

Harrogate High School

Ainsty Road, Harrogate Road, North Yorkshire, HG1 4AP

Inspection dates 15–16 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2	2
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Achievement is rising rapidly. The standards students reach is average and they make good progress in English and mathematics.
- Teaching is good and improving. Most lessons challenge all abilities of students, are engaging and fun.
- Students receive high quality advice on how to improve their work through the careful marking of their books by teachers.
- Students' behaviour is good around the academy and in lessons. They feel safe and secure from any threats of bullying.
- The sixth form is good because achievement is rising quickly as a result of outstanding teaching.
- The high quality curriculum in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form is matched very well to students' needs and gives them a wide choice.
- The arts have a high profile in the academy and add to students' enjoyment of school life.
- Impressive improvements in teaching, achievement and the sixth form are a result of outstanding leadership at all levels.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There are a few remaining inconsistencies in the quality of teaching that are preventing its overall quality from rising to outstanding.
- Occasionally, students find the work they are given too simple or too difficult.
- There are occasionally missed opportunities for students to improve their literacy skills through other subjects.
- Sometimes, lessons are too directed by the teacher or teaching assistants, which prevents students from learning by solving problems independently.
- Those students who arrive with very low reading ability from primary school could make even more progress through carefully targeted help in how they link sounds to letters.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 31 part-lessons taught by 29 teachers or teaching assistants. Some were joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. A number of students were heard reading.
- Meetings were held with groups of staff, students and the Chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors took account of the 50 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- Inspectors scrutinised a number of documents including school improvement plans, minutes of the governing body meetings and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Robert Jones, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Irene Lavelle	Additional Inspector
Shirley Fall	Additional Inspector
Steven Horne	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is smaller than the average-sized secondary academy.
- Most students are of White British heritage.
- An average proportion of students are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for those students in local authority care, students known to be eligible for free school meals and children with a parent in the armed forces.
- The proportion of students with special educational needs and supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion of students supported through school action plus or with statements of special educational needs is above average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- At the time of the inspection, nine students were receiving off-site training on a part-time basis from Harrogate College.
- The academy opened in June 2012. When the predecessor school, Harrogate High School was inspected in March 2011, the school's overall effectiveness was judged as satisfactory.
- The academy takes in a number of students from schools around the Harrogate area who often have additional behavioural and emotional needs. Since the academy opened there have been 19 such students.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, thereby raising achievement further so they become outstanding by ensuring that:
 - every opportunity is taken across all subjects to improve students' vocabulary and their literacy
 - work is consistently matched to students' different abilities with precision
 - students are consistently given opportunities to solve problems independently without too much help from teachers or teaching assistants.
- Ensure that those students who have very basic reading skills receive additional support so that they are better able to link sounds to their corresponding letters.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Achievement is rising rapidly. The proportion of students achieving 5 good GCSEs including English and mathematics is now broadly average, but has improved substantially over three years from a point where it was well below average.
- Students make good progress in all subjects over time, and inspection evidence indicates that the pace of their progress is increasing, with many students currently on roll in the academy making outstanding progress.
- The very effective curriculum in Key Stage 4 enables students to study an unusually high number of subjects. Students are able to choose subjects in Year 8 and take examinations early if they are ready to do so. They can then choose from a further menu of options. This ensures that they develop an excellent range of skills across various subjects.
- Under this arrangement, this means early entry for examinations, including mathematics, is used by the academy although this does not disadvantage students in any way.
- In 2012, students did not quite make as much progress in mathematics as they did in English, although changes in the curriculum, improved teaching and excellent checking of students' progress has ensured that students' achievement in mathematics has improved quickly.
- However, while their progress in English is good, there are sometimes missed opportunities in other subjects for students to learn more adventurous vocabulary and generally use and apply their literacy skills.
- Students who are eligible for the pupil premium and catch-up programmes make good and sometimes outstanding progress due to the good support they receive, sometimes on a one-to-one basis. The gap in achievement was greater in mathematics than in English in 2012, although inspection evidence indicates that this gap is closing over time. In English the average GCSE grade difference was one quarter of a grade and in mathematics it was one grade.
- Those students who arrive at the academy mid-year from other schools in the Harrogate area make as much progress as that of their peers.
- The needs of those students who are educated off site are met well and they achieve as well as their peers.
- There have been recent improvements in the Key Stage 3 curriculum to ensure that disabled students and those who have special educational needs receive more intensive support to make sure they can read, write and use mathematics well. This is proving effective, since they make good progress overall.
- However, the small number of students who arrive in the academy in Year 7 with very rudimentary reading skills sometimes struggle to link sounds with their corresponding letters, which is sometimes preventing them from making faster progress when they encounter unfamiliar words.
- Achievement is rising particularly quickly in the sixth form. This is because the quality of teaching in the sixth form is particularly high and also because students are very well prepared for the demands of study at A Level through intensive courses provided for them at the end of Year 11.

