

The Wensleydale School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 121679 |
| Local authority | North Yorkshire |
| Inspection number | 380300 |
| Inspection dates | 20–21 March 2012 |
| Lead inspector | Brian Blake HMI |

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

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|--|-------------------------------------|
| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Community |
| 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 | 478 |
| Of which number on roll in the sixth form | 63 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Ken Readshaw |
| Headteacher | Phil Benaiges |
| Date of previous school inspection | 30 November 2009 |
| School address | Richmond Road Leyburn DL8 5HY |
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Introduction

Inspection team

Brian Blake
Isobel Short
Mark Simpson

Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two working days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in a total of 22 part lessons, which included 20 teachers. The lead inspector looked at the Ofsted on-line questionnaire (Parent View) to read any responses that had been made prior to the start of the inspection and took these into account when planning the inspection. Inspectors observed all aspects of the school. A range of documents was scrutinised and meetings held with members of the senior leadership team, and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body. Informal discussions were also held with other staff and a significant number of students during lessons and around the school. Inspectors read 170 questionnaires returned by parents and carers, in addition to considering the views of those students and staff who completed separate questionnaires.

Information about the school

This community secondary school is set in the rural landscape of Leyburn in North Yorkshire. The school, which is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school, has specialist status for science with a rural dimension. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. Almost all students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students with special educational needs is well below the national average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational needs. The school has achieved the government's floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. It holds a number of awards, which includes SportsMark and Healthy 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 | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | 2 |
| Leadership and management | 2 |

Key Findings

- This is a good and continuously improving school. Some aspects of the school's work are outstanding, particularly the drive to engage all students, parents and carers, staff and governors in making further improvements. Overall, leadership and management are very effective, with senior leaders and managers very aware of the strengths and areas for future development.
- The students' achievement in the main school is good, and has improved year-on-year since the previous inspection. The latest 2011 GCSE results show that students' attainment is significantly above average for five or more good grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics. The students make good overall progress in lessons, which is helping them to become better learners because their behaviour is good, they listen carefully and they work well as individuals or in groups.
- Those students with identified learning needs are also making good overall progress, with many gaining a number of vocationally orientated awards, alongside the more traditional accreditation of GCSE.
- Although most teaching is good, with some that is outstanding, there is also a small proportion which is only satisfactory. Outstanding teaching creates very high levels of interest, motivation to learn and rapid progress from the students. Some satisfactory teaching is characterised by too much teacher talk, which limits the potential for the students to take greater responsibility for aspects of their own learning, and takes insufficient account of the different learning needs of all students in the lesson. The school is not outstanding because it has yet to achieve a consistently good or outstanding quality of teaching across the whole school.
- The sixth form is satisfactory in all respects. A-level results are in line with national averages. Students are well supported, enjoy their education and feel challenged. The curriculum is well suited to student needs. Sixth-form students are very active in school, particularly in supporting younger students.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the overall profile of teaching to a consistently good or better standard by:
 - ensuring that staff take full account of the varying learning needs of all students in lessons
 - developing a more consistent approach to teacher feedback, specifically to ensure that marking includes clear comments about the quality of the work produced, the next steps in learning, and an opportunity for the students to reflect on what they believe they need to do to improve their work.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

The achievement of the students in the main school is good, and is satisfactory in the sixth form. The students' attainment in the key indicator of five or more GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, has been improving year-on-year since the previous inspection, especially in English, mathematics and science, and is above average overall and separately in the core subjects. This level of achievement is seen equally among different groups, which includes those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. These improvements are the result of focused priorities and actions to raise standards across the school. It also includes an extending range of curricular opportunities at Key Stage 4, which is providing greater opportunities for traditional and vocational awards. This latter type of accreditation is greatly appreciated by those students with identified learning needs because it gives them an opportunity to pursue an area that links with their chosen career after leaving school, for example, motor maintenance and agricultural studies. There is some underperformance in geography, where in 2011 fewer students than seen nationally gained the highest grades in the subject.

In the sixth form, students' attainment is average and progress satisfactory, with some underperformance in psychology and sport/physical education at A/AS levels. The progress of students is good across almost all subjects, and inspectors' evidence from lesson observations and scrutiny of work confirms this. It also aligns with the views of 95% of parents or carers who thought that progress was good, when responding to the inspection questionnaire. Students' progress exceeds beyond good when there is outstanding teaching. In these lessons, the teacher facilitates a learning environment where the students engage in high level discussion and use their prior learning as a stimulus for questioning each other and the teacher about the possibility of different answers to challenging questions. This type of outstanding progress was seen during the inspection, where it clearly made an impact on students' motivation and interest to learn, in addition to helping them to learn for themselves, independently of the teacher.

Quality of teaching

Teachers throughout the school demonstrate good subject knowledge, which the overwhelming majority use well to set high expectations and challenging learning activities. Lesson planning is thorough and well linked to the long- and medium-term

planning seen across the broad curriculum. Where planning is best, it makes clear what the students will learn in all the activities planned. Almost all lessons are characterised by teachers using questions to challenge the thinking and involvement of the students in their learning. Questioning is most effective when it both relates and builds upon prior learning, developing a depth of knowledge and understanding where the students are most reliant on themselves for answers. The vast majority of teachers skilfully use a range of interactive learning activities, including group work, to develop aspects of shared learning among the students; this enhances general social skills but particularly in listening and questioning. However, some teachers spend too much time talking at, rather than with the students, which has the effect of slowing progress because lesson time is less effectively used. Overwhelmingly, however, the teachers show commitment and enthusiasm in the classroom, which creates a positive learning environment within which the overwhelming majority of students are confident learners and willing participants in the range of tasks that are set. This is making a positive contribution to the good standard of behaviour observed.

