

Ravenscliffe High School and Sports College

Skircoat Green, Halifax, West Yorkshire, HX3 0RZ

Inspection dates 28–29 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school. Select

- Students start with levels of ability which are much lower than the average for their age.
- The exceptional quality of teaching ensures that they progress extremely well throughout their time at school.
- Teachers have a detailed knowledge of students' individual needs and make sure that lessons are pitched at the right level so that pupils can learn at their own pace but are also always encouraged to achieve their best.
- Lessons are fun because teachers include many practical activities which capture students' interest and harness their enthusiasm for learning.
- Students' communication skills are developed very well throughout the school day. This means that they can let other people know what they are thinking, what they need and the choices they wish to make.
- The results of the school's strong focus on promoting literacy and numeracy across all subjects are seen in the very good progress students make in these important skills.
- Students feel safe in school and trust the adults who work with them. They are polite, well-mannered and considerate towards each other. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary, and throughout their time at school, they increasingly take on responsibilities.
- The school's exceptional approach to developing students' independence and vocational skills prepares them very well for moving on after school at age 19 years.
- The quality of education and care provided throughout the school, including in the sixth form, is outstanding.
- The headteacher and senior leaders have not only maintained the excellent standards of teaching and learning seen at the last inspection, but have also ensured that the school has continued to improve. Everyone has a role in checking how well the school is doing and deciding what it needs to do next, but planning documents do not have quite enough detail.
- The governing body is exceptionally good at keeping abreast of the school's strengths and what it is trying to improve. Governors are passionate about enabling students to enjoy school and achieve the best they can.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed parts of 12 lessons involving 11 teachers; one of these was a joint observation with the headteacher. They listened to students read. They also spent time making general observations around the school at different times of the day including the start and end of the day, breaks and lunchtimes.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors also met with representatives of the school council.
- The views of staff were noted through the 40 responses to the staff questionnaires as well as through informal discussions with staff during the inspection.
- The inspection took account of the views of 26 parents who had entered their responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and by looking at surveys previously carried out by the school. In addition, inspectors received three separate letters from parents.
- Documents were looked at relating to safeguarding, behaviour, attendance, teachers' planning and assessments, school improvement and the accuracy of how well the school views its own performance.

Inspection team

Caroline Broomhead, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Christine Potter

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a special school for students with a broad range of special educational needs including those who experience severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. All students have speech, language and communication difficulties. Additional needs include autistic spectrum disorder, sensory impairment, physical disabilities and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- Most students join the school at the beginning of Year 7. All students have a statement of special educational needs.
- The majority of students are of White British heritage and the proportion from minority ethnic groups is below average. The proportion who speaks English as an additional language is average.
- About a quarter of students are eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional government funding provided for students who are known to be entitled to free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority. This proportion is higher than the national average.
- Students in the sixth form attend off-site work placements with local employers.
- The school is a specialist sports college.
- The current headteacher was appointed in September 2011, having previously been deputy headteacher and then partner headteacher at the school for a number of years.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide more detail in the school development plan about how the priorities will improve students' achievements and personal development.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- From their very low starting points, students make exceptional progress in their learning and personal, physical and emotional development.
- Teachers know that students can only learn and achieve well when they feel settled and safe. Consequently, they pay very careful attention to supporting students when they first enter school and as they move up through the key stages. In this nurturing environment, all students, including those eligible for pupil premium and those from minority ethnic groups, make rapid gains in their learning and their ability to communicate effectively.
- The school sets challenging targets for individuals in all subjects and carefully tracks students' small steps of progress, adjusting those targets once they have been achieved. As a result, teachers know how well students are progressing and quickly identify any who may be falling behind, for instance for serious medical reasons, and take steps to help them catch up.
- Those students who may have particular talents are identified and given opportunities to nurture those talents further, for instance in dance, music, art or swimming.
- Students take part in a very wide range of sports activities, including competitive events with other schools, which promote a positive attitude to health and fitness. For instance, they learn to ride bicycles and to swim, and their skills improve step by step until their confidence and competence is quite remarkable for some.
- Students' independence and ability to work with others are developed exceptionally well throughout school because the staff know how important this is to their future lives. Each day the students are encouraged to take responsibility for getting to lessons on time, to complete tasks with the least amount of help necessary, and to achieve higher standards in all they do.
- As students move into Year 11 and the sixth form, they are given even greater challenges which they relish. A good number successfully complete independent travel training programmes and are then able to get to and from school each day by public transport. This boosts their self-esteem enormously as well as broadening their horizons by letting them see how this opens up opportunities for them to also get to work placements and leisure facilities. Students spoke with enthusiasm and pride about how much they enjoyed this.
- In the school's specialist catering and horticulture facilities, students learn valuable vocational skills which they are able to transfer into work placements with local employers. They are encouraged to reach standards which would be required in paid jobs.
- By the time they leave school, all students achieve nationally accredited awards at pre Entry or Entry level, depending on their individual abilities.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Senior leaders ensure that teachers are well-qualified in their specialist subjects and develop additional expertise in working with students with complex needs. This means that students benefit from teaching which deepens their understanding of particular subjects, and is tailored to their individual needs. As a result, they progress extremely well.
- Teachers and support staff work very effectively in teams, each contributing their particular skills and expertise across the curriculum. Teaching support staff are very effective in supporting learning and behaviour both in lessons and when students are involved in activities in the local community. This contributes very effectively to their confidence and achievements.
- Teachers' planning is detailed and shows what activities are planned for individuals, the levels of support they need and how their learning is expected to progress by the end of a lesson or a unit of work.
- The daily communication classes are very effective in developing students' confidence in speaking and listening. Adults are skilled in improving students' speech and language across

different subjects. They use signs, symbols, voice recognition technology as well as spoken language to enable students to communicate their thoughts, feelings, needs and choices. This helps students to remain calm because they know their views are listened to.

