

# The Mirfield Free Grammar and Sixth Form

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	136674
<b>Local authority</b>	Kirklees
<b>Inspection number</b>	395673
<b>Inspection dates</b>	28–29 May 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Nell Banfield

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Academy
<b>School category</b>	Non maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,492
<b>Of which number on roll in the sixth form</b>	377
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jennifer Ryan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lorraine Barker
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	N/A
<b>School address</b>	Kitson Hill Road Mirfield WF14 9EZ
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## Introduction

### Inspection team

Nell Banfield  
Neil MacKenzie  
Steven Davis  
Bimla Kumari  
Ralph Lilley

Additional Inspector  
Additional Inspector  
Additional Inspector  
Additional Inspector  
Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 38 teachers in 39 lessons, two of them jointly with a senior leader. An inspector observed a Year 8 reading session and talked with three students about their books and their reading. As well as talking informally with students during the inspection, inspectors held meetings with seven groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and five governors. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, looked at the school's self-evaluation document, records of lesson observations, information on attendance and behaviour, monitoring records and minutes of the governing body meetings and assessment data. Inspectors scrutinised samples of students' work in a range of subjects and analysed questionnaires received from 372 parents and carers.

## Information about the school

The Mirfield Free Grammar and Sixth Form is a larger than average secondary school. It became a specialist technology college in 1995, a Leadership Partner school in 2009 and converted to academy status in 2011. The proportion of students from a minority ethnic background is above the national average. Few students are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special needs is below the national average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The school is over subscribed and draws students from over 20 primary schools. This is the first inspection of the academy. It exceeds the current floor standards which set the government's minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress. The school has been awarded Healthy School status (Gold Standard), Investor in People (Gold Standard), the Sportsmark and Careers Quality Standard.

**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

<b>Overall Effectiveness</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>1</b>

## Key Findings

- This is an outstanding school with an outstanding sixth form. The proportion of teaching that is outstanding is increasing and enabling almost all students to make rapid and sustained progress.
- Achievement has improved significantly in the last three years and is outstanding. Students attain at a higher level than students nationally by the time they leave the school. Almost all students make outstanding progress overall from their starting points.
- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. The good and outstanding teaching accelerated students' progress in 2011. School monitoring records show how rigorous and well-planned strategies, ably led by senior leaders, have rapidly improved teaching and students' learning. However, a small proportion of teaching is not at the same high standard as the vast majority within the school.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding. Students move around school and work in lessons with exceedingly impressive maturity and show mutual respect which very effectively supports both their personal development and their learning, preparing them exceptionally well for the future. Attendance was above average in 2011 and continues to improve.
- Leadership and management are outstanding. The school's behaviour management strategies have transformed behaviour to the extent that students exhibit a subtle and unspoken expectation that everyone will conduct themselves with dignity and respect. Achievement in the sixth form has improved rapidly as a result of determination and strategic planning by senior leaders. The recent impressive programme of professional development for improving teaching has resulted in a significant increase in the number of outstanding lessons. There is an extensive and rigorous programme of self-evaluation of teaching and leadership at all levels so that expectations of staff

are high. The school's curriculum very effectively supports students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- The sixth form is outstanding. Students of all abilities are admitted and all groups make progress through courses well suited to their needs and aspirations.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to the level of the best by:
  - fully promoting excellent levels of students' engagement and enjoyment of learning
  - closely matching teaching resources, tasks and teaching strategies to students' specific needs
  - ensuring middle leaders fully moderate and evaluate the quality of teaching in their subject.

## **Main Report**

### **Achievement of pupils**

The school-wide programme to develop sophisticated literacy and communication skills is particularly effective in supporting reflective discussion and debate in lessons. Year 10 students were observed in an English lesson identifying features of persuasive discussion and applying the features to a group problem-solving exercise, in which they played the roles of Olympic committee members who had to agree which sports to remove from the Games.

Students join the school having attained slightly above average test results. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is above average. In Key Stage 4, students' progress accelerates further so that their attainment is well above average. Achievement in the sixth form has improved rapidly as a result of a well-planned curriculum and very effective support and challenge for any students who are underachieving.

Disabled students and those with special educational needs make similar progress to others in the school. The school's recently established nurture group provides very effective, informed and tailored support for those needing any additional provision in order to succeed. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds are also very well supported and make similar progress to others in the school.

The school's regular review of students' progress ensures that the extensive range of support and intervention is well targeted and effective. Parents and carers agree that students achieve exceptionally well.

### **Quality of teaching**

In the majority of lessons observed, students are very attentive and use well-established routines to support learning. In a history lesson, they listened carefully to information given, then used it to make thoughtful and perceptive comments in a group task about turning points in international conflict. They respond exceedingly well to teaching and make rapid progress when teaching is carefully planned. Students develop high levels of engagement and independence. They have a clear understanding of other life-styles, traditions and customs, as a result of imaginative, varied tasks with expectations made explicit, such as a role play where students adopted the roles of Amnesty International personnel and worked together writing a section of a publication on human rights. This lesson successfully promoted reflection on human rights and contributed exceptionally well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students are prompted to use correct pronunciation, give extended answers to probing questions and to define standard English in order to pitch the language at the right level for the task. Students themselves say 'Teaching is amazing'.

In the very small minority of lessons where teaching is slightly less successful, teachers talk for too long and students lose interest. Questioning is general and students are given the answers rather than expected to think carefully first. The same tasks are set in a few lessons for all students, regardless of ability, with some students unable to succeed and others completing the task too quickly with insufficient challenge.

