

Highfield School

Gawthorpe Lane, Ossett, West Yorkshire, WF5 9BS

Inspection dates

5–6 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Most students make good progress in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT).
- A well planned curriculum gives students a good range of opportunities to develop skills for their future employment, independent living and recreation.
- Students enjoy school and are eager to learn. Their attendance is above average.
- Most students behave well. They help and encourage each other in lessons. They feel very safe from all forms of bullying.
- Groups of pupils have the speaking skills and confidence to talk in public as ambassadors for disabled people.
- The majority of teaching is good or outstanding.
- Most teachers ensure a good pace of learning by giving students interesting practical tasks to work on independently.
- Lessons in a wide range of subjects help students to develop their writing, speaking, ICT and personal and social skills.
- Most teaching assistants work effectively in partnership with teachers and make a strong contribution to students' good progress.
- The new headteacher has the support of the staff in building on the school's previous strengths.
- There is a strong team of middle leaders in charge of subject departments. Senior and middle leaders work very well together to improve teaching and students' achievement across the school.
- The governing body monitors students' achievement and it helps school leaders to ensure a good pace of improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

The achievement of a minority of students requires improvement, for the following reasons.

- They sometimes have work that is too easy or too hard for them.
- They have not received a good grounding in letters and sounds and therefore do not read as fluently as they should.
- They do not have sufficient access to computers and similar equipment, which slows their progress in writing, reading, researching and solving mathematical problems independently.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors spent eight hours observing 19 lessons.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, groups of students and a small number of parents. There was also a telephone discussion with an external consultant who works with the school.
- Inspectors looked at students' work and read a range of management documents including those relating to how the school gains an accurate view of its performance, improvement planning, the curriculum, students' progress and safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered 30 questionnaires returned by staff and 10 responses from parents on the online Parent View.

Inspection team

John Rutherford, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Hilary Ward

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school provides education for disabled students and those who have special educational needs. Students have a range of needs including moderate and severe learning difficulties, challenging behaviour, communication difficulties, sensory impairment and autism. All students have a statement of special educational needs.
- Most students come from across the Metropolitan District of Wakefield and a small number live outside the local authority.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for those students known to be eligible for free school meals is over 50% of the school population and well above average.
- The school is a member of the Education Ossett Community Trust, working in partnership with primary and secondary schools in the local neighbourhood. As part of this partnership, the school provides education for 16 six-form students from Ossett Academy who have complex special educational needs.
- The school has received a range of awards for the professional development of staff, for researching how best to meet students' needs and for the quality of its provision in music and sports.
- In 2007 the school was given specialist status in cognition and learning.
- The headteacher is a recent appointment and has been in post for three months.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

To raise students' achievement from good to outstanding, school leaders should take the following actions.

- Ensure all teaching is as good as the best by:
 - altering tasks in lessons so that they provide the correct level of challenge for each student
 - teaching letters and sounds effectively so that all students are quickly able to read new words.
- Increase the availability of ICT equipment to help students improve their independent learning skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Almost all of the parents who responded to Parent View or who spoke to the inspectors feel that their children make good progress. The inspection evidence confirms this positive opinion.
- The majority of students make good progress and leave with qualifications in independent living, work-related learning or academic subjects.
- On leaving, all students gain a place in a college or in the sixth form of another school.
- Most students achieve well in English, mathematics, science and ICT. Progress in mathematics is much better since it was identified as an area for improvement in the previous inspection. This is because a new head of department pinpointed the weaknesses and removed them.
- Students' speaking skills are a particular strength because most lessons encourage learning through talking. This gives some students the skills and confidence to talk in public, for example, about respect for disabled people.
- Most students read well because they have been taught letters and sounds effectively, but this is not consistent in every class. Therefore, a minority of students struggle to read new words and this makes it harder for them to understand text.
- Students supported by the pupil premium make the same progress as all others. This is because the money is used effectively to provide guidance to their families on how they can support their learning. It is also because the additional funding is used to help them take part in the school's extensive extra-curricular learning enrichment programme. This especially benefits those students who live a long way from school.

