

# Ralph Thoresby School

Holtdale Approach, Adel, Leeds, West Yorkshire, LS16 7RX

## Inspection dates

26–27 March 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
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

- Overall, students are not making enough progress. In mathematics and English students' progress is too slow.
- Teachers' marking does not give students enough guidance on how they can improve their work.
- Students' attendance is below average. Absence figures for girls have been too high.
- Opportunities for students to develop their numeracy skills across the range of subjects are limited.
- Subject leaders are not fully involved in leading improvements in teaching.
- The sixth form requires improvement because students are not yet making enough progress.

### The school has the following strengths

- In work-related lessons, teachers use real-life examples that students find interesting and which motivate them to learn.
- There are examples of outstanding teaching in design technology, drama and science.
- Care and support for disabled students with physical disabilities are good. These students make good progress and achieve well.
- Senior leaders have the right priorities. New systems to improve the quality of teaching are making a difference.
- The governing body is now monitoring the work of school leaders more closely.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 42 lessons. Nine of these were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, the Chair and a member of the Governing Body, senior leaders, other staff, groups of students, a National Leader in Education (NLE) who supports the school and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 31 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the 42 responses received from the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors analysed examination results and scrutinised a range of other evidence, including the school's checks on how well it is doing and improvement plans, records relating to behaviour, safety and attendance, lesson monitoring information, safeguarding documentation and examples of students' work.

## Inspection team

Lisa Fraser, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Irene Lavelle

Additional Inspector

Gary Kirkley

Additional Inspector

Derek Barnes

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average size secondary school, with a sixth form.
- The large majority of students are from White British backgrounds; students from Pakistani, White and Black Caribbean and any other Asian background are the largest other ethnic groups.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is above average but very few are at the early stages of learning English.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, for those from service families and for students known to be eligible for free school meals) is above average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs who are supported at school action is above average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or who are assessed with a statement of educational needs is below average.
- The school has specially resourced provision for eight students with physical disabilities.
- The school has specialist status in the arts.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Thirty-two students attend part or full-time off-site alternative provision with a range of providers including the Hunslet Club, Leeds Reach, Headingley Learning Centre, Burley Park Pupil Referral Unit, Educ8, Leeds College of Building, Central College of Beauty, Thomas Danby College, Yorkshire Sculpture Park and Huddersfield Football Club.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by:
  - inspiring students through using practical, real-life examples which link their learning to the world outside school
  - ensuring teachers give examples in lessons of the knowledge and skills they expect students to apply so that all students, particularly those of lower ability in mathematics and English, understand the standard required and make good progress
  - making sure that good practice in marking in English and humanities is more widely shared with other subjects so that students are clear about what they need to do to improve their work
  - ensuring that teachers plan opportunities for students to practise and develop their numeracy skills.
- Improve attendance rates by monitoring recent action plans to improve attendance rigorously and organising intervention to support students' good attendance where necessary.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - developing subject leaders so that they take a leading role in improving the quality of teaching in their areas
  - ensuring that all teachers receive individualised support and training to help them improve their skills
  - implementing plans to improve students' numeracy across all subjects.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because not enough students make good progress overall.
- Students enter the school with skills in reading, writing and mathematics which are now significantly below the national average and much weaker than in the past.
- The proportion of students in Year 11 gaining five or more A\*-C GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, is usually broadly average.
- In mathematics and English students' attainment is too variable. Low-ability students have very low points scores in both subjects because teaching activities are sometimes too difficult and do not help them understand how they can reach the required standard.
- In 2012, students' progress in mathematics, English, science and languages was below that expected nationally.
- Senior leaders have taken a number of steps to ensure that achievement improves, including focusing on improving the quality of teaching. Data systems are now used more effectively to track students' progress and extra support is organised for students who are not achieving their target grades. Lesson observations, scrutiny of students' work and the school's own tracking data show that current students are making better progress than those who have just left Year 11.
- The number of Key Stage 4 students who attend alternative off-site provision has reduced because senior leaders recognised that not all students were making the progress they should.
- Selected students only are now entered early for examinations in mathematics. In the past, all students were entered and not enough students attained the top grades.
- As a result of senior leaders' actions to improve achievement, the school's projected figures for this academic year show that the school is on target to achieve results in line with previous years.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs supported with statements or at school action plus receive excellent support from teaching assistants who help them to integrate fully in mainstream classes. As a result, they make good progress.
- 'Year 7 catch-up funding' supports students with weak literacy skills through specific programmes and is beginning to make a difference to their achievement.
- Additional pupil premium funding is used by the school to provide extra support for Year 11 students in English, mathematics and science because students supported by the pupil premium are a grade behind their peers in English and over a grade behind in mathematics. However, the school's current data indicates this attainment gap is narrowing. The extra money is also being used to fund off-site learning courses for selected students and to recruit higher level teaching assistants who will focus on developing students' basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Students who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to their peers.
- Students join the sixth form with below average starting points. However, results at A level are not high enough. Students make better progress on BTEC courses.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement in the main school and the sixth form because it is not yet making enough difference to students' achievement.
- Generally, teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations. However, they are not always aware of the steps students need to take to make more rapid progress. Sometimes the work is too hard for lower ability students, particularly in mathematics and English. These students make limited progress because teachers do not always model the knowledge and skills

they expect students to be able to demonstrate.

