

Hipperholme and Lightcliffe High School and Sports College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107578
Local Authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	356186
Inspection dates	15–16 February 2011
Reporting inspector	John Rutherford 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1406
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	199
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Holly Bottomley
Headteacher	Mr Anthony Smith
Date of previous school inspection	3 October 2007
School address	Stoney Lane Lightcliffe, Halifax West Yorkshire HX3 8TL
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 37 lessons. They held meetings with school leaders, groups of students and the Chair of the Governing Body. They observed the school's work and looked at samples of students' work, information about students' progress and a range of management documents, including policies and records for ensuring the safeguarding of students. They analysed 37 completed questionnaires from parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The progress that more-able students make.
- Teachers' use of assessment in lessons to accelerate the progress of all groups of students.
- The development of vocational courses within the curriculum to meet students' differing needs.
- The impact of new approaches to pastoral care.
- The use of the sports specialism to improve students' outcomes in other subjects.
- The work of leaders at all levels in improving teaching and learning.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average school. The number of students has increased significantly in recent years and is continuing to grow. The school mainly takes students from the eastern side of Halifax, but a significant number comes from other parts of the town and from neighbouring local authorities. Students of all abilities are admitted, although the proportion of more-able students is reduced by the presence of two selective schools in the local authority. Eight per cent of the students are known to be eligible for a free school meal, which is below average. The percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. Most students have White British heritage and only 5% of the students are from a minority ethnic background; very few are at an early stage of speaking English as an additional language. The school has specialist sports college status. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2009.

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

This is a good and rapidly-improving school. Students make outstanding progress in learning how to make a positive contribution to their school and to the wider community. Excellent collaboration with a wide range of external partners enhances the curriculum for students and the provision for their well-being. The sports specialism is being used to outstanding effect in improving students' achievement across the curriculum, especially in English and in adopting a healthy lifestyle.

When the new headteacher started, he quickly extended and strengthened the leadership team, empowering them to increase significantly their positive impact on the effectiveness of teaching and assessment. Leaders at all levels are working very effectively as a cohesive unit and, within a year, they have brought about rapid improvement. As a result standards are rising and, they were in line with the national average in 2010 GCSE examinations. School records and students' work indicate that the rate of improvement has accelerated in the current school year. These rising standards are sustainable because school leaders use assessment information to enable all groups of students to make better than expected progress from the beginning of Year 7. The early impact of the leadership team's work demonstrates that they have a good capacity to continue raising standards.

School leaders have high expectations for what students can achieve. They have identified a significant number of more-able students who should be achieving much higher standards than has recently been the case. They are, therefore, providing additional challenge and mentoring for this group and these students' progress is strongly improving as a result. Recently-introduced approaches to improving guidance and support for all students have already improved tutorial arrangements and are beginning to make a positive difference to outcomes. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive well-planned personal and academic support which helps them to make the same good progress as other students. Some receive such intensive one-to-one support from teaching assistants, however, that it is restricting their opportunity to develop independent learning skills and to work collaboratively with other students.

The large majority of lessons enable all groups of students to make good progress. An important aspect of these lessons is high expectations and stimulating teaching. Teachers' lesson planning is informed by very detailed information about the learning needs of each student. While most teachers use this information effectively to meet the whole range of needs during lessons, this is not yet consistent across the school. The curriculum and extra-curricular programme are being developed well to widen the range of options for students and to provide more opportunities for in-depth learning linked to interesting first-hand experiences. The development of vocational learning within the curriculum has been slower and part of the reason for this has been space limitations caused by the rising student roll. The school has recently acquired additional accommodation and recognises

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the need to use this opportunity to expand the offer of vocational courses. Overall, as a result of the good teaching, curriculum and care, the overwhelming majority of students enjoy school and their attendance is above average.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards by:
 - - using assessment information more consistently in lessons to adapt tasks and questions to meet the needs of all students
 - - using assessment information more consistently to provide feedback to students on the level at which they are working and how they can improve it
 - - ensuring that the deployment of support assistants promotes independent and collaborative learning for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities
 - - increasing the offer of vocational courses to improve the match of the curriculum to the range of students' needs.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

When students start at the school, their attainment is broadly average. Their standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are also in line with the national average, although they are improving rapidly. The rising trend is the result of students' progress improving considerably over the past 18 months; it is now good throughout the school. However, this improvement has not yet had time to raise GCSE results above the national average. The proportion of students attaining the highest GCSE grades is low in a large number of subjects. The new leadership team does not use the reduced admission of more-able students as an excuse for this. They have identified students who should be achieving more and have made sure that this group is accelerating their progress significantly. Any students who are underachieving are quickly identified and provided with individually-planned support that helps them to catch up quickly. Standards in the specialist subject of physical education are exceptionally high. The school has very effectively used this strength to raise standards in English. A recent project combining work in the two subjects has significantly increased the motivation of students and they have achieved very high standards in writing and speaking. The school has received a national award for this work.

