

Harrogate High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121697
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	359070
Inspection dates	9–10 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Johan Mackinnon HMI

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	784
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	158
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ian Curtis
Headteacher	Mr Andrew Bayston
Date of previous school inspection	13 May 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Thirty lessons were observed and the same number of teachers seen. This included joint observations carried out with the headteacher and a deputy headteacher. Inspectors met staff, groups of students and governors. They observed the school's work, and looked at school policies and procedures about safeguarding (the care and protection of students) and the welfare and progress of students; as well as documents showing how leaders and managers monitor, evaluate and review the work of the school. Inspectors also considered 279 parental questionnaires and 98 student questionnaires.

- Achievement, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science throughout the school, linked to quality of provision for these areas.
- How effectively the school is promoting good attendance.
- Achievement of higher-ability students in Key Stages 3 and 4 and whether expectations and challenge are sufficiently high.
- Effectiveness of leaders and managers in securing the required pace of improvement in outcomes at all key stages.

Information about the school

Harrogate High School is smaller than the average secondary school. Numbers in the small sixth form have remained steady. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free schools meals has risen to become broadly average and the school has a slightly higher proportion of boys on roll than average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is relatively low and the proportion with statements is average. The vast majority of students are White British. Harrogate High is a specialist sports college and holds the Investors in Pupils and Eco-schools awards and the Quality Inclusion Mark (level 4). In 2010 it was recognised by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust as one of top five most-improved sports colleges that year. The school has worked in partnership with Outwood Grange Academy since 2007 and has recently been granted agreement in principle, by the Department for Education, to become an Academy within the Outwood Grange group of schools from September 2011.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Harrogate High School has undergone significant changes of leaders at a number of levels since the last inspection and currently provides a satisfactory, and improving, education for its students. Since his appointment in 2009, the headteacher has identified clearly the changes required to secure and accelerate improvement and has a clear vision for the school's future. Appropriate training is being undertaken to improve the skills of staff in monitoring and accelerating students' performance. More work needs to be done but already there has been substantial improvement in the use of data to support monitoring. The school's sport specialism makes a strong contribution to improving students' achievement and gives the school a clear identity and sense of ambition. Attendance is average substantially fewer students are persistently absent. Students in the sixth form are articulate about improvements they have seen since joining the school in Year 7. An unusually large proportion of students of all ages are actively involved in contributing to school life, leadership and development and wear their 'Student Voice' badges with pride.

Improvement in achievement in some key aspects, particularly English, mathematics and science at GCSE level, has been slower than in overall achievement. The pace of improvement has accelerated in the current year, especially in English. Achievement in the sixth form is variable, with strengths in recently-introduced vocational subjects but there has been less success at A-level, particularly in Year 12. In lessons where opportunities are provided for students to take responsibility for their learning and engaging activities are well-matched to demanding learning outcomes, students rise to the challenge with enthusiasm, behave well and the pace of learning is good. Where teaching is less effective, students become disengaged and progress is slower. The proportion of lessons where the teaching is strong is currently too low to secure good progress for students. There are clear strengths in the quality of teaching and learning in a number of subject areas. The school however is not sharing the good practice extensively enough.

The flexible and innovative curriculum, with a high degree of personalisation across Years 9 to 11, meets the needs of students increasingly well. Care, guidance and support are strengths of the school, and there is improved guidance for students in making choices about courses to follow. The support provided for students whose circumstances make them vulnerable is strong. The support enables those who arrive after the start of Year 7 to settle effectively into the school.

The headteacher and governing body have worked closely together to establish systems to make the school's understanding of its strengths and weaknesses more accurate and to improve accountability. The vision for the future of the sixth form and outcomes for students are less well developed than that of the rest of the school. Leadership across the school and sixth form is being restructured to drive improvement more effectively and strengthen the school's capacity to improve. This is supported by recognising and

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nurturing leadership potential in less-experienced staff. It is too early for some developments to have had significant impact on improving outcomes. Variability in leaders' effectiveness, particularly at middle leader level and in the sixth form, and the limited impact so far on some key aspects of achievement mean that capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory rather than good.

