

Rye Hills School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111742
Local authority	Redcar and Cleveland
Inspection number	378348
Inspection dates	21–22 March 2012
Lead inspector	Mick Hill

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	954
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Iain Fuller
Headteacher	Neil Appleby
Date of previous school inspection	13 May 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspection team observed 36 lessons taught by the same number of teachers across a range of subject areas and both key stages. Two of these observations were conducted jointly with senior school staff. In addition, movement around the school was observed and visits made to registration sessions and an assembly. Inspectors looked at students' work in their books and a number of school documents, including the school's self-evaluation, improvement plan, key safeguarding procedures, student tracking and assessment information, and minutes of the meetings of the governing body. Inspectors also held meetings with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, teachers, groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. Fifty-seven questionnaires from parents and carers, and all those returned by students and teachers, were analysed. There had been no responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), so this information was not available when planning the inspection.

Information about the school

Rye Hills is an average-sized secondary school. There are very few students from minority ethnic backgrounds, or who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students who are disabled and those with special educational needs is broadly in line with that found nationally. An above average proportion of students are known to be eligible for free school meals. The school met the government's floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in the 2010/11 academic year. The school was designated a specialist sports college in 2005 and has drama as a second specialism. It has a number of awards, including achieving Healthy Schools status and the Youth Sports Trust Gold Partnership Mark. It is a foundation school and is part of the Redcar and Marske Specialist Schools Trust together with three local secondary schools and a special 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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is improving rapidly because good leadership and management at all levels are driving change, with notable success in raising GCSE attainment, particularly in English and improving the behaviour of students. The school is not good because the progress made by students in lessons and over time is not better than that made by all students nationally given their above average starting points.
- Attainment is improving and GCSE examination results are now generally above those found nationally. The progress of students is satisfactory but variable across subjects. Progress is less pronounced in mathematics and science than in English.
- Leaders and managers are aware of the need to improve the quality of teaching through training and the management of the performance of teachers. Teaching is satisfactory overall, because shortcomings such as a lack of consistency in matching tasks closely to students' needs and abilities mean that students do not make good progress. However, there are some striking examples of outstanding practice on which the school can build.
- Students are eager to learn and there are very positive relationships between students and teachers. As a result, attendance is high and typical behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. The recent introduction of the 'climate for learning' policy is successfully focusing on rewarding good or better behaviour and is contributing to the continuing trend in the improvement in behaviour since the previous inspection.
- Leaders and managers display a passion for improving the school and impatience with the rate of progress towards becoming a good school. They are driving change and improvement effectively. The determination to improve teaching is leading to increasingly better practice. However, the desire to see improvement has also led to an overly optimistic assessment of the quality of teaching observed by the school's leaders and managers.

Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the rate at which students make progress by:
 - ensuring the best practice in teaching that exists in the school is more widely replicated
 - ensuring that all teachers make full use of the school's robust assessment information when planning lessons in order to provide tasks that meet the learning needs of all students
 - using targeted questioning techniques effectively to challenge students and extend their thinking
 - engaging students more fully as active participants in their own learning by providing more opportunities for students to become researchers and independent learners.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Students join the school in Year 7 with standards of attainment that are above average. They make satisfactory progress overall and by the end of Key Stage 4 reach above average levels of attainment. For example, the proportion of students achieving five or more A* to C grades at GCSE is above the average seen nationally and has risen in each of the last three years. Similarly, average GCSE point scores have been significantly above average for the last two years. However, students attain less well in some GCSE subjects than they do in others. For example, although attainment in mathematics is above average overall, not enough more-able students secure the very highest grades.

Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire consider that their child is making good progress. Inspection evidence shows that the progress students make varies between subjects because the quality of teaching is not consistently good or better. Students in English, physical education and modern foreign languages make better progress than in mathematics, science, and design and technology. Leaders and managers are fully aware that there is this variation. They have succeeded in driving up attainment in these subjects and are now turning their attention to improving rates of progress in lessons so that these inconsistencies cease.

Disabled students and those with special educational needs progress at rates similar to that of their peers. The curriculum in particular makes a strong contribution to this by providing a range of opportunities well matched to students' needs and aspirations. In addition, the school works hard to ensure that students who may be vulnerable are well supported. Very thorough tracking of the progress made by all students including those needing additional support is helping to close the gap between their progress and that of their peers. The accelerated reading programme is helping those students who need extra support to become confident readers and so access learning more effectively. However, progress in some mainstream lessons is slow because not all teachers make full use of the school's reliable assessment information when planning lessons in order to provide tasks that meet the learning needs of all students. The scrutiny of students' work, discussions with them,

and lesson observations all show that students are keen to learn, take pride in their work and display good quality presentation skills.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is satisfactory, although there are examples of outstanding teaching. Some parents and carers, and students, expressed the view that there is variation in the quality of teaching. Inspection evidence confirms this is the case.

In the best lessons, activities are well planned to meet the needs of all learners, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. As a result, they make good progress. Well-thought-out activities engage all students actively in their learning and skilful questioning challenges them to think more deeply. In an outstanding English lesson, for example, Year 10 students responded enthusiastically to targeted questioning, organised themselves into groups based on an understanding of their specific individual subject strengths, and then worked cooperatively reviewing one another's work. The level of independence and the quality of the dialogue was on a par with that seen in A-level lessons.

