



# Ripon Grammar School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 121694  
**LEA** North Yorkshire  
**Inspection number** 281081  
**Inspection dates** 23 November 2005 to 24 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Mr Brian Blake HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Clotherholme Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Ripon
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18		North Yorkshire HG4 2DG
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01765 602 647
<b>Number on roll</b>	815	<b>Fax number</b>	01765 606 388
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Ian Pringle
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	14 September 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Martin Pearman

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 18	<b>Inspection dates</b> 23 November 2005 - 24 November 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 281081
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

Ripon Grammar School is a very popular, mixed gender selective school serving a large, mainly rural area in North Yorkshire. There are 815 students from 11 to 18 years of age on roll, with 60 in boarding accommodation. There are very low numbers of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those from minority ethnic groups, and those entitled to free school meals.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

Ripon Grammar School provides a high standard of education and care for all its students. It is a well established school, having recently celebrated its 450th anniversary. It is popular and oversubscribed.

The vast majority of parents support fully all that the school is doing. They appreciate the efforts of teachers to ensure that their children achieve very well and enjoy their time at the school.

Overall standards are outstanding. Girls do marginally better than boys at all key stages, but the difference is not significant.

The personal development and well-being of the students are also outstanding. The students thrive in the positive work atmosphere seen across the school. The school is a safe place to be, and the overwhelming majority of teachers are caring and sensitive to the needs of the students. Although small in number, those students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress and generally achieve in line with their peers. The boarding provision is good and meets fully the National Minimum Standards.

Students contribute extremely positively to the school and the local community, especially in the sixth form. With the exception of a daily act of collective worship, the curriculum is compliant with statutory requirements. Extra-curricular and other activities are impressive, and add to the overall quality of provision in the school.

The majority of teaching is good or better, although not all teachers are consistently reaching these high standards. Students are able learners, with their behaviour exemplary in and around the school.

The school is led well, and the headmaster and other senior staff are clear in what they want to achieve; this includes a bid to gain specialist engineering status. The capacity of the school to improve further is good. The school achieves good value for money.

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

### **Grade: 2**

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are good. A recently appointed head of sixth form provides good leadership and management. She has evaluated effectively students' needs and, as a result, introduced many new and useful developments, though some are still at an early stage of implementation.

The students thoroughly enjoy being in this community, and benefit from good supportive relationships with teachers. They feel well consulted and listened to. Regular mentoring, and good support when making career choices, helps students achieve their potential. Good monitoring systems result in challenging examination targets being set to raise achievement.

Good quality teaching, combined with the students' outstanding attitudes and behaviour, results in exceptionally high standards and achievement in general certificate

of education advanced level (GCE A level) and advanced subsidiary level (AS level) examinations. The curriculum meets students' needs well and is enhanced by an outstanding extra-curricular provision. Through their voluntary work, students make an outstanding contribution to their local community.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision**

### **Grade: 2**

Provision for boarding students is good. In 2004, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) found that the school met all National Minimum Standards for boarding provision. Since then, the school has acted effectively upon the small number of recommendations made at that time. The management of the two boarding houses is good. Staff apply procedures and regulations fairly, and maintain a good balance between exercising control and allowing freedom. Students enjoy the experience of boarding at the school. They are well looked after and they develop a good sense of community.

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

- Develop a consistent and more robust approach to lesson planning, as an aid to focusing teachers and students on key areas for improving learning in lessons.
- Develop further the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum.
- Develop a broader and more consistent approach to the use of individual learning targets, which emphasises greater student ownership.
- Increase further the use of performance data as an aid to assessment for learning across the school.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Achievement and standards are outstanding. Students' attainment on entry to the school is well above the national average. Standards at Key Stages 3 and 4 are very high. Students in Years 3 and 5 (National Curriculum Years 9 and 11) consistently achieve well above the standards expected for their age. Performance at GCE A Level is equally strong, with a very high pass rate and substantially higher numbers reaching the top two grades than is found nationally. Basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) are well developed. Students' achievement is outstanding overall. However, there are some subject areas where attainment is above the national average, but students achieve significantly less well than they do in other subjects across the school. The most able students are encouraged to be ambitious, and sixth form students regularly gain places at nationally prestigious and internationally known universities. Much of this success is grounded in the students' enjoyment of school and the zest for learning that they bring to their work.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good in all respects. Students show respect for one another and form very positive relationships with all staff in the school. Their great enjoyment of school is reflected in an exceptionally high level of attendance; in exceptionally high standards of behaviour; in very positive attitudes towards their learning; and also in their enthusiastic participation in an extremely wide range of extra-curricular activities.

The school promotes a healthy lifestyle well. Students say they feel safe and have confidence in the school's effective anti-bullying procedures. The contribution made by students to the school and the wider community is outstanding. The sixth form voluntary service work is very impressive; so too is their role as 'peer listeners' to younger students in the school.

Students' awareness of matters relating to the world of work is satisfactory. The school has begun to address the need to do more to increase this aspect of students' learning by modifying the personal development programme, but this is still at an early stage.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching is good overall, but there is variation across the school. Students' learning is consistently good or better.

