areas for development.
- Improve outcomes in the sixth form, by:
  - developing students' study skills and readiness for independent learning as they embark on sixth form courses
  - increase the rigour in the academic guidance given to students throughout the year to raise aspirations and redress quickly any relative underachievement.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

<b>1</b>
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Inspection evidence from lesson observations confirmed the school's view that learning and progress is good overall, and sometimes outstanding, from students' above average attainment on entry to the school. Along with high attainment and good enjoyment in lessons, this means that students' achievement is outstanding. Students enjoy a challenge and this was exemplified well in a Year 11 English lesson on William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* where students were skilfully questioned to deepen their thinking. In most lessons, good behaviour makes a good contribution to learning and students work well together. This was seen to good effect in a Year 9 German lesson on describing a town as a tourist destination. Students worked very successfully in pairs to match up events and where they would take place. Inspection evidence confirms that progress is good in Key Stage 3, as it is in Key Stage 4. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities also progress well, in line with their peers. Much of the credit here is due to the excellent work of the learning support department.

The vast majority of students say that they feel safe in school. They have an excellent understanding of what it means to be healthy. They enjoy the many opportunities to take part in sporting activities and as sports leaders organising events for younger students. In addition, they act as ambassadors to promote a healthy lifestyle through their work as student leaders. This role also affords many opportunities to make an excellent contribution to their school and the wider community, through events such as serving tea to asylum seekers in a day centre. Students say that the school listens to them, for example, by 'taking on board' their views about mixed-age tutor groups. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their understanding of international cultures is particularly good, because the school's promotion of community

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cohesion is good. However, their understanding of minority ethnic religions and cultures, reflecting those found in the United Kingdom as a whole, are less well developed.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	1
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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> 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?**

The impact of the outstanding curriculum is seen in the outstanding outcomes for the students. Literacy and numeracy are fully integrated across all curriculum areas. ICT is also embedded throughout the curriculum and the innovative Conyers Cloud, which allows staff and students to access work through the internet, is having a marked effect in many areas. Some students are able to enter GCSEs a year early, for example, in mathematics, French and German and some Year 11 students study an AS-level course in science in society. All students study at least one modern foreign language and many study two. The many enrichment experiences allow students to have memorable experiences, from foreign trips to visits to the national Shakespeare theatre. Focus days are held every half term and give students many opportunities to enhance their personal development, including the opportunity to develop team spirit. The school is rightly proud of its outstanding care, guidance and support and its reputation as an inclusive school. All students, including the most vulnerable, benefit greatly from a highly personalised and proactive approach to care, guidance and support. There are many comments from parents and carers complimenting the school on the 'very successful integration' of their children into Year 7.

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Good and outstanding teaching is characterised by interesting activities, a good pace and good questioning that challenges students well. The good use of interactive whiteboards promotes good learning and discussion is often used well to generate ideas as a precursor to independent work. This was seen to good effect in a Year 7 religious education lesson on 'learning to learn'. Very occasionally, in lessons where learning is less secure, teachers talk too much from the front of the class, giving students less opportunity to be involved in independent learning tasks. In addition, in some lessons teachers do not give clear criteria by which students can tell how well they are learning. In these lessons, learning and progress slows. Good assessment is evident in nearly all lessons. For example, in a Year 10 ICT lesson, the teacher was seen checking throughout the lesson the understanding of individual students against the learning intentions. Teachers' marking is usually clear and helpful; students have individual challenging targets in each subject and most know how they can improve their work.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The executive headteacher and head of school, very ably assisted by the governing body, have provided the school with a very clear vision and direction that has had a significant impact on its development. The school's leadership specialism has impacted well on very effective leadership seen at all levels. The whole staff share a clear commitment to raising achievement, team spirit is robust and everyone's contribution is valued. Any previous gaps in performance, such as those of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, have closed rapidly. This, along with the cohesive and harmonious nature of the school community and the school's zero tolerance to racism, indicates that equality of opportunity is outstanding. The school clearly knows its strengths and what to do to improve even further very well. For example, it acknowledges that to raise learning and progress to outstanding, the management of teaching and learning needs to be even more incisive than it is at present.