Students' enthusiasm for learning and their ability to work independently or as part of a team contributes to their good progress. Their responsible approach to managing their own behaviour effectively in most unsupervised situations adds to the school's very constructive climate for learning. These personal qualities give students a strong foundation for their future economic well-being, combined with their good progress in developing literacy, numeracy and computer skills and in learning about business and enterprise.

In social situations within school, students feel at ease and can express themselves without fear of disapproval from others. They say that they feel safe from intolerance and bullying and they are confident that they will receive support from adults when they need it. While not all students have a broad understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, they show good habits of healthy eating and participation in physical activity. Students make outstanding progress in developing skills in leadership when organising

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activities within their own school, in neighbouring primary and special schools and in community groups. The sports specialism makes a significant contribution to this work, notable examples being the group of boys and girls who coached rugby in South African townships and the group who teamed up with disabled students to take part in outdoor adventure activities. This work also makes a very strong contribution to students' moral, social and cultural development. Students' ability to reflect on and express spiritual ideas is less well developed.

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	3
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	1
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?

Students make good progress in the majority of lessons because they are motivated to learn by challenging, interesting activities. Progress accelerates when students improve their outcomes by assessing their own and each other's work. Students understand their targets and receive useful guidance from teachers about how to achieve them. Teachers have a detailed knowledge of the levels to which students aspire and of their individual needs. While lesson plans are almost always pitched at a suitably challenging level for most students, a minority of teachers do not sufficiently modify the tasks, questions and feedback during lessons for those who need more support or challenge.

The curriculum is being extended and provides a good range of academic courses to meet the needs of the majority of students. Vocational aspects of the curriculum are at an earlier stage of development. The recent introduction of 'immersion' days provides

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students with good opportunities to extend their understanding by applying skills from a range of subjects to an interesting project. Students' learning is greatly enhanced by the extensive programme of visitors to the school, off-site work and extra-curricular activities. The sports specialism makes a significant contribution to this enrichment. The curriculum is adapted well for students with significant special educational needs and/or disabilities. It helps them to make good progress in many subjects and in the personal skills needed for life beyond school, such as staying safe. At times, however, these students are given insufficient opportunity to practise solving problems independently or to work cooperatively with classmates.

The broadening of the curriculum is combined with improved guidance for students and their parents and carers on choosing courses. The recently-introduced tutor system, although at an early stage of development, is beginning to have a positive impact on the guidance and support for students because there is more time for mentoring and for enabling the older students to support the younger ones. Students' personal development and well-being are monitored as thoroughly as their academic progress. This information is used effectively to plan support for students, and their families, when there are social and emotional barriers to good progress. A particular strength is the care and support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, which is based on systematic monitoring of such aspects as their enjoyment of school and their participation in extra-curricular activities.

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 new headteacher has demonstrated exceptional leadership in the way he has quickly gained support and commitment from the significantly-reorganised leadership team and the majority of staff. They are working together with a strong sense of common purpose and the impact can be seen in the growing consistency of effective teaching and its early impact on raising standards. Senior leaders work very effectively together to keep the school's performance under close review. Central to this is the searching analysis of a range of data about students' progress to check that all staff and students are on track to meet the school's challenging targets. Robust and supportive action is taken if any aspect of the school's work shows signs of underperformance. The leadership team's weekly gathering of a wide range of evidence gives a strong basis for the detailed identification of strengths and weaknesses. This informs very focused school improvement planning and an in-house training and coaching programme that closely meets the professional development needs of staff. It also gives them a very accurate view of the overall effectiveness of the school and, therefore, the judgements in their self-evaluation form

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very closely match the inspection judgements. While leadership is very strong, school leaders do not yet see it as outstanding because it has not had time to bring about exceptional student outcomes.

The governing body is developing an effective partnership with the re-organised leadership team. Members are well-informed about recent developments in the school and their impact on students' progress. By linking governors to faculties, they are increasingly aware of how they can support the school in improving further. Their committee structure provides a means for discussion about the school's performance and they are receiving training on how they can be more constructively probing in this. They have the welfare of students and staff at heart and have demonstrated that they are prepared to take a firm stance to protect their interests. School leaders and members of the governing body are thorough in checking that appropriate arrangements are in place for keeping students safe.

School leaders work hard to inform parents and gather their views by using the most convenient methods, for example text message, e-mail and asking parents and carers to complete questionnaires when they are in school. They receive a high rate of response and parents and carers say they value the quality of information provided by the school. They particularly appreciate school leaders' honest and helpful responses to any concerns they raise, including an apology if appropriate.