In less effective lessons, the same task is often given to all students in the class. As a result, more-able students are not challenged to move more quickly and less-able students struggle to engage fully in the learning activities. Similarly, not all teachers' questioning expects greater involvement or more thoughtful responses from students. Too much focus on the teacher means that opportunities for students to develop independent learning and social and research skills through guided activities are missed.

Regular oral and written feedback encourages students to try their best and in most cases offers good advice on the next steps. The school's sports specialism contributes strongly to the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In an 'Olympic Values' physical education lesson observed, for example, well-planned activities based around the theme of 'fair play' successfully developed students' organisational, teamwork, negotiation and leadership skills. Additional support in lessons is well used to assist the progress of all students. Reading, writing and communication is promoted successfully through the accelerated reading programme and in the use of subject-specific vocabulary in lessons. However, number skills are less well supported outside of mathematics and science lessons. The standard lesson planning sheet used by teachers is a useful tool when used effectively in conjunction with the school's assessment information because it focuses on the progress expected of students rather than on what the teacher will do, but it is not used sufficiently well by all teachers in practice.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Typically, students' attitudes to learning and their conduct in lessons and around the school are good. In those lessons where students have opportunities to work collaboratively, they demonstrate mature and respectful attitudes to one another, which enables them to make good progress. The large majority of students respond very well to the school's high expectations for behaviour and are considerate, respectful and courteous. Most parents and carers who completed the questionnaire reflected this view.

Students say they feel safe at school, are aware of different types of bullying, and know how to keep themselves safe, including online. Incidents of bullying are rare and tend to be related to the breakdown of friendships resulting in name calling. Students report that these

incidents are dealt with effectively by staff when reported. The recently introduced 'climate for learning' policy is successfully focusing on rewarding good or better behaviour and students are responding positively. There have been marked improvements in behaviour over the last 18 months as a result of this policy and increased rigour in the timely reporting, recording and response to incidents of poor behaviour. Students with identified behavioural difficulties benefit from the extensive links with specialised outside agencies that provide them with bespoke support programmes.

These strategies have also helped improve the level of attendance of all students. The school rigorously tracks attendance and has, for example, identified strategies to improve the persistent absence of a group of Year 9 girls. Good attendance is successfully celebrated through the house system. The school's zero exclusion policy is successfully reducing the small incidence of students excluded for a short time. In the few cases where exclusion is necessary, a tailored programme is provided to ensure effective reintegration on their return to school.

Leadership and management

Leaders and managers at all levels are driving improvement rapidly. They have a very clear understanding of those aspects of the school's work in need of further improvement. The school's evaluation of the impact of its work is mostly accurate; although too great a focus on what teachers are doing rather than on the progress being made by students has led to an over-optimistic evaluation of the quality of teaching. Results at GCSE have improved significantly and remaining variations in outcomes between subjects are reducing. As a result, the school is demonstrating a good capacity to improve further. However, the school has rightly identified that more work is needed to improve the progress made by students in lessons, for example in mathematics and science, so that this matches and exceeds that seen nationally.

Improvement planning identifies a number of appropriate development priorities. Leaders and managers have correctly focused the school's efforts on improving attainment and behaviour; they are now ready to focus on longer-term strategic goals. The governing body under the new Chair of the Governing Body shares the headteacher's vision and drive for the future success of the school and is increasingly able to provide the necessary levels of support and challenge. The governing body carries out its statutory duties efficiently, ensuring, for example that all safeguarding requirements are met in full.

Leaders and managers have successfully driven improvement in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. They recognise that some variability in the quality of teaching across the school remains. The monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching, and therefore the management of performance and the training that secure improvement, have tended to place too great an emphasis on features of teaching observed, and too little emphasis on the impact of teaching on learning in lessons.

The curriculum is broad and balanced, with provision for the sport specialism and the vocational options available to students in Key Stage 4 through the Redcar and Marske Specialist Schools Trust a particular strength. The 'High Tide' initiative aimed at providing training and employment opportunities for school leavers is an impressive example of the benefits of the school's outward-looking involvement in local partnerships. As a result of the strong curriculum and the equality of opportunity which underpins it, most students move on successfully to employment, education or training. The curriculum also promotes

students' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development well, through, for example the focus on 'Global Issues', which provides many opportunities for students to develop their awareness of diversity in race, religion, sexual orientation and disability.

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).

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.



23 March 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Rye Hills School, Redcar, TS10 2HN

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave when we came to inspect your school. We enjoyed talking to you in lessons, in meetings and as we met you around the school. When we made our judgements we took full account of your views, expressed in the very large numbers of completed questionnaires we received, and those of your parents and carers who had also completed questionnaires.

We have judged your school to be providing you with a satisfactory education. We think, and the staff agree, that you can make even better progress than you currently are and we have suggested ways in which this can be achieved. You told us that the school had already improved considerably in the last 18 months, for example in the way your behaviour is managed, and we are confident it will improve further because of the good leadership provided by Mr Appleby and his staff and by the school's governors.

You told us that you wished your teachers to listen to your views about your own learning more fully. We agree that this is important. We were impressed by your generally good behaviour and by your positive attitudes to learning in lessons. We have asked the school governors and staff to build on these strong foundations by ensuring that you are given more opportunities to work independently and are given more responsibility for your own learning. We have also asked them to make sure that all lessons are planned and taught as well as the best lessons.

You can also play your part in further improving your school by continuing to attend regularly, behaving well and working hard. I wish you every success for the future. Best wishes on behalf of the inspection team.

Yours sincerely

Mick Hill
Lead inspector