The quality of teaching is good

- All the parents who responded to Parent View or spoke to inspectors accurately believe that their children are taught well.
- The majority of teachers create a very good climate for learning in which students are eager to talk about the interesting activities they are given. This is especially true in the many lessons that promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example, discussing what it means to be a good friend and identifying aspects of adults' lifestyles that are unhealthy. This approach helps students to make good progress in their personal development.
- Many teachers have high expectations for what their students will achieve. When students meet these expectations, their pleasure in succeeding is obvious. This was illustrated well in an English lesson when students showed great pride in the very good musical 'raps' they wrote and performed. The way they supported and praised each other in this work also demonstrated their good progress in social development.
- Students achieve well in science, mathematics and vocational subjects because they learn by working independently on well planned practical tasks. Occasionally, these tasks are too easy or too hard for some students and this slows their progress.
- When students use computers in their lessons it accelerates their progress in learning independently, for example, when correcting their own writing, researching mathematical facts about shape and preparing diagrams to show the formation of soil. However, students do not have access to computers and similar equipment on a sufficiently regular basis to maintain this rapid progress.
- The work in many subjects helps students to extend their writing and reading skills.
- The majority of teaching assistants are well trained for their work. They have a detailed knowledge of their students' needs and of how to support their learning in each lesson. This enables them to make a good contribution to students' achievement.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Good behaviour and safety are long-standing features of the school. This is confirmed by all the parents who responded to Parent View and who spoke to inspectors. The same view is held by almost all of the staff who returned an inspection questionnaire.
- The behaviour of some students is occasionally very challenging. However, school staff are working increasingly effectively with external support services to help these students and their families. As a result exclusions are reducing significantly: there have been none since the beginning of this school year.
- Students' good behaviour in lessons makes a strong contribution to their achievement. Many students show they can manage their own behaviour by thinking about consequences and making better choices. This reflects the guidance given by staff as part of a new approach they are introducing for improving behaviour.
- Students enjoy coming to school and, even though some have long and difficult journeys, their attendance is above the average for all secondary schools. Students enjoy learning and they work very hard. They persevere with challenging tasks and show pride in a 'job well done'. These attitudes prepare them well for their future employability.
- Students feel safe in school and take some responsibility for making sure that this is maintained. For example, the school council recently checked whether any students had concerns about the roof repairs being carried out at the present time. They identified a small number who were worried and appropriate action was taken by school leaders.
- Students feel safe from bullying and this is confirmed by the majority of parents and carers who gave their views to inspectors. It is also confirmed by school records, which show no incidents of bullying related to any form of prejudice.
- Students have a very good understanding of how to use the internet safely and they know what to do if they feel under threat from misuse of social websites or mobile phones.

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher and senior leadership team give strong guidance and support to staff, which are focused on improving students' achievement.
- Senior leaders have a detailed and accurate view of strengths and priorities for improvement in teaching and achievement. This is not always clear in the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans. However, the headteacher has recognised this and has already started to improve them.
- Middle leaders make a very strong contribution to improving students' achievement in their subjects. They work well as a team to analyse students' progress and, using this information, to improve teaching where it is most needed. This has contributed significantly to an increase in the consistency of good teaching over the last two years.
- Senior leaders and the governing body use performance management well to set appropriate targets for staff, review their progress and ensure promotion for those who make the greatest contribution to improving students' achievement. A very well planned training programme enables staff to learn any new skills they need for their work.
- The curriculum is enriched by an extensive programme of residential visits, holiday activities and daily clubs for sports, games, art, crafts, music, dance and video. Most students benefit from these activities, especially through improved progress in their personal and social development.
- Partnership with local schools enhances students' social development by giving them the opportunity to collaborate with a wider range of young people in activities such as improving the local community, gardening and bird watching. Since being awarded its specialist status, Highfield has provided good support to local mainstream schools by training staff in teaching disabled students and those with special educational needs. They also provide specialist teaching for six-form students who have more complex needs.
- The large majority of parents who responded to Parent View and who spoke to inspectors value

their partnership with the school. The school fosters this partnership in a wide range of ways including, for example, parent-support staff helping families to support their children's learning and very well-attended open days.

- In developing their leadership methods, senior leaders and the governing body have made good use of helpful guidance from an external consultant.
- Safeguarding requirements are met, both when students are in school and when they are working elsewhere. Equality of opportunity is promoted well and discrimination is not tolerated.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The new headteacher and leadership team have improved the quality of information provided for the governing body. As a result the governing body has a detailed and accurate understanding of the quality of provision and students' outcomes. This enables them to monitor the performance of the school effectively and work with the leadership team to improve teaching and achievement at a good pace.

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	108311
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	400975

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	126
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr David Brady
Headteacher	Mrs Pat Marshall
Date of previous school inspection	23 March 2010
Telephone number	01924 302980
Fax number	01924 302983
Email address	headteacher@highfield.wakefield.sch.uk

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