Teaching in the vast majority of lessons is good and occasionally outstanding. In the most effective lessons, teachers maintain a very good pace to the learning, matching lesson content very well to the needs and abilities of the students. This well planned work helps students develop further skills, more extensive knowledge, and levels of understanding that result in high standards. In less effective lessons, teachers fail to change the learning activities quickly enough to meet the needs of learners. Teachers' subject knowledge across the school is generally good or better, with individual planning for lessons satisfactory. However, there is inconsistent use of planning formats, which leads to variation in the quality of teaching. At its best, planning makes for informed teaching and focused learning. Where it is less effective, teachers do not make sufficiently clear to students what aspects of learning they will be expected to acquire and develop during the lesson.

With few exceptions, the quality of students' learning in lessons is at least good and more often outstanding. Levels of concentration are extremely high, behaviour exemplary, and attitudes to peers and teachers commendable. Relationships are of a very high standard. The result of this high quality teaching and support, and positive attitudes to learning, is a work atmosphere in the school in which the overwhelming majority of pupils thrive and prosper in their learning.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The school provides a good quality curriculum. The deliberately academic emphasis generally meets learners' needs well, with most studying 10 subjects to general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) level. With the exception of a daily act of collective worship, other curriculum requirements are met. The curriculum is broad and balanced and enhanced very well by an extensive and outstanding range of extra-curricular activities that cater for all interests. However, the use of ICT across the curriculum is underdeveloped.

In the sixth form, a wide range of courses is offered, including some in partnership with a local college. The higher attaining students are challenged well when studying for Advance Extension Awards.

Personal development, which is part of the curriculum, is not as effective as it could be because not all lessons are taught by specialists. While students benefit from work placements, this experience is not built upon with work-related learning in lessons.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Care, guidance and support of students are good. The school's pastoral support procedures ensure that students feel safe and can confide in staff, when necessary. Predicted examination grades are used very effectively to set targets for students' attainment at GCSE. Although the majority of students know what their targets are, they are less clear about those aspects they need to improve upon in order to reach them. This is because of inconsistencies in some marking, planning and use of assessment data across the school.

Students benefit from performance reviews and receive clear guidance on their choice of GCSE courses and what to study in the sixth form. However, the school recognises that careers guidance for pupils aged 11 to 13 years is not well established.

Bullying and racist incidents are rare and are dealt with promptly. Mentoring systems are working well. Child protection procedures are linked clearly to specialist support staff and agencies. Good provision is made to identify and meet the needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The school is well led and managed, with particularly strong leadership from the new headmaster. He has retained loyalty and maintained morale against a background of some change, and there is a strong strategic sense of direction. In developing this, his readiness to respond to parents, governors, staff and students is commendable. There is good support from an able senior leadership team and an emerging layer of strong middle managers. Senior managers

know the strengths and weaknesses of the school very well, as reflected in the accurate self-evaluation provided for this inspection.

Governance is conducted through a range of appropriate sub-committees, which hold the school to account and show constructive engagement in both day-to-day management and in longer-term strategic planning. Development planning is scrupulously linked to student outcomes and achievement. The school's financial position is sound, with good strategic stewardship of resources. The evaluation of cost effectiveness, relative to educational outcomes, is built into strategic planning, although it is not yet fully established at the level of middle management.

In a number of subject areas, good appointments and effective structural planning have helped to raise standards and to widen the school's curricular provision. However, a continuing weakness in the structure is the relative professional isolation of colleagues who are a single person department.

The monitoring and evaluation of staff performance have improved since the previous inspection, and now include procedures in both formal performance management and peer review. The process does, however, lack some clarity of target setting against measurable and achievable success criteria. The school's bid for specialist status in engineering reflects innovative thinking about direction for a selective school. It builds on noted strengths in mathematics, science and technology, and the bid's quality has attracted considerable support from some major financial institutions.



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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>	1	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
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>	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
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	3	

### 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**

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave me and the inspection team when we visited your school on 23 and 24 November. We were very impressed with all that we saw during these two days, particularly the way you behaved and your willingness to talk with us in an open and honest way. We learned a lot about what it's like to be a student at your school; from when you first join until the time you eventually leave.

We found that your headmaster and the teachers care about what you do and how they can help you do the best you can during your time at school. Most of the teaching we saw was good or even better than this. The standards you reach during your time at school are really impressive, and show how hard you work and how well most of you behave in your lessons. You told us that you enjoy school and trying your hardest to show how good you are in so many different activities. Well done to you all.

We are going to ask that your school improve some of the things it does to ensure that:

- you know what you are expected to learn by the end of each lesson, and that teachers also tell you what you must do to make this possible
- the modern technology you have in school, especially computers, is used more effectively to help you learn
- teachers talk to you and agree the targets (levels and grades in all your subjects) that they expect you to achieve throughout your time at the school. The teachers should also talk to you about any other things you need to do to achieve the highest standards you can.

I wish you all every success in the future.