The school promotes good safeguarding procedures as part of its excellent quality care. Engagement with parents and carers is good. Very effective partnerships have been instrumental in bringing about many of the improvements. For example, partnerships with local firms have helped to boost achievement in the New Diploma in Engineering. Community cohesion is good, particularly in relation to local and international communities. Members of the governing body are extremely knowledgeable about the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They not only monitor and evaluate the school's performance incisively, but also their own performance. The school achieves outstanding value for money.

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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

## Sixth form

The number of students entering the sixth form is increasing and attendance is high. The majority of students make good progress and reach above average attainment at the end of Year 13. Almost all go on to higher education and the number who do not enter employment, training or further education is extremely low. Sixth-form students are highly articulate and excellent role models for younger students. Their contribution to the community is excellent; they play a leading role in the school's Focus Days and benefit greatly from working in the local community, for example, at a residential home for older people. They contribute very well to the personal development of younger students in school, through roles such as mentors. This is valued greatly by Year 7 students who say this plays a large part in helping them to settle in.

Sixth form teachers have very good subject knowledge and students' progress in lessons is good. Many lessons offer a good degree of challenge, as seen in a Year 12 philosophy lesson where students rose to the challenge of understanding the writings of Wittgenstein. However, students are not given enough opportunities or guidance to be responsible for their own independent learning at present. The curriculum provides a very good range of courses, including the very successful personal, externally assessed, extended project. Several students have gained an A\* in this new A level equivalent qualification. Care, guidance and support are good and students appreciate that 'teachers have lots of time' for them. Increasingly, students are being given more focused academic guidance through tutorials, but currently this does not encourage high enough aspirations for some students or identify underachievement early enough. The newly restructured leadership of the sixth form demonstrates an accurate view of priorities and a clear agenda for further improvement.



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*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

## Views of parents and carers

About a fifth of parents and carers returned the questionnaire. They were very positive about all aspects of the school's work, particularly the extent to which their children enjoy school and the extent to which the school keeps their children safe and meets their child's particular needs. These were aspects that the inspectors felt the school was doing very well. A small minority did not agree that the school dealt with unacceptable behaviour effectively. Inspectors followed up this concern but found behaviour to be good overall and that any misbehaviour was dealt with appropriately.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Conyers School 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 272 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1343 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	110	40	149	55	8	3	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	88	32	173	64	8	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	64	24	173	64	14	5	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	68	25	164	60	11	4	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	72	26	174	64	8	3	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	48	18	167	61	33	12	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	44	16	186	68	26	10	0	0
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)	74	27	157	58	9	3	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	72	26	174	64	6	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	50	18	139	51	44	16	13	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	39	14	159	58	23	8	4	1
The school is led and managed effectively	63	23	166	61	15	6	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	88	32	164	60	10	4	3	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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](http://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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you very much. We judged your school to be outstanding. We would like to share with you why we think this is so and what the school can do to make certain aspects even better. Your achievement in the main school is excellent; you learn and progress well and your attainment is high. Most of you behave well and engage well in your lessons. Your curriculum is excellent and you told us how much you welcome the opportunities the school has to offer, such as through the student leadership programme. We were very impressed with the way that you are taking on these responsibilities.

Although you progress well, we believe that your progress could be even better. We have asked the school to share best practice in teaching more widely, to give you more independent learning tasks and always to give you clear criteria for success so that you see for yourselves if you are learning well. In addition, we have asked that, when observing your lessons, the focus is always on how well you are learning and on previous areas for development. You can help by asking your teachers to make it clear to you how you can assess how well you are learning in each of your lessons.

Outcomes in the sixth form are good but not quite as good as they might be. In order that you may achieve more highly, we have asked your headteacher and other leaders to develop your study skills and readiness for independent learning at the beginning of Year 12. We have also asked them to increase the rigour of academic guidance to raise your aspirations and redress any underachievement as early as possible.

We hope that you continue to enjoy your education at Conyers and we would like to wish you all the best for your future lives.

Yours sincerely,

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