

Inspection of Ripon Grammar School

Clotherholme Road, Ripon, North Yorkshire HG4 2DG

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 January and 3 March 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected 11 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time. From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders, staff, pupils and parents are proud of Ripon Grammar School - its history, its traditions and its achievements. Leaders are ambitious for pupils, both academically and for their wider personal development as young people and future citizens. Pupils rise to this challenge. They achieve very highly in their GCSE and A level examinations.

Across the school, and particularly in the sixth form, teachers challenge pupils and students to stretch themselves academically and to take risks in their learning. A small number of pupils do not receive the same encouragement from staff to achieve their best.

Pupils benefit from the broad range of provision offered by clubs and societies, for example, in science, the arts, humanities and sport. Pupils are eager to seize the extensive opportunities presented to them.

Pupils' behaviour around school and in classrooms is for the most part very good. It reflects very strong relationships in the school community. Visitors are greeted with politeness and courtesy.

The very large majority of pupils feel safe in school. Bullying is not an issue. Pupils are confident that if bullying does happen, staff will deal with it effectively. The majority of pupils are happy at school.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have high expectations of their pupils and have built a suitably ambitious curriculum. In the sixth form, the curriculum encourages all students to aim high, such as through the 'plus one' programme of additional courses to support access to ambitious post-18 destinations. Across the school, teachers have a strong understanding of their subject. They teach challenging content with skill. Assessment is used effectively to monitor how well pupils are doing. Pupils answer teachers' questions with considered responses, drawing on a wide subject-specific vocabulary to do so. This enables them to think deeply and with accuracy about often complex subject matter. As a result of such teaching over time, in the sixth form, students engage with demanding curriculum content with a spirit of intellectual enquiry.

The curriculum at key stages 3 and 4 matches the breadth and ambition of the national curriculum. Curriculum goals in the sixth form build cumulatively from key stages 3 and 4. Consequently, pupils acquire a depth of subject knowledge and skills across the curriculum. Outcomes in national examinations at key stages 4 and 5 are very high.

The support received by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) has been strengthened recently. Leaders and staff participate in a range of training opportunities, which are closely focused on the learning needs of pupils with SEND. However, the application of the strategies to support pupils with SEND varies. Currently, in some lessons, teachers do not implement appropriate teaching strategies that support pupils with SEND. There is more for leaders to do to ensure that pupils with SEND consistently receive the personalised support they need in order to achieve stronger academic and personal outcomes.

Pupils are confident and fluent readers on joining the school. Even so, leaders have put in place a reading programme to support those pupils in Year 7 who are relatively less confident and fluent. All pupils benefit from the 'Reading Challenge' to encourage an enjoyment of reading.

Standards of pupils' behaviour in class and around the site are generally very high. Students' behaviour in the sixth form is of an equally high standard. However, the school's behaviour system is not applied consistently. In a very small number of classrooms, pupils' behaviour does not meet leaders' high expectations. Furthermore, some pupils and staff report that standards of behaviour are not as high in classrooms when substitute teachers are leading lessons.

Pupils told inspectors that staff deal firmly with the very rare instances of racist, homophobic and sexist language. Inspectors saw respectful relationships between pupils, and with staff. However, a very small minority of staff, on occasions, do not speak as encouragingly and kindly to some pupils as they should. This has resulted in a small number of pupils feeling less confident in their learning.

The curriculum for developing pupils' personal development, including extra-curricular provision, is broad and varied. Pupils have extensive opportunities to enjoy sporting and musical activities. In the sixth form, there is a well-planned programme of careers support. 'Student officer' roles are clearly defined and help develop leadership qualities. In the main school, the curriculum for careers information, education, advice and guidance prepares pupils for adult life through a programme of work experience.

Leaders are eager to engage positively with parents. Many parents are satisfied with the communication they have with school and the wide range of opportunities to visit the school. A small number of parents have some frustrations about what they see as less effective communication with school. Governors know the school well and fulfil their statutory duties. Leaders and governors listen to staff and have, as a result, taken practical steps to reduce staff workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a clear system for any concerns about the safety and welfare of pupils to be logged and acted upon. Leaders act on concerns in an

appropriate and timely way, including liaison with external agencies where required. Leaders keep a vigilant eye on emerging safeguarding matters. Staff are trained in the requirements of the government's statutory guidance 'Keeping children safe in education' and understand what to do should they be concerned about the conduct of any adults in school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders and staff are taking steps to strengthen the provision for pupils with SEND. However, the teaching and wider strategies used to support pupils with SEND vary across the school. This means that pupils with SEND experience more personalised support in some lessons compared to others. Leaders and staff should build on the work already achieved to ensure that appropriate teaching strategies to support pupils with SEND are consistently implemented and that key decisions and actions linked to SEND are revisited, refined and revised, providing a growing understanding of the needs of each pupil with SEND.
- Although infrequent, a very small minority of staff do not speak to pupils in an appropriately encouraging manner. As a result, some pupils lose confidence in their abilities. In the past, when leaders have been aware that this is the case, they have taken appropriate action. Leaders should continue to ensure that all staff are crystal clear about the responsibility on them to always speak appropriately to all pupils, irrespective of ability, and take robust action where any staff fall below the expected standards of teacher-to-pupil communication.
- The behaviour policy is not always consistently applied. Behaviour is weaker in a small minority of classrooms, particularly where a substitute teacher is leading the lesson. Leaders should ensure that all staff and pupils have a clear understanding of their high expectations for the implementation of the behaviour policy, so that behaviour is consistently positive in all classes.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	121694
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	10255653
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	919
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	328
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Elizabeth Jarvis
Headteacher	Jonathan Webb
Website	http://www.ripongrammar.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 and 9 February 2012

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the school's headteacher has changed.
- The school provides boarding provision for pupils aged 11 to 18: School House for boys and Johnson House for girls.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation (Baker Clause), which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and senior staff. An inspector met with governors, including the chair of governors.
- An inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, geography and art. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also considered the curriculum in design technology and information technology.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors met with the senior staff with specific responsibility for managing safeguarding cases. Inspectors reviewed a sample of the school's case files and spoke with staff and pupils about safeguarding. An inspector scrutinised the school's process for recording that the required checks on staff have been carried out.
- The inspection was deemed incomplete after the first two days. Two of His Majesty's Inspectors returned on 3 March 2023 to gather additional evidence about the quality of education, behaviour and attitudes and SEND.

Inspection team

Steve Shaw, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Alexandra Hook	Ofsted Inspector
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Helen Lane	His Majesty's Inspector
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