

Eskdale School

Stainsacre Lane, Whitby, North Yorkshire, YO22 4HS

Inspection dates

5–6 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
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

- While students' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 is above the local average and that expected nationally for their age, too few students make the expected, or better than expected, rate of progress in English, especially the most-able.
- In a few lessons, teachers do not plan work that is challenging enough, particularly for the most-able.
- Students are not always given enough opportunities to find things out for themselves. This means that they do not always deepen their understanding of what they are learning. .
- Leaders do not focus sufficiently on the progress of students when setting targets or checking the quality of teaching.
- Leaders' use of school performance data is inconsistent, and sometimes inaccurate. This means that leaders' evaluations of the school's work are not always accurate.
- The monitoring of teaching, including the effectiveness of training, is not yet rigorous enough. Leaders do not do enough to share, and learn from, the most effective practice.
- The governing body requires improvement because it does not have an accurate view of how well the school is doing.

The school has the following strengths

- This is a caring school, with a strong family ethos, where every student is respected as an individual.
- Students supported by the pupil premium, disabled students, and those with special educational needs, achieve well.
- Students achieve well in mathematics.
- Good teaching is now seen in most lessons and some teaching is outstanding; this follows a dip in teaching especially in English.
- The curriculum and wider opportunities provided by the school help students to develop new interests and skills.
- Behaviour is good and students feel safe; there are positive relationships and disruptions to learning are extremely rare.
- Students are extremely polite and courteous. They engage well with other students and adults and are very proud of their school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 part-lessons taught by 20 different teachers. Three observations of lessons were also carried out in partnership with members of the senior leadership team.
- Meetings were held with the members of the governing body, the headteacher, senior leaders and heads of learning for each year group. Inspectors also met with groups of students of differing ages and abilities. A telephone conversation was also held with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including information and work showing students' progress and attainment, school improvement plans, monitoring documentation and records related to behaviour and safeguarding.
- Inspectors took into account the views expressed by parents in the 57 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as an individual letter sent directly to the inspection team.
- Inspectors analysed the 2013 Key Stage 3 results and the school's data on students' progress in all year groups.

Inspection team

Derek Davies, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Steven Goldsmith

Additional Inspector

Peter William Harrison

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Eskdale is a middle deemed secondary school with students in Key Stage 3 only.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is broadly in line with the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children of service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is broadly at the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also at national average.
- The school does not use any other alternative provision for its students.
- The school is in the process of consulting to become an 11–16 academy.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure all teaching is at least good and increase the proportion of outstanding teaching in order to raise standards in English, particularly for the most-able students, by:
 - always providing challenging activities that are matched accurately to the needs of all students
 - creating more opportunities for students to play a more active part in their lessons, and to find things out for themselves, in order to deepen their understanding
 - ensuring that teachers' planning is always clearly focused on the next steps of progress for all groups of students
 - making sure staff have opportunities to share, and learn from, the most effective teaching practice.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management , including governors, by:
 - making sure that leaders' evaluations of the school's effectiveness are accurate
 - making sure that leaders always consider the impact of their actions, including when they check teaching or set targets, on improving students' achievement
 - using information about students' progress more precisely to ensure that all groups of students achieve equally well, particularly the most able
 - ensuring that governors have specific information to help them measure the success of actions and to check on students' progress; so they are better able to hold school leaders to account for all aspects of the school's work
 - an external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because students are not making fast enough progress in English, especially so for the most-able students.
- Students enter the school with overall levels of attainment that are broadly average or better. From this starting point, the proportion of students that attain Level 5 and Level 6 in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 9 are above the local authority average. Students' skills are above those typically expected for their age, particularly in mathematics.
- In English however, the proportion of students making the expected rate of progress is much lower than would typically be expected. Students' achievement in English has declined in recent years. In 2013, only about half of students made expected progress in English and too few made more than this. The most-able students do not make fast enough progress in English because they are not always provided with work that is challenging enough.
- In contrast to English, student's progress in mathematics is good. In 2013, the proportion of students making expected and more than expected progress was above that expected of students nationally.
- The school works hard to foster a love of reading across the curriculum with specific programmes to help support students in developing their reading skills further.
- Disabled students, and those with special educational needs, make particularly good progress in both English and mathematics because of the good support they receive.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium achieve well. The attainment and progress of students supported by the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, have improved. As a result, in 2013, there was little difference in the levels that eligible students achieved compared to others within the school. The gap between the progress that these students make in English and mathematics, compared to other students in the school, has narrowed over the past three years. Although this clearly shows the school's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity for its students, more still needs to be done to ensure that the most-able students achieve well.
- Students who are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium receive additional support to develop their literacy and numeracy skills through a 'personalised learning' group. This extra support is helping students' reading skills to improve quickly.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Most of the teaching observed during the inspection was good, with some being outstanding. Other inspection evidence confirms that this good quality teaching is typical of the current practice in the school. This is the reason why students are now making faster progress than they used to.
- With the addition of new staff, teaching in English now deepens students' understanding and promotes key skills, such as the wider analysis of language. Marking and feedback to students in English has also improved and is now excellent, providing students with much clearer and concise targets that help them to improve their work. Consequently, students are now making better progress in English. Nevertheless, and despite the good quality teaching now on offer, there is still more to be done to help students catch up to where they should be in English.
- Where learning is most effective, there are high expectations, astute questioning and many opportunities for students to discover and learn for themselves. Activities in these lessons are appropriately planned and ensure all students are challenged and make at least good progress.
- The teaching of mathematics is effective because of teachers' secure subject knowledge. In an outstanding mathematics lesson, for example, the teacher was well organised and set up activities so that students were able to explore key concepts and develop their understanding. In such lessons, students are actively engaged and make very good progress.

