

Great Yarmouth (VA) High School

Salisbury Road, Great Yarmouth, NR30 4LS

Inspection dates

13 – 14 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- There is not enough good and outstanding teaching. Work given to students is not always sufficiently demanding. Some teachers do not mark students' work thoroughly or regularly.
- Achievement is not yet good and standards are below the national average. Achievement varies between subjects, for example, the students' progress in mathematics lags behind that in English.
- Some students lack the self-discipline to show good behaviour, particularly outside of lessons. Not enough students attend regularly.
- The recent procedures introduced by leaders and managers to improve the quality of teaching and improve progress have not yet resulted in good achievement for all students.
- A few middle leaders are inexperienced and are still developing in their roles, particularly in promoting good teaching within their departments.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and senior leaders have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Leaders and managers, supported by governors, are working determinedly to raise students' achievement and strengthen the quality of teaching.
- The percentage of students achieving five good GCSE grades that include English and mathematics has risen over the last three years.
- There is significant improvement in students' behaviour, particularly this year. Students say they feel safe in school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 33 lessons across all year groups, observing 33 teachers, and some other adults. Five lessons were jointly observed with senior leaders.
- Inspectors held discussions with students, teachers, the headteacher and deputy, members of the governing body and a local authority representative.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents including the school development plan, data on students' attainment and progress, monitoring and self-evaluation procedures, a range of policies and the arrangements for the safeguarding of students. They also examined the work in students' books.
- The views of 31 parents were analysed through the online questionnaire (Parent View). The findings from the school's survey of parents were also considered.
- Inspectors took account of the views of staff, including those expressed in 78 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- During this inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the school's view of the impact and effectiveness of the local authority services to support school improvement. This information will contribute to the work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of those services.