The most effective teaching seen during the inspection created a learning atmosphere in the classroom where everyone, including the teacher, engaged in discussion, group and individual working, and where the levels of interest and participation were outstandingly high. It was a privilege for inspectors to observe teaching of this quality. Teachers' marking is satisfactory overall but of variable quality across the school. Although marking is consistently carried out, some does little more than tick the work. This means that it is hard to pinpoint where the next steps in learning are and how the work could be improved upon to reflect a greater depth of understanding. This further limits the students' opportunities for self reflection, as part of their broader spiritual development in school. This latter point limits the students' ability to self-assess against the targets and expectations placed by others, or even themselves. Over 90% of those parents/carers and students responding to the inspection questionnaire indicate that teaching is effective and inspectors agree.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The behaviour of students around the school site is calm and orderly, with the overwhelming majority showing very positive attitudes to their learning; this reflects accurately on the positive trend in behaviour since the previous inspection. Almost all of those parents or carers and students responding to the inspection questionnaire confirm that feeling and being safe are of a good standard in school. The students understand how to keep safe and are quick to recognise when bullying, in whatever form it takes, occurs. Detailed school records of bullying, anti-social behaviour or racist behaviour incidents since the previous inspection show that these are rare, but those actions taken by staff are both quick and effective. Students say they enjoy school, which is reflected in the high levels of attendance achieved across all year groups.

Leadership and management

Since the previous inspection, the work of senior leaders and managers, including the governing body, has been robustly focused on improving the achievement of all

students, improving the quality of teaching, and in engaging the students, parents and carers, staff and governors more actively in the work of the school and the vision for future improvements. These aspects are a real strength of leadership and management and are of outstanding quality. A key component of this has been the detailed, but succinctly written, school improvement plan, to which all staff and governors usefully make a positive contribution. The plan effectively reinforces the key priorities and uses well-targeted actions to direct practice across the school.

The targeted monitoring work of the governing body is impressive and is making a positive contribution to the overall quality of leadership and management within the school. The governing body has a robust and supportive range of strategies in place to hold both senior and middle leaders and managers to account. There are effective links between heads of faculty and named governors, which is ensuring a good level of understanding and appreciation of their respective roles within the school.

The monitoring and evaluation of middle management by senior leaders and managers, especially the governing body, is good, and has had a direct influence on the quality of self-evaluation throughout the school. Senior leaders and managers, including the governing body, know the strengths and areas for development exceptionally well, as evidenced in the very accurate self-evaluation provided to inspectors. The leadership and management of the sixth form is satisfactory overall, but is now beginning to gather pace as changes to the curriculum are providing a broader provision for all students and more effective challenges are being made to subjects that are underperforming against respective national averages.

This range of focused management activities has had a direct influence on the quality of teaching, which has continued to improve from the time of the previous inspection. Senior leaders and managers are aware of the areas where satisfactory teaching exists, and are continuing to provide support and challenge in order to raise the quality to the levels seen elsewhere in the school. This relatively small amount of satisfactory teaching, combined with the satisfactory quality of the sixth form is currently preventing the school from achieving an outstanding overall grade for teaching and, consequently, leadership and management.

The curriculum is good because it is open to ongoing review to ensure that it meets the needs of all students. The proposed developments for the curriculum over the next two years are well advanced and reflect an ever increasing range of opportunities for students to gain traditional or vocationally oriented qualifications. The developing range of examination courses available at Key Stage 4, and in the sixth form, reflects well on the range and types of qualification needed to gain employment, or to continue in some form of further or higher education.

The school takes all reasonable actions to ensure the safety of its students, and good quality supervision in and out of lessons makes a significant contribution to this. All statutory safety requirements placed upon the school are met, including the completion of the single central register, which confirms that all adults in school have been suitably checked to allow them to work with the students.

The school actively tackles any recorded discrimination, and its approach to the principle of equal opportunities is seen clearly in the harmonious way the staff and students interact throughout the school.

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.



22 March 2012

Dear students

Inspection of The Wensleydale School, Leyburn, DL8 5HY

On behalf of the inspectors who recently visited your school, I should like to thank you for the way you behaved throughout our visit. I should also like to thank those parents and carers, staff and students who returned the inspection questionnaire.

The key findings from the inspection are as follows.

- Wensleydale is a good and continuously improving school.
- Some aspects of the school's work are outstanding, particularly how leaders and managers, including the governing body, have worked to involve everyone in helping to make the school even better.
- Achievement in the main school is good, and has improved year-on-year since the previous inspection. In 2011, standards were above average for five or more good grades at GCSE.
- You make good overall progress in lessons because your behaviour is good, you listen carefully to the teacher and you enjoy the lesson activities. Those of you with particular learning needs are also making good overall progress, well done to all of you.
- Teaching is mainly good, with some that is outstanding. There is still some satisfactory teaching. At its very best, teaching creates very high levels of interest, motivation to learn and outstanding progress. Some satisfactory teaching has too much teacher talk, which takes insufficient account of the different learning needs of everyone in the lesson, including working more independently of the teacher.
- The sixth form is satisfactory in all respects.
- Leadership and management, which include the governing body, are very effective. Senior leaders and managers are very aware of the areas for future development which inspectors have identified; namely, to ensure that all teaching is at least good or better.

We wish you all continued success.

Yours sincerely

Brian Blake
Her Majesty's Inspector

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