The school has excellent partnerships with a wide range of schools, colleges and universities, which are used effectively for sharing best practice, developing sports leadership skills and providing a wider range of curriculum choices for students. Links with local and national businesses and careers services are central to the developing vocational curriculum. Very effective working partnerships with support services enable the school to provide well-tailored support for students whose circumstances may have made them vulnerable.

Staff systematically monitor the progress of all groups of students to ensure that none is encountering a barrier to their equal opportunity to achieve. At the same time, staff work hard to raise the aspirations of all students and this results, for example, in a very high proportion going on to study in the sixth form. The school is particularly successful in breaking down gender barriers to participation, for example, in sport. The leadership team is making good progress in developing the school's approach to promoting community cohesion, especially in relation to socio-economic and cultural diversity. Through local partnerships and links with schools abroad, students are gaining experience of working harmoniously with people from other cultures or who have disabilities. Students have less experience of promoting cohesion in a context of religious diversity.

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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	1
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Lesson observations and analysis of school records show that students' progress is improving and it is now good. Standards at the end of sixth form are therefore rising, although, at this point, they are still broadly in line with the national average. Students' attendance is high and the proportion of students who continue their education from Year 12 to Year 13 is very high. Students make an outstanding positive contribution to the school and wider community through participation in leadership development courses and organising charity work.

The quality of provision is improving, and it is now good, because the leadership of the sixth form has been more closely integrated into the leadership of the whole school. The new approaches to improving students' progress in Key Stages 3 and 4 are therefore having a similar positive impact in the sixth form. The quality of teaching is good. Students take full advantage of the opportunities provided for independent research and for learning through discussion. As a result, there is an effective pace of learning in lessons. Staff give students challenging targets and carefully monitor their progress towards achieving them. Well-planned support is quickly provided for students whose progress is beginning to stall and this helps them to get back on track. The curriculum for students is good, with a range of courses appropriate to their needs. The range on offer is extended through the school's involvement in a local partnership of learning providers for 14 to 19 year olds. Relationships between staff and students are good. Students feel that they receive helpful guidance to help them to improve their achievement.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
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

Inspectors received a very small number of completed questionnaires from parents and carers. However, school leaders frequently seek parents' and carers' views using a range of methods and they have responses from a much larger number. The school's evidence confirms the main finding of the inspection questionnaire that the very large majority of parents are supportive of the school. Whereas the inspection questionnaire indicates that around one fifth of parents and carers feel that leaders do not take account of their suggestions and concerns, school returns show that a much smaller proportion hold this view. The inspection questionnaire also indicates that around one fifth of parents do not agree that teaching is good. However, inspectors found that the quality of teaching, overall, is good and enables the majority of students to accelerate their progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hipperholme and Lightcliffe High School and Sports 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 37 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1406 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	14	38	18	49	3	8	2	5
The school keeps my child safe	17	46	17	46	2	5	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	14	38	20	54	3	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	11	30	20	54	1	3	4	11
The teaching is good at this school	7	19	22	59	7	19	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	6	16	25	68	4	11	1	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	7	19	25	68	3	8	1	3
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)	11	30	19	51	1	3	1	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	9	24	19	51	1	3	3	8
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	7	19	20	54	3	8	2	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	6	16	21	57	6	16	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	7	19	22	59	3	8	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	13	35	18	49	3	8	2	5

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



17 February 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Hipperholme and Lightcliffe High School and Sports College, Halifax, HX3 8TL

Thank you very much for your co-operation when I came with my four colleagues to inspect your school. You gave us some very useful information which helped us to make the judgement that your school provides a good quality of education.

Teachers help you to make good progress, especially when lessons provide you with plenty of opportunity to assess and improve your own work. We were impressed with your mature and responsible approach to working independently and, at break times, we found the school a pleasant, sociable place to walk around. In general, you are making outstanding progress in learning how you can make improvements to the lives of others, both locally and across the world. You told us that staff provide high levels of care for you and our evidence confirms this. You also told us that you feel very safe in school. You know exactly where to go with any concerns or if you just need a little time out. We saw many of you enjoying your sport and dance in school. You were working very hard and performing to a high standard. We judged very highly the writing that some of you did about aspects of sport and you thoroughly deserve the national award you received for this. Congratulations.

Although your school is good, the headteacher and staff are determined to improve your education even further. In order to bring this about, we have agreed with them the most important areas upon which to focus. They are:

- to make sure that work meets the needs of all students in lessons
- to enable all students to learn more by working independently
- to increase the number of vocational courses on offer.

Finally, we would like to say a very big 'well done' for what you already contribute to the success of your school and we are confident that you will help your teachers by making the most of the improvements they introduce.

Yours sincerely

John Rutherford

Her Majesty's Inspector

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