Inspection team

Dilip Kadodwala, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Michael Stanton	Additional Inspector
Anne White	Additional Inspector
Mary Le Breuilly	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Most students come from White British backgrounds; the percentage of students from other ethnic backgrounds is average and rising. The largest group is from Any Other White background, mostly from Eastern Europe. Around 3% are at an early stage of learning English.
- There is a high proportion of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and for whom the school receives additional income (the pupil premium).
- The proportion of students supported through school action is high, as is the proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs. Most of these students have either moderate learning difficulties, behavioural, social and emotional difficulties or other specific needs.
- A small number of students in Years 10 and 11 are educated off-site for part of the week at Horatio House which is a partnership initiative with all schools on the East Coast of Norfolk.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher started in September 2012 and took over from a consultant headteacher who was in post for a year.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of teaching so that it is typically at least good by:
 - raising the expectations of what students can achieve
 - planning work which is set at the right level for students
 - giving students time to work independently and to think for themselves
 - making sure that marking is consistent in all subjects, showing how students can improve their work, and ensuring that they act on the comments made.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - developing further the skills and expertise of leaders who are relatively new to their posts
 - making sure that all middle leaders are held accountable for improving the quality of teaching within their departments.
- Improve the attendance of those students who are finding it difficult to attend regularly.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students join the school with standards in English and mathematics that are well-below average. By the end of Year 11, standards remain significantly below average. Progress is better in English than in mathematics. In English, the proportion of students making better than expected progress compares well with the national average.
- Achievement in other subjects requires improvement. In some subjects, such as science, French and Spanish, students make good progress but overall they do not make as much progress as they should.
- The school uses early entry to GCSE examinations for only a small number of higher-ability students. They attain good passes.
- The school's most recent tracking data indicate that year-on-year students are making better progress through Key Stage 3, which gives them a stronger foundation for GCSE work than previously.
- The school uses its pupil premium funding to help disadvantaged students through one-to-one support for individual students in English and mathematics, as well as small group interventions. This is having a positive impact. Targeted students have good attitudes to learning and their progress is improving. Within the school, gaps in average point scores (a measure used to compare overall GCSE attainment), for this group of students and all other students, are now closing and much smaller than those seen nationally.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to other students. Their needs are identified quickly and support put in place to ensure they do not fall behind, or further behind, others. They are served well by a policy which ensures that additional help is focused on the right students.
- Students who speak English as an additional language are helped to develop their speaking, reading and writing skills quickly through intensive support. This helps to make sure that their progress is in line with that of their peers.
- The off-site provision for a small number of students is carefully chosen so that it maintains their motivation and regular attendance. They go on to achieve passes at GCSE or equivalent examinations, including in English and mathematics.
- Across the school, teachers are aware of the need to develop students' reading, writing and speaking skills and teaching usually ensures that this happens in different subjects. Helping students to develop their numeracy skills, other than in mathematics lessons, is not as well developed.
- Students are mostly positive that the school helps them to gain the skills they need for their future chosen routes. Almost all students enter further education, employment or training. Parents and carers are generally positive that the school helps students to make good progress. However, inspection evidence confirmed the school's view that students are capable of higher achievement.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- There is too much variation in the quality of teaching, a minority of which is inadequate. There is not enough consistently good teaching to result in students' good achievement over time. There is some good practice in all subjects and some outstanding teaching was observed during the inspection.
- Typically, in lessons that are not good enough, teachers do not have high enough expectations of what students can achieve and do not insist on hard work and good behaviour. Teachers do not set work at the right level for all students, so they do not make good progress. Students are too reliant on their teachers and opportunities for students to tackle high-quality independent work are limited.
- In the better lessons, students are actively involved, working in small groups talking about their work and sharing their ideas. Teachers make the purpose of the learning clear and check with pupils how well they are progressing.
- Another strength of the most effective teaching is the use of questioning to help students deepen their understanding. For example, this was seen in a Year 10 mathematics lesson on 'translations' where the teacher's questioning helped to expose common misconceptions, so that there was a chorus of, 'Oh! I see' from students. The teaching resulted in students' making good progress in their understanding and use of mathematical language to describe translations.
- Additional support for students with special educational needs is a strength because it is aimed closely at their specific needs, using support staff purposefully.
- Although there are some opportunities to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, the school recognises that more needs to be done in lessons to complement experiences provided through assemblies and extra-curricular activities.
- There is some detailed marking, giving students useful information about the quality of their work, and what they have to do to improve their work, but this good practice is not consistent. Students do not always act on teachers' comments.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Students' behaviour requires improvement because too many students are over-dependent on direct supervision without being responsible for their own good conduct. Although not common, there are still a small number of incidences of low-level misbehaviour in lessons.
 - Most students have positive attitudes to learning and are sensible when moving around the school. Students are insistent that behaviour has improved over the past two years and more so since last September, because of high demands made by the headteacher and senior leaders.
 - As a result of the school's 'zero tolerance' of poor behaviour the number of fixed-term exclusions increased in the autumn term but figures for this term show a declining trend, as students respond positively to high expectations.
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- Students say they feel safe. Parental surveys carried out by the school and the majority of those who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) show that they agree.
- Students understand the damage caused by different forms of bullying. The school's personal, social and health education and citizenship programme makes a good contribution to students' understanding of risks. Students say that bullying is not common and that it is dealt with effectively. There is harmony between students of different social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds.
- Students are punctual to lessons. Attendance is improving over time but remains much lower than average. Links with the education welfare services, the use of rewards and sanctions and the targeting of persistent absenteeism, resulting sometimes in prosecutions, are leading to higher attendance.
- Regular checks are made on the behaviour and safety of students who attend part-time off-site provision.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have not had sufficient impact over time to ensure that the school provides a consistently good quality of education.
 - The recent appointment of the new headteacher, ably supported by governors, is providing sharply focused leadership. Some work begun last year under temporary leadership is being developed well. There is clear evidence of improvement in students' achievement in mathematics and in their behaviour. The responses from the staff in their questionnaire show the positive impact of the new leadership.
 - Initiatives, such as performance management, are being driven by the headteacher with determination and supported by staff. Teachers comment positively about the opportunities they have had to develop their skills.
 - The setting of targets for teachers to improve their work is more rigorous and carried out in line with the national *Teachers' Standards*. Performance is linked to information about how well students are doing and salary scales are directly linked to the achievement of these targets. Teachers promotion up the pay scales is dependent on successful results.
 - Self-evaluation is accurate and extremely honest. It recognises that the school is on a journey of improvement and is not yet good. Although the school development plan has some unnecessary detail and not enough clarity about evaluation procedures, it does identify some of the right priorities for improvement and suitable criteria to measure success.
 - Subject leadership is at an early stage of development, as some are very new to the role. Senior staff are leading improvement effectively by carrying out joint lesson observations with subject leaders and supporting them to evaluate how well students are doing.
 - There is an agreed system for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. Senior leaders' observations focus on how well students are learning and provide helpful feedback to staff observed which is followed up subsequently. The sharing of good practice is currently mostly within the school, with very little reference to successful practice in other schools or providers.
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- Off-site provision at Horatio House is suitable and promotes appropriate support for students' academic progress and well-being. Senior leaders carry out good quality assurance of this provision.
 - Leaders promote equality of opportunity well and take steps which make sure that barriers to learning are removed, particularly for those students who are potentially most vulnerable. Partnerships with other providers and external agencies are effective in this regard. No group of students is performing significantly less well than any other group.
 - Increasingly good relationships are built with parents and carers through meetings to discuss students' progress. A parents' forum is used well to share views and explain the school's work. This supplements communication through regular newsletters and the school website.
 - Leaders recognise the need to extend the range of courses and subjects available to further improve the curriculum and raise students' achievement. Students' enjoyment of school is enhanced by extra-curricular activities.
 - Provision for promoting students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has recently been reviewed to find out where strengths and weaknesses lie. Although the school is increasingly becoming culturally diverse, not enough is done to deepen students' understanding about the religious and cultural diversity found in Britain.
 - The safeguarding of students complies with statutory requirements.
 - Since the last inspection in May 2011, the local authority has responded positively to the governing body's request to carry out a review of senior leadership and has provided good support to the school. Subsequent action has resulted in stabilising leadership through the appointment of a consultant headteacher for a year and improving students' behaviour. Since the appointment of the new headteacher in September 2012, the local authority is taking a light touch approach. The school's link with an Improvement Professional helps ensure that its view of the quality of teaching and students' performance is accurate. The governing body benefits from additional support services provided by the local authority. Although the local authority's light touch approach is appropriate after a period of intensive support, there are currently limited opportunities for staff to see and learn from good and outstanding teaching beyond the school.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body take their responsibilities seriously and are highly supportive of the school. They value the training they have received recently in how to interpret performance data and other data in order to assess how well the school is performing. Governors have a secure view about the quality of teaching and learning. Governors with specific responsibilities carry out their duties conscientiously and report back to the full governing body, resulting in an informed view about the school's work. Governors know how the additional funding from the pupil premium is being used and are keen to bring greater rigour to evaluating the impact of this resource on students' achievement. Members make sure that the performance targets set for the headteacher are challenging and that rewards for teachers are suitably based on their performance.
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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	121219
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	406010

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	903
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Derrick Hill
Headteacher	Wendy Missons
Date of previous school inspection	19 May 2011
Telephone number	01493 842061
Fax number	01493 332 848
Email address	office@gyhs.co.uk

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