All teachers promote literacy and develop students' communication skills. Robust records are kept of students' reading. Students are guided in the choice of texts and always have their chosen text with them to use in lessons. Two Year 8 students were observed reading sophisticated texts which supported their progress in debates, discussions and in written work well. They spoke of their keenness to succeed at the regular tests of their understanding of each of their chosen texts and how their progress is monitored. Students' work is marked regularly and teachers give helpful routine feedback so students know how well they have done. Most students take pride in their work, but the presentation of a very small proportion falls short of the high standards of the majority. Students expressed clear confidence that the school would act if the standard of their work fell short of expectations and that they would be given the right help at the right time.

Disabled students and those with special educational needs and students from minority ethnic backgrounds make excellent progress in lessons which present them with a high level of challenge. A Year 8 group were able to successfully identify reasons why Charles I should or should not be put to death, as a result of effective questioning, carefully structured steps in the tasks given and well-targeted support from non-teaching staff.

An overwhelming majority of parents and carers say their son or daughter is taught well and making good progress.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

The overwhelming majority of students are extremely courteous, highly considerate and exceptionally respectful of each other. They display incredibly high levels of skill in working together and independently. Students have internalised the school's behaviour code, and can describe accurately and promptly what the school's expectations are and what happens in the event of any transgression.

A small proportion of parents and carers expressed concerns about behaviour although typically, inspectors found behaviour to be exemplary. Students are extremely adept at keeping themselves and others safe. Students manage themselves incredibly well when moving around the school site, particularly in the narrow corridors and the many nooks and crannies in the building. In lessons, behaviour is usually excellent.

The school's records and discussions with staff and students show that behaviour has improved significantly over time. The number of fixed-term exclusions was higher than national levels for 2011 and the school is clear that certain behaviours challenging the safety of others are not tolerated. The school has established a Well-Being Centre, where students can self refer, or be referred, and offers a range of strategies, including relaxation, conflict resolution and counselling, to meet the needs of students. The school's nurture group also offers targeted and well-planned support for potentially vulnerable students.

Students are made aware in lessons, through assemblies and in discussions of the different forms that bullying can take, including bullying involving technology. A small number of concerns were expressed by students about bullying but the vast majority of students spoken to explain bullying is rare, and when it occurs, it is usually quickly and effectively dealt with. Students express their views through the School Council and are appreciative of the role of Young School Leaders in representing the school in the locality and nationally.

Attendance has risen steadily over time and is above the national average. Persistent absence is below national levels.

## **Leadership and management**

Leadership and management are outstanding at all levels. Demonstrable impact has been made on all key areas of the school, including the sixth form, and achievement is now outstanding. School leaders have a clear vision; philosophies based on respected research expertly guide middle leaders on how to achieve the school's aspirations. They have implemented an extensive programme of professional development which has strongly improved the quality of teaching which is now outstanding. Leaders recognise that not all teaching is outstanding and have accurately identified where improvements are required. They use the latest technologies to enable discreet guidance to teachers during lessons. The performance of teachers is monitored through formal and informal systems. Data are assembled and all information is carefully analysed, enabling guidance and direction to be individualised for staff. Senior leaders include developing middle leaders in this programme of professional development. Middle leaders are beginning to apply these

skills in their subjects so they can tailor professional development and collaborative support to individual teachers.

The school actively seeks productive partnerships for all aspects of its work. Guidance for students in their career choices are very well supported by external agencies. A wide range of partnerships very strongly supports students in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Many links have been established with other schools and teachers visit to learn and improve. The school's excellent work is recognised and it helps to support the improvement of other, less successful schools. Systems to monitor students' progress are very effective and efficient. Every seven weeks, new data are analysed and support is identified for those students whose performance has dipped. The school's careful targeting of areas of inequality in achievement has successfully reduced the gaps in achievement for different groups and demonstrates the significant impact of approaches to tackling inequality and discrimination.

The governing body supports and challenges the school very effectively and contributes a wide range of high level expertise and experience to the school's leadership. The carefully structured plans have resulted in steady improvement over a number of years and reflect the school's outstanding capacity to improve.

The school's curriculum in Key Stages 3, 4 and 5 is outstanding; it has been developed in response to the needs of students and national developments. Students speak highly of the range of activities offered at the end of the school day, and of the extensive trips and residential experiences in which they can participate. The curriculum's contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. The range of pathways, including vocational options and the English Baccalaureate qualification, ensure all students, including higher-attaining students, are well equipped for the next stage in learning.

Students feel very safe around the school and their outstanding behaviour makes a significant contribution to this. The school's implementation of policies and procedures meet statutory requirements and ensure students are safe on the school site.

A feature of the school's development is engaging students and their parents and carers in improvements. Communication with parents and carers is strong and the vast majority of them say the school keeps them well informed.



## 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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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](http://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.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
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.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
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.**



30 May 2012

Dear Students

**Inspection of The Mirfield Free Grammar and Sixth Form, Mirfield, WF14 9EZ**

On behalf of the team of inspectors I would like to thank you for your very helpful discussions with us. We were interested to hear about your experiences and views, including through questionnaires completed by many of you. You made us feel very welcome in your school. We can tell that almost all of you really enjoy school and work very hard in lessons. We found that the school is providing you with an outstanding education and that:

- the results of GCSE and other qualifications are high in your school and went up again significantly last year
- you learn enthusiastically in almost all lessons and are making the most of the really interesting work that most teachers give you and work exceptionally well with your classmates so that you can all learn new knowledge and skills very successfully
- almost all of you take a lot of care over your work and your teachers expect a lot from you but you know they will always help you if you get stuck or need some extra help
- you behave exceptionally well in lessons and around the school and know that behaving well in lessons gives teachers time to think about how to make work more interesting
- your attendance has improved again this year and you always arrive on time at the start of the day and to lessons.

We have asked the Principal and the governing body to improve teaching to the quality of the best and some of you could work more neatly so that teachers can mark your work more easily.

Yours sincerely

Nell Banfield  
Lead inspector

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