



Ermysted's Grammar School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121716
LEA North Yorkshire
Inspection number 281090
Inspection dates 17 October 2005 to 18 October 2005
Reporting inspector Mr Stephen Wall CfBT Lead Inspector

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Gargrave Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Skipton
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		North Yorkshire BD23 1PL
Gender of pupils	Boys	Telephone number	01756 792186
Number on roll	673	Fax number	01756 793714
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr J Spencer
Date of previous inspection	4 December 2000	Headteacher	Mr T Ashworth

Age group 11 to 18	Inspection dates 17 October 2005 - 18 October 2005	Inspection number 281090
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is a selective 11 to 18 grammar school for boys, serving the market town of Skipton and its surrounding area. It is smaller than average, although the number of pupils admitted into Year 7 has been increased recently. Nearly all students stay on into the sixth form after Year 11 and nearly all continue to university at age 18. All but a very few pupils have English as their first language and nearly all are of white British heritage. The school has very low levels of pupils entitled to free school meals and a well below average number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. For entry in September 2005, the school accepted pupils from nearly 50 feeder primary schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Ermysted's Grammar School is a good school with an outstanding sixth form. Students enter the school with well above average standards of attainment and this is maintained through Key Stages 3 and 4. Standards in the sixth form are exceptionally high. Pupils achieve well and make good progress, but more pupils could gain the highest grades in general certificate of secondary education (GCSE). Although still good, some students' rate of progress dips a little in Years 10 and 11. Students make exceptional progress in the sixth form. The school uses its funding very well and gives outstanding value for money. The school is a well ordered community and pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils feel safe and valued as individuals. Nearly all develop into mature and responsible young adults by the time they leave the school. The pupils are proud of their school and are keen to take advantage of the wide range of opportunities the school offers. Parents appreciate all that the school offers. Overall, teaching is demanding and challenging. