



# Tadcaster Grammar School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 121693  
**LEA** North Yorkshire  
**Inspection number** 281080  
**Inspection dates** 24 May 2006 to 25 May 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Ms Susan Bowles HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Toulston
<b>School category</b>	Community		Tadcaster
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18		North Yorkshire LS24 9NB
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01937 833466
<b>Number on roll</b>	1686	<b>Fax number</b>	01937 836082
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs Charlotte Bromet
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	27 September 1999	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Geoff Mitchell

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 18	<b>Inspection dates</b> 24 May 2006 - 25 May 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 281080
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Tadcaster Grammar is a mixed comprehensive school which has had specialist status as a Business and Enterprise College since 2003. A popular school, it has grown considerably in recent years and now houses 1686 students aged 11-18 in recently extended accommodation. Students transfer from 31 primary schools in Tadcaster and surrounding communities, and the great majority stay in the school throughout their secondary education. There is little deprivation in the area and few students take free school meals, though the proportion has slightly increased. Students are predominantly white British, and none are learning English as an additional language.

The average attainment of pupils entering the school is higher than the national average. Their test results at the age of 11 reflect a wide range of attainment, but more than the average number of high attainers. The proportion with statements of special educational need is below average. 70% of students stay in full time education at the school beyond the age of 16, and nearly all Year 13 students move into higher education.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

Tadcaster Grammar is a good school in all aspects of its work. The headteacher inspires loyalty and has created an ethos that makes this a very popular school. It has been steered well to meet the needs of its community, so that the number of students staying in the school post 16 has nearly tripled in six years. It provides good value for money. The great majority of parents and students are very satisfied with the school, and their occasional concerns are recognised and, where possible, addressed. Through sensitive and imaginative provision, the school promotes the all round well being of learners particularly well. Its specialist status and extra curricular activities considerably broaden students' opportunities. Standards are good and progress is improving where it needs to, notably in years 7 to 9. This is because managers are ably leading a drive to improve the quality of learning and teaching and the effectiveness of assessment, especially at Key Stage 3. This is beginning to make a difference to outcomes. Inspectors found the school's self evaluation thorough and agreed with its overall judgements on all aspects. It is not complacent and knows how it can do better. The school has addressed all areas highlighted in the last inspection, though plans to further develop the students' use of information and communication technology (ICT) have yet to be implemented. Based on the rate of improvement thus far, its capacity to improve further is strong.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

The sixth form is good. Standards are above average and students make good progress. The large majority complete their courses successfully, which allows them to proceed on the career path of their choice. Individual targets, based on effective use of data, are used well to help students maintain their progress and to give good information about what they need to do to improve further. There are wide opportunities for students who enter with minimum GCSE grades to take suitable courses to meet their particular needs and aptitudes. The curriculum is good and enhanced by a wide range of enrichment activities in sport, the arts, music and voluntary activities. However, the school does not provide teaching in religious education for all students. The sixth form gives good value for money. Leadership and management are good. Any weaknesses are identified by use of the good systems that are in place to monitor and evaluate performance, and effective action is taken. Students are given good academic and pastoral guidance prior to joining the sixth form, during their time in the school and before leaving to pursue further studies or the world of work. Students find the support they receive is good and they are very enthusiastic when they describe their life in the sixth form.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Continue to develop greater consistency of teaching and learning, especially at Key Stage 3, so that more shows the high quality of the best.

- Improve the accuracy of assessment at Key Stage 3 and the consistent use of assessment to promote higher achievement through tracking and targeting systems.
- Improve the use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum.
- Seek to increase the access to religious education for all students in the sixth form.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement and standards are good. Students attain well above national average levels in tests and examinations. The attainment of sixteen year olds is consistently well above the national average on all measures, and has exceeded the target for 5 or more grades A\* to C. The rate of improvement is much better than the national trend. Both boys and girls attain at higher than national averages for their gender and subjects perform broadly consistently. Students attain above average results in the sixth form. At Key Stage 3, attainment in national tests is significantly higher than the national average, but though the school has met some of its targets, it has not kept pace with national trends.

All groups of students make good progress in relation to their starting points. Whilst students make stronger progress in Key Stage 4 than Key Stage 3, Key Stage 3 performance is catching up. At Key Stage 4, progress is very good, placing the school in the top ten percent nationally in 2005. The value added at this key stage shows significant improvement since 2003. In English and mathematics, progress was well above national expectations in 2005.

The school has rightly concentrated recently on improving progress in the first three years. Three years ago, progress by Year 9 in each core subject was well below national expectations. After rigorous evaluation, the school put in place appropriate strategies to raise achievement. These have begun to have an impact: achievement in mathematics has shown marked improvement in the past two years, English has shown some improvement and there is good evidence from internal assessment that Year 9 students are on track to meet challenging targets this year. On the basis of data and the progress observed in lessons across a range of subjects, achievement is judged to be good.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Personal development is good overall and makes a significant contribution to progress. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding, although teaching in religious education is not provided for all sixth form students. There are excellent chances for students to reflect on their learning and personal matters. During an inspirational headteacher's assembly for Years 7 to 9, there was pin drop silence as faith and empathy were considered following the renewal of links with a school in Mozambique. Students enjoy debate and always respect other peoples' point of view on issues such as crime, capital punishment, abortion and euthanasia. Many chances to interact with the community and develop team work skills contribute to social

development especially well. A 'Question Time' involving speakers from diverse cultures recently enabled students to find out about different lifestyles. Students make a good contribution to the community, for instance, through Duke of Edinburgh Scheme projects, and many sixth formers act as 'Numeracy Buddies' to Year 7.