The quality of teaching is good

- The academy has worked very hard to improve the quality of teaching across the academy. In most of the lessons inspectors visited, students were very actively involved in group work and solving problems on their own. As a result, students learned quickly and understood the relevance of what they were being taught and how it related to the world around them.
- Teachers often ensure that students are fully involved in their own learning. In one history lesson, students gained a very good understanding of migration to the West in the United States

through tasks that required them to solve problems in groups. Students then commented on each other's work, highlighting strengths and weaknesses while the teacher helped students to understand how migration may have affected the early settlers.

- Teachers carefully assess students' work and give them good feedback through marking so they are fully aware of the next steps they need to take to improve it.
- Teaching in the sixth form is outstanding. Most lessons that were seen by inspectors were inspirational and were characterised by teachers' excellent subject knowledge and questioning that deepens students' knowledge, skills and understanding. This excellent teaching is a key reason why achievement in the sixth form is rising quickly.
- Across the academy, however, there are still some sporadic inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. This is because teachers occasionally do not use the data on students' abilities well enough to match the learning tasks to students' needs. Therefore some students find the work either too easy or too difficult.
- Moreover, there are still occasions where students are given too much help from teachers or teaching assistants and therefore have fewer opportunities to solve problems independently.
- While these relative weaknesses are rare, the academy is aware of them and is working well to ensure that all teaching is at least good and often better.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Around the academy at lunchtimes and break times, students are well behaved and relate well to each other and to adults.
- In most lessons, students apply themselves well to their work because they enjoy them so much. This is because teachers go out of their way to make learning active and fun. It is only on the few occasions where learning does not fully involve them in problem-solving in groups or independently that they become a little restless.
- The academy manages the behaviour of students who arrive from other schools mid-year well. A significant proportion of these students have behavioural and emotional needs.
- Attendance has improved over the past three years in the predecessor school and is now average.
- Sixth-form students act as very positive role models for their younger peers by acting as mentors or assisting in classes.
- Students say they feel safe from any threats of bullying and they have an impressive understanding of the potential dangers from social networking on the Internet and what they should do if faced with threatening text messages.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The principal has galvanised the enthusiasm and ambition of the staff who have a shared ambition to do their very best for the academy and its students.
- Academy leaders have been very successful in improving the quality of teaching. There is a first-class programme of staff training in place that ensures that teachers are equipped with the most effective teaching techniques. While this training has not yet led to teaching being outstanding overall, it has improved quickly and more teaching; particularly in the sixth form, is now outstanding.
- Subject leaders use the academy's excellent data on students' achievements to drive up the quality of teaching in their departments and insist on the highest of standards.
- Students' progress is meticulously checked six times a year by teachers. This checking is extremely rigorous and means that very few students have the time to fall behind before teachers take action to help them catch up.
- Newly qualified staff receive tailored support that enables them to develop into good teachers and any inadequate teaching across the academy is tackled decisively through the very rigorous

system in place to manage teachers' performance.

- The excellent range of subjects on offer in the sixth form, alongside superb enhancements to the curriculum and much improved achievement is as a result of outstanding leadership and management.
- The curriculum has been carefully designed to give students a rich variety of options at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form so that they are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- A good link with a school in Ghana helps students to understand global issues. Moreover, there is a rich arts curriculum which enables many students to take part in public performances and shows around the Yorkshire area. These experiences ensure that students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness develops well.
- The academy promotes equal opportunities well by very carefully monitoring any difference in achievement between groups of students and taking very prompt positive action if any is detected. Safeguarding meets all current government requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - A member of the governing body attends each weekly senior leadership meeting. This, alongside the high quality, detailed information that its members receive six times each year ensures that the governing body provides a first-rate level of challenge and support to the academy. Its members have an excellent understanding of how the pupil premium must lead to measurable improvements in students' achievement. They also have impressive knowledge of achievement data and what constitutes good and outstanding teaching through high quality training that is provided by the academy. This enables the governing body to challenge academy leaders well on how they manage the performance of teachers and that there is a clear link between their teaching ability and their progression on the pay scales.

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	138190
Local authority	Not applicable
Inspection number	408932

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	627
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	140
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Curtis
Principal	Andrew Bayston
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01423 548800
Fax number	01423 501664
Email address	admin@harrogatehighschool.co.uk

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