

Inspection of a good school: Ralph Thoresby School

Holtdale Approach, Leeds, West Yorkshire LS16 7RX

Inspection dates:

25 and 26 October 2023

Outcome

Ralph Thoresby School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is proud of its inclusive nature. Pupils enjoy being part of the diverse school community. They value the wide variety of enrichment opportunities on offer. These include crochet and knitting, politics club and tabletop cricket.

Pupils behave very well in lessons. Staff set high expectations, and pupils respond well to these. This contributes to a calm atmosphere, where pupils are keen to learn. However, the high standards of behaviour in lessons are not consistently replicated at social times.

Pupils know that they have a trusted adult in school to turn to if they have any concerns. Pupils say that bullying does sometimes happen but are clear that the school supports them if it does. The school takes effective action to ensure that any instances of bullying are resolved.

The school has recently introduced a coaching programme. This is where pupils meet in small groups with a coach and fellow pupils to reflect on their feelings and achievements. They also discuss personal safety, such as how to keep safe during Bonfire Night celebrations. Pupils value this time.

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

The school has built a carefully considered curriculum that enables pupils to build knowledge securely over time. The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school offers all pupils a broad curriculum. This is supported by leaders, who promote the suite of academic subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate. A growing number of pupils are taking these subjects.

Many teachers use questioning skilfully to extend pupils' thinking and check their understanding. Sixth-form pupils are able to explain what they are learning now and how it links to previous learning. For example, when studying Shakespeare's 'Measure for

Measure', students made insightful links to previous love poetry they had studied. However, this is not consistently the case across all subjects. On occasion, teachers do not check the understanding of pupils as effectively. This means that they sometimes move on to new topics before pupils are ready.

The quality of education that the school provides is effective. Pupils demonstrate that they can remember the information they have been taught. However, this is not reflected in the outcomes achieved by pupils and sixth-form students in the summer examinations of 2023. Pupils in this year group were adversely affected by the pandemic. For some pupils, absences contributed to their gaps in knowledge. Current pupils are benefitting from a curriculum and teaching approaches that are helping them to retain key knowledge.

Pupils in the early stages of reading are swiftly identified and appropriate support is put in place. Staff provide phonics teaching and literacy catch up to help pupils to become more fluent readers. Pupils receive the short-term support they need to access their full timetable quickly. Developing a love of reading is woven into 'reading for pleasure lessons' in key stage 3. Leaders have carefully selected novels that pupils will read in their class. During coaching time, pupils read extracts to explore particular themes, such as climate change. This is helping pupils to develop their reading skills, as well as a wider understanding of the world.

The school takes pride in how it supports the broader development of pupils. Many pupils take up the impressive range of extra-curricular activities on offer. Pupils develop their leadership skills through involvement in groups such as 'The Allies Club'. Pupils recently designed and delivered an assembly to all pupils on the theme of Black History Month. Sixth-form students take on roles of ambassadors, such as anti-bullying ambassadors. Pupils have been well trained to carry out these roles, offering pupils a different person with whom they can talk and share their concerns.

Staff set high expectations for behaviour, which is evident across lessons. However, this is not consistently the case during social times. Some parents and pupils have expressed concern about this. Leaders are aware of this and are taking positive actions to drive improvement.

The school is keen to understand the views of parents. Coaches contact parents to speak with families about how their child is getting on in school. This gives parents the opportunity to understand how their child is progressing and explore any other concerns.

Leaders take care in supporting staff with their well-being. The school has appointed a well-being coach. Staff workload is carefully considered, and staff feel supported by leaders. Staff are proud to work at Ralph Thoresby School.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils' behaviour during social times is weaker than it is in lessons, and this is a cause for concern for some pupils and parents. The school should take further action to improve pupils' behaviour outside of lessons and address the concerns of pupils and parents in this area.
- There is variation in the use of assessment. On occasion, teachers do not check pupils' understanding of important knowledge before moving on to new lesson content. This means pupils sometimes move on to new content before pupils are ready. Leaders should ensure that effective strategies are in place to check pupils understanding in lessons.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2015.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium](#)

[funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	108075
Local authority	Leeds
Inspection number	10297242
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
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	1,048
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	161
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	Neil Martin
Headteacher	Will Carr
Website	http://www.ralphthoresby.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	16 October 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has provision for pupils with physical difficulties. The provision, 'COPE', currently has nine pupils.
- A very small number of pupils attend registered and unregistered alternative provision. The school takes appropriate action to check the suitability of these provisions and to ensure the pupils are safe.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, geography and mathematics. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders over the course of the inspection.
- The lead inspector met with the members of the governing body, including the chair.
- A range of school documents were reviewed, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents through the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors considered the views of pupils through their responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils and through meetings held with pupils.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff through meetings and through their responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.

Inspection team

Andrew Gibbins, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Julian Appleyard

Ofsted Inspector

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