Outstanding rates of attendance across the school reflect much enthusiasm and enjoyment in learning. Students are courteous, well mannered and behave well. Bad behaviour is not tolerated and firm action is taken when necessary.

Most students adopt healthy lifestyles and the great majority feels safe and free from bullying. Chances to develop work related and other useful skills are good: many opportunities to take responsibilities are on offer, including on the school council. Students are well prepared for the future and have good chances to develop the necessary skills for applying to universities, job-hunting and business planning.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good, and improving as a result of effective strategies to promote and share good practice between staff. This includes the use of Advanced Skills Teachers and Leading Teachers together with a programme to monitor teaching and provide feedback to staff.

A significant amount of teaching is outstanding in terms of the pace and level of challenge. Teaching has been stronger in its impact on students' progress from Year 10 upwards. However, significant measures have been taken to make teaching in Years 7 to 9 more consistent. Good progress has been made in tracking students' progress, with more accurate assessments of students' attainment. However, systems are not yet consistently in place across the whole school. Target setting procedures are in place, but in Years 7 to 9 do not currently give specific targets for the end of each year. There is good practice in a number of subject areas in marking students' work and the use of peer and self assessment.

Students work well and make good progress. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are gifted and talented also make good progress. Work is generally more consistently matched to the needs of the ability range in those that are set by ability groups rather than mixed ability classes. Lessons are increasingly well planned with a variety of activity, although the use of ICT is restricted in some subjects.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good and promotes students' achieving well. Students make good progress in their literacy and numeracy skills in Years 10 and 11, and their achievement is now improving in Years 7 to 9. Development of ICT skills is satisfactory. Separate ICT lessons have now been introduced in Years 7 to 9, but insufficient resources restrict

teachers' capacity to reinforce ICT skills systematically across the curriculum. The sixth form curriculum is effective in meeting the needs and aspirations of all students.

In this specialist Business and Enterprise College, results in Business Studies are very strong. Enterprise activities are systematically planned across the curriculum and provision is very good. There is good vocational provision and two thirds of students take at least one applied GCSE. A fast track system has enabled some to take certain subjects in one year. There is good provision for modern foreign languages. The very good range of extracurricular activities enriches the curriculum. The personal, social, health and citizenship (PSHCE) curriculum is being improved through specialist-led days on, for example, cultural diversity. The PSHCE provision needs to be evaluated, as planned, to determine its sufficiency and impact.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school provides good care, advice and support. Students feel that they can turn to adults for help regarding personal and academic difficulties. Procedures to ensure health, safety and child protection are robust and reviewed regularly. Personal development is monitored particularly well at this school through questionnaires. Responses are carefully checked and used to modify or develop support systems. Many anti-bullying measures are in place and the school council has made a good contribution. The school works well with agencies such as Connexions regarding personal development.

Academic guidance is improving. Students have a good general awareness of how well they are doing and how to improve. Students are given good academic guidance in preparation for Year 12 and throughout their sixth form career. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because support is organised well. Teaching assistants provide good support in the classroom and specialist teachers lead lessons with very small groups in certain cases.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. Managers have developed a school ethos that is positive and inclusive. They have developed the school's specialist status well, so that it is having a positive impact on provision. They are well supported by strongly committed governors. The governors have diligently applied their considerable expertise to the exercise of their financial control and holding school managers to account.

The improvement planning process is effective and builds on extensive self-review, including external audits. Quality assurance procedures are rigorous. Self-evaluation is accurate in identifying strengths and weaknesses, and involves stakeholders. There is a good awareness by all of what needs to be done to improve and managers act to remedy any weaknesses. The pace of change is moving into a higher gear, with raising pupils' achievement, particularly at Key Stage 3, at the forefront.

The head teacher's leadership is impressive. He offers clear direction and a commitment to each student in his care. Judging by the way students responded to his assembly they trust and respect him. The leadership group provides very good role models, and has increased its capacity for further development. There is a good delegation of responsibilities and there are examples of outstanding practice in middle management. Line managers are now fully involved in evaluation at classroom level.

Communications within the school are good. Consultation is democratic and difficulties are dealt with sensitively. Staff are given every opportunity to develop their professional competencies. New staff, including newly qualified teachers, are inducted well into the school. Effective links exist with the local community. Morale is good.

Managers have addressed the issues arising from the last inspection report. The pace of improvement has been satisfactory. The school's specialist status is having a positive impact on provision. This is not a complacent school, and it has good capacity to improve on its high standards, although some aspects of the buildings are a limiting factor.



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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

As you know, four colleagues and I recently spent two days inspecting your school. I am writing to let you know the judgements we have made.

We found that your school is a good school which cares for all its students well. We also found that teaching is good, and some of the lessons we saw were outstanding. This good teaching helps you to learn and make good progress. Those of you who have particular needs also make good progress. Examination results are good. The changes that the school has made to the way you are taught have begun to improve the Year 9 test results, though, as you know, these need to improve further.

Your teachers know you well and work hard to make sure that you are happy, safe and healthy. You have a particularly wide range of interesting extra activities. Because of this, you enjoy coming to school and your behaviour and attendance are impressive. Business and Enterprise College status has helped to provide better accommodation, resources and opportunities for you. Tadcaster Grammar is a school that continues to change to meet your needs and aspirations. It is well led by your headteacher who is keen that every one of you does as well as you can.

We think your school can improve further towards making all your lessons as good as the best we have seen. This includes improving your use of information and communication technology (ICT). The school can also help you to know more clearly how well you are doing and how you could do better.

Thank you for welcoming us into your school and for your help in the inspection. You and your parents made clear how much you care for the school. We enjoyed talking to you about your work, your life in school, your concerns and your many interests, and would like to wish you well for the future.