- Where learning is not yet good, teachers do not plan effectively to meet the varying needs and abilities of students. This means that sometimes all students are provided with the same work and so, some students, particularly the most able, are not challenged enough. Likewise, there is sometimes too much direction from the teacher. Students are not given enough opportunities to find things out for themselves. This means that they do not always deepen their understanding of what they are learning and this slows their progress. .
- The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills has improved and these key skills are generally promoted well in different subjects.
- Support staff make a valuable contribution to the learning of students and the progress they make, particularly within the 'personalised learning' programme.
- Marking is usually good with some marking of students' work being exemplary, providing clear and detailed feedback that allows students to improve their work. Some teachers use technology to provide an online dialogue, which effectively engages students in the quality of their work and how to improve.
- Lessons in the performing arts generate high levels of engagement. Students work collaboratively and respect the contributions from everyone in the group. All students contribute and are appropriately challenged to achieve their very best.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students' behaviour is good and they demonstrate a very positive attitude to their school. There is a strong sense of every child being an individual within a wider community. Students are polite and courteous, and relationships with each other and adults are excellent; they are very proud of their school.
- Students say they feel safe and secure in the school and are made aware of all types of bullying, including being safe on-line and in other situations, through the school's Wednesday enrichment programme. The responses from parents responding to Parent View indicate that a very large majority of parents agree that students behave well, are not bullied, are well cared for and feel safe at school.
- Attendance has improved and is now at the national average. The persistent absence figure has been affected by two significant events outside of the school. The school has clear systems and procedures for managing attendance.
- Students' uniform is consistently of a high standard and they behave responsibly around the school, demonstrating very mature attitudes. As a result of precise sanctions and rewards, students have clear expectations of what is acceptable behaviour.
- While conduct in lessons is excellent, there are missed opportunities for students to become actively engaged in activities and participate much more than they do; this sometimes prevents learning being as effective as it could be.
- Students have a very good awareness of their social responsibility and their place in the world. This is supported by an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, visiting speakers and international exchanges, along with specific activities within the curriculum.
- The values that students are taught, as demonstrated in their commitment to charity work, ensure that they are prepared to fulfil their role as global citizens.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because, while teaching is now good, there is still more to be done to improve students' progress in English, particularly for the most able, to a consistently good rate.
- Leaders, including governors, are sometimes over generous with their judgements about key aspects of the school's work. During this inspection, inspectors' judgements of teaching in joint observations undertaken with by senior leaders did not always match the school's view. This is because leaders do not always take enough account of the actual progress made by students.

- The headteacher and governors are determined to ensure that the school improves further. They are ambitious and have high expectations. Improvement plans accurately identify the most important priorities. Well chosen appointments to the teaching staff have improved the quality of teaching. Most teaching is now good and, consequently, more students in all year groups now make much faster progress. This shows that the senior leaders have the ability to improve the school further.
- Similarly, leaders are now tracking the achievement of students more carefully, although this information is not yet used rigorously enough to ensure that all groups of students achieve equally well from their particular starting points, particularly the most-able students. Leaders do not ensure that the targets they set for the brightest students are ambitious enough.
- The arrangements for managing teachers' performance have been reviewed and updated and reflect those set out in the Teachers' Standards. Leaders and governors ensure that teachers' pay progression is clearly linked to targets being successfully met. Leaders have also improved the school's systems for monitoring the quality of teaching, so that there is a more collective responsibility for doing so. These improved, and more rigorous, systems have been key factors in bringing about strong improvement in the quality of teaching. However, more could be done to share, and learn from, the strongest teaching and to check the impact of improved teaching on students' achievement.
- The curriculum has been strengthened so that it ensures that students have the appropriate support and pathways to prepare them well for their future. The new Wednesday afternoon challenge, for example, is very popular with students and provides opportunities for them to develop new skills, such as first aid.
- Very productive links with primary schools ensures that students are able to make a positive start to their secondary education.
- The local authority is aware of the school's strengths and aspects that require improvement. Following a formal review, it has provided support in identifying the school's most important areas for development.
- Safeguarding meets statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - While governors are able to identify key strengths of the school, they do not always do enough to challenge leaders about the progress of key groups, particularly the most-able students. Likewise, they do not know enough about the difference that strategies aimed at improving the achievement of those supported by the pupil premium are having. This is because their understanding of information that shows students' achievements overtime is not fully developed.
 - Governors have strengthened their procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching. They carefully check that arrangements for performance management are robust and this is helping them to hold staff to account for their performance. They ensure that teachers' pay progression is linked to the quality of their work.

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	121668
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	413469

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	294
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mike Ward
Headteacher	Sue Whelan
Date of previous school inspection	29 June 2010
Telephone number	01947 602856
Fax number	01947 605748
Email address	admin@eskdale.n-yorks.sch.uk

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