- Marking is inconsistent across the range of subjects. In English and humanities, students receive detailed feedback which makes them think about their work. However, this level of reflection is rare. Typically, teachers' marking does not provide clear enough guidance as to how students' work can be improved.
- Teaching on vocational courses is a strength because students enjoy learning about real-life contexts. In other subjects, students sometimes find it difficult to maintain their interest because tasks are routine and fail to excite their curiosity.
- Students make most progress when they are aware of the practical purpose of what they are learning. For example, students in a Year 10 design and technology lesson made outstanding progress when working on design briefs to produce a retro light holder. As a result of the expert advice the teacher offered each student and his choice of relevant industry-related resources, students were absolutely engrossed in their learning.
- Teaching in the sixth form is sometimes outstanding, particularly in health and social care.

### **The behaviour and safety of students**

### **requires improvement**

- The behaviour and safety of students require improvement because overall attendance is below average. Persistent absence is above average and girls' persistent absence has been particularly high.
- Senior leaders have worked with the local authority to devise an action plan for improvement because they are aware that attendance is not as good as it should be. There are signs in some year groups that this is beginning to make a difference. However, this is a recent initiative and it is still too early to judge its full impact.
- Students' behaviour around school and in lessons is good because students are keen and eager to learn. Both permanent and fixed-term exclusions are below average and decreasing because relationships with staff are very good.
- All students value and respect each other's differences. Students are proud of the school's inclusive environment where students with physical disabilities participate fully in school life.
- Arrangements for students' safety are secure and parents agree that their child is safe at school. Students say that bullying is not an issue and school leaders deal effectively with any rare instances which do arise.
- Students have the opportunity to develop their leadership skills by participating in the student parliament or volunteering as a peer supporter to help younger students resolve their problems. Older students talk enthusiastically about their work in organising an Easter egg hunt for local primary school children.
- In the sixth form students say they enjoy their learning and that 'staff look out for you'. Nevertheless, their attendance is too low.

### **The leadership and management**

### **requires improvement**

- The new headteacher's drive and ambition have brought fresh ideas and ways of working which are already having a positive impact on students' achievement.
- Senior leaders have the full backing of virtually all members of staff.
- School leaders' assessment of the school's strengths and weaknesses is accurate because the school is making good use of data to judge how well it is doing across the range of subjects.
- School improvement plans focus on the right issues. Senior leaders have been successful in making sure that no teaching is inadequate because systems for checking the quality of teaching have improved rapidly.

- Since his appointment in September, school improvement has been driven by the headteacher and the senior team. Subject leaders have been given support so that they understand how to observe lessons accurately, but they have not yet taken full responsibility for leading improvements within their subject teams.
  - Teachers understand that they will now be observed three times per year and that future pay rises will be linked to how well they perform in the classroom.
  - The newly-appointed leader of teaching and learning has good ideas to improve the quality of teaching by making sure that each teacher receives training which helps to develop their individual skills. However, this is still at an early stage in development.
  - Good links with the local authority and support from a National Leader in Education (NLE) are used by senior leaders to check their judgements are accurate and to access additional support.
  - Senior leaders are reducing the number of subjects studied by students in Key Stage 4 in order to make sure that their achievement improves. Students talk enthusiastically about the literacy focus of some form sessions but there are fewer opportunities to develop their numeracy skills. Considerable changes to the range of courses available in science are beginning to show improvements in students' achievement.
  - Working in partnership with a local school will enable an extended choice of subjects in the sixth form from the next academic year.
  - Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength shown in the calm and friendly atmosphere where everyone gets along well. The school's arts specialism makes a positive contribution to the life of the school with annual performances and talent shows which are very popular with students.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - The governing body has recently participated in a training session on the use of data and assessment run by the local authority. Governors are now asking more challenging questions. This is why an external audit is not recommended despite the school requiring improvement. For instance, governors recently identified the school's under spend on the pupil premium and ensured that it is now more effectively used to support students. The governing body understand the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors are aware of the school's new arrangements for the management of teachers' work and understand the link between good teaching and salary progression. Governors ensure all requirements relating to safeguarding are met. The school takes reasonable steps to ensure the suitable behaviour and safety of students when attending off-site provision.
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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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	108075
<b>Local authority</b>	Leeds
<b>Inspection number</b>	405150

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<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>	971
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	153
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Katrina Greenhalf
<b>Headteacher</b>	Will Carr
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25 January 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	0113 3368181
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