- Literacy and numeracy skills are taught extremely well in different subjects. Students enjoy reading and improve their skills over time. They take books home to read and make regular visits to the local library.
- Teachers use practical, creative and imaginative teaching methods which appeal to the different senses and stimulate students' interest. This extends their concentration and maintains their participation in activities. As a result, lessons move on at a good pace and students achieve well.
- Teachers have high expectations of students' learning and behaviour. They are constantly challenging students to do better. For instance, in lessons they pose questions which require students to reflect on what they are learning and to give more in-depth answers.
- Students are extremely positive about school. They are praised for their efforts and receive clear verbal guidance on what they need to do to improve.
- Corridors and classrooms are ablaze with displays of students' work and experiences. For instance, there are high quality photographs, written work, art work, and audio visual presentations on screens in different locations around school, all reflecting how much students work hard to achieve their best.
- Assessment of students' learning and progress is regular and thorough. Teachers track small steps of progress and use this information very effectively in their planning. The school has robust internal systems in place for ensuring that assessment is accurate and leaders are planning to extend this work to involve other schools in these checks.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students enjoy school, as seen in their high attendance levels. Their behaviour and attitudes in lessons and as they move around school are excellent. They are friendly towards one another, showing consideration and care. They are polite and courteous, including to visitors who they greet with a warm smile and usually a handshake. The students are keen to help and take responsibility in school as well as in the local community.
- Students feel safe and well cared for. They know about different types of bullying and say there is rarely any in this school, mentioning occasional name-calling, and say there is always someone they can go to for help. They say that school is like a big family; they share the good times as well as the times of sadness.
- Students know how to keep themselves safe, for instance when using the internet, or outside of school such as when they are travelling independently. This is because the school places great emphasis on teaching students about possible risks and how to avoid them or what to do if they find themselves in difficult situations. As a result, students are willing to try new activities and take on challenges, both of which contribute to their growing confidence and maturity.
- Students are treated with respect and dignity. Those with very complex needs, who require physical support from staff to move, are handled with extreme care and safely.
- In this calm environment, students learn to cope with their anxieties and manage their frustrations in a positive way, so the need for physical intervention or exclusion is very rare.
- Parents are extremely positive about the school, agreeing with inspectors that behaviour is excellent and that the school keeps students safe.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher demonstrates strong leadership and clear ambition for continuing excellence. Leaders, managers and staff at all levels share this goal. Students and their parents also eagerly play their part in helping the school to achieve such excellence.

- Procedures for monitoring and improving the work of the school, including the quality of teaching, are well established. Staff at all levels are fully involved in this process and readily take up opportunities to extend their expertise in working with students with complex needs. This robust and supportive approach has proved very successful in maintaining outstanding teaching and learning across all key stages at a time of recent staff changes following a number of retirements. It demonstrates that the school is very well placed to improve further.
 - Senior leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. However, the development plan does not give enough detail about how these actions will improve students' achievements and well-being and this hinders the ability to check on the success of actions.
 - Senior leaders have high aspirations for all students and are very successful in enabling each individual to take a full and active part in all aspects of school life and to fulfil his or her potential. The pupil premium has been used this year to improve personal care programmes for the most vulnerable students and to improve facilities for students to develop catering skills on site. Students of all ages and abilities enjoy the numerous clubs at lunchtime and after school, as well as residential activities in the United Kingdom or abroad. This reflects the school's genuine commitment to promoting equality for all and the rigour with which senior leaders tackle discrimination if it occurs.
 - The exciting and innovative curriculum offers a broad range of opportunities relevant to students' interests, abilities and needs. It provides for clear progression in learning and personal development. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well through all aspects of school life. The strong focus on communication, literacy, numeracy, sport, health and independence continues into the sixth form with an added emphasis on developing vocational skills through the school's excellent 'Springboard' programme. Students also select from a range of options to form a personalised timetable.
 - Leaders and managers have established excellent partnerships with local employers, colleges, and training organisations, which contribute a great deal to developing students' vocational skills and helping them to move successfully on to college, training or paid work at age 19.
 - The school is meticulous in its approach to safeguarding. Planning and supervision for off-site visits and independent travel programmes are thorough. A number of students take part in regular work placements. Routine checking of attendance, well-being and progress shows that these are very successful.
 - The local authority provides light-touch support for this outstanding school.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is exceptionally effective. Governors are very well informed about the quality of teaching and learning. They hold senior leaders to account for the performance of all staff, including teachers, and are actively involved in decisions about salary progression. They ensure that the school's finances, including the additional pupil premium, are allocated appropriately and used effectively to meet students' needs and managed efficiently within budget. Governors ensure that all statutory requirements are met, including those for safeguarding. Careful attention is paid to ensuring that work placements are safe for students to attend.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	107588
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	403041

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	138
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	50
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dave Peck
Headteacher	Martin Moorman
Date of previous school inspection	23 January 2008
Telephone number	01422 358621
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