Up to 40% of the 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 students' progress and raise attainment, particularly in mathematics and science.
- Improve the proportion of good and outstanding teaching and learning by:
 - sharing existing good practice effectively
 - securing more consistent student engagement in lessons through increasing the pace and challenge in teaching and providing opportunities for students to assess and take responsibility for their own learning
 - making the quality of marking and feedback more consistent.
- Secure the strategic direction of the sixth form and improve its outcomes, for example by:
 - establishing a clear vision for the sixth form and its leadership, integrating it more effectively with the whole school
 - developing the curriculum to better meet the needs and aspirations of students
 - ensuring that monitoring and evaluation of impact of improvement strategies are rigorous.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students enter the school with attainment and skills broadly similar to the national average. The percentage of students gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE has been high for the last three years. Achievement in a range of vocational subjects and qualifications has also been consistently high. Attainment in English and mathematics has, however, remained low. GCSE results already secured by students currently in Years 10 and 11 indicate that improvement in these areas is accelerating and attainment is now approaching the national average in English. Higher-ability students are making more rapid progress than previously, due to improved tracking and greater levels of challenge. The school's assessment data and the lesson observations during the inspection show that most students make satisfactory progress. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive appropriate support and they make progress which is as good as that of their peers, as do students known to be eligible for free school meals.

Students show willingness to take on responsibility in lessons and around the school. Where teachers harness this willingness well, engaging students quickly at the start of lessons and providing activities which stimulate and challenge them, students respond enthusiastically and make good progress. In lessons where learning is no better than satisfactory, students are passive, with fewer opportunities for independent learning,

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debate and discussion. This leads to disengagement and sometimes to deteriorating standards of behaviour. Students are welcoming and treat others around school with respect. Sixth-form students act considerately and responsibly as role models, coaches and mentors for younger students through the vertical form structure and sports activities. Students usually feel safe at school and know who to go to if they need help of any sort. They believe that school will deal effectively with any incidents that may occur.

Activities available through the sports specialism support students in developing healthy lifestyles and participation in these activities is good. Student voice is a clear priority and strength of the school, with around a quarter of students taking roles and responsibility. Although attendance has risen, variable punctuality and improvements still required in students' literacy and numeracy skills mean students' preparation for their future working lives is satisfactory. Respect for others is promoted strongly by the school and students engage well in opportunities to work and learn co-operatively. Opportunities are not, however, developed well across the school to strengthen multiculturalism and explore spirituality.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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?

Although good and outstanding teaching was observed, the majority of teaching is satisfactory. In the better lessons, teachers plan well to meet the needs of their students, engage students quickly and have high expectations of students' work and skills. Learning

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in these lessons is well-structured, students can see clearly how each activity links to their learning outcomes and targets and they are given the opportunity to work independently as well as in groups or with partners. In an outstanding Year 8 physical education lesson, students led some of the learning, self- and peer-assessment were used extremely effectively and students were given opportunities to persevere and reflect. Too many lessons, however, are mundane and make insufficient demand of the students, leading to the satisfactory progress seen overall. Teaching is more consistently good in particular physical education, history and drama.

The school has developed a powerful tracking system, 'Praising Stars', and staff, students and parents and carers are well-informed about their children's progress. Students respond well to the praise and rewards built into this system and it helps staff to plan more effectively and direct intervention. The quality of marking, including feedback on how to improve, varies between subjects.

The curriculum in Years 9 to 11 allows students to choose subjects each year and they may work with students of different ages, depending on the choices they make. This provides students with a rich curriculum experience and gives the flexibility to focus more on areas of weakness where necessary. For example, students in Year 11 can take an extra option in core subjects. This highly-personalised approach by the school is improving knowledge and skills. The school works effectively with partner schools and colleges to optimise the range of courses and experiences offered. New inclusion strategies are re-engaging students who had lost confidence and motivation and improving support for students whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. Good care, guidance and support structures are in place for individuals and groups, and students particularly appreciate the support from learning managers. Transition into and through the school is managed well. Curriculum development and guidance increasingly look forward to where students want to be viewed as adults and endeavour to ensure that appropriate progression routes are provided. The impact of the good curriculum and care is limited by the satisfactory teaching.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
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?

Leaders and managers are ambitious for the school and students. The headteacher and governing body have a clear view of the future path of the school as a strong partner in a successful family of schools. The school is receptive to external support and advice and responds rapidly to emerging issues. The most senior leaders have a good understanding of the key priorities for the school, in both the short- and longer-term, and are working to

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ensure that this is more widely shared. Strategies and training are in place to improve teaching and learning. There is a common structure for lesson planning and delivery which is used creatively by the more effective teachers and provides a secure base for less confident staff. The monitoring of what happens in the classroom is still very reliant on senior leaders. Middle leaders are not yet consistently able to evaluate provision well and drive improvement across the school. The governing body has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and has taken robust action to support the school in overcoming key barriers to improvement.

The quality and frequency of communication with parents and carers, particularly those of students with special educational needs, has improved since the last inspection and parents and carers are more satisfied with the information that they receive. Effective partnership working has supported the school's drive to improve standards and strengthen leadership capacity. The school collaborates well with external agencies to reduce the number of students who are not in education, employment or training at the age of 16. Effective procedures and practices are in place to ensure that safeguarding is good. Training and information on safe practice and child protection, for staff and governors, are kept up to date. Good promotion of equal opportunities ensures that different groups of students access opportunities and succeed at similar levels to their peers. Students demonstrate empathy for others, including those from other cultures, but have limited experiences of the rich diversity of the multicultural country in which they live. The school gives satisfactory value for money in the satisfactory outcomes that it provides overall.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

The sixth form is relatively small and outcomes for most students are satisfactory. They usually make at least satisfactory progress and those who opt for sports-based courses

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often make good progress. Retention from Year 12 into 13 and attendance in lessons has been low but is improving. A-level results are also improving, as seen in the most recent results from modules examined in January 2011, and the school is taking better care to ensure that students have made appropriate course choices. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with teaching quality varying depending on which option is chosen. Students show a sensible and mature attitude as they develop through the sixth form. This is fostered by the school's approach to care, guidance and support and the opportunities available for students to take adult responsibility in the school and wider community. The students are positive about their school and how it supports and encourages them to succeed. The school is aware of the challenges facing a small sixth form in sustaining its financial viability and providing a sufficiently rich curriculum to continue to both attract and provide effectively for its community. Partnerships are being established which will support further curriculum development, for example through shared facilities and provision. Leaders and managers did not secure the anticipated rate of progress in recent years, but improving trends are now more secure.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

Over a third of parents and carers returned the questionnaire, a much higher response rate than average. The majority of parents and carers were positive about the school and how it provides and cares for its students. A number of parents and carers expressed concerns about progress and teaching in mathematics and science, and were also worried about the impact of a high proportion of lessons taught by staff from supply agencies. Inspectors found a higher proportion of satisfactory teaching in these subjects than in other areas. The school is taking appropriate steps to tackle these concerns; achievement is rising and more stable and effective staffing is being secured. Concerns about teaching were also linked to poor behaviour in some lessons – inspectors found that in those lessons where teaching was least effective students were more likely to become disengaged and become a distraction. The school is aware of this and is taking active steps to ensure that most teaching is at least good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Harrogate High 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 279 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 784 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	51	18	191	68	29	10	5	2
The school keeps my child safe	73	26	196	70	10	4	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	104	37	156	56	14	5	3	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	62	22	177	63	37	13	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	43	15	204	73	23	8	4	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	49	18	181	65	39	14	5	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	35	13	184	66	43	15	9	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)	69	25	176	63	24	9	5	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	55	20	183	66	29	10	7	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	55	20	167	60	39	14	12	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	12	188	67	33	12	5	2
The school is led and managed effectively	63	23	181	65	18	6	5	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	72	26	175	63	23	8	6	2

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

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	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.



11 March 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Harrogate High School, Harrogate, HG1 4AP

Thank you for the way in which you made the inspectors welcome in your school and sixth form and the way in which you contributed to the inspection. We enjoyed talking to you about your views and experiences and you helped us to find out about the school. Inspectors were particularly impressed by how many of you take an active part in making the school a better place to be and wear your 'Student Voice' badges with pride. The school provides you with a satisfactory, and improving, education overall and some aspects are good. The sports specialism is a particular strength of the school and provides many exciting opportunities for students to take responsibility and act as leaders. You also enjoy and achieve well in sports subjects.

Although examination results are improving, and more of you are leaving school with a good range of qualifications, you are currently doing less well in some of the more academic subjects, especially mathematics and science. You told us that you enjoy lessons where you get the chance to take responsibility for your learning and the activities used are interesting and challenging – but when lessons are less engaging and slower more students tend to stop taking part and can become a distraction. You have a wide range of subjects to choose from in Years 9 to 11, and the flexibility to change when needed. The sixth-form curriculum is, however, less well-developed and the school is working to make sure that it matches the needs and ambitions of students more closely. You are cared for well by the school and you get good guidance on the choices you need to make about your future.

We have asked the school to make improvements by:

- accelerating progress and raise attainment, particularly in mathematics and science
- making sure that there are more good lessons
- developing the sixth form to improve the curriculum and outcomes for students.

On behalf of the inspection team I wish you all the best for your future lives and careers.

Yours sincerely,

Johan MacKinnon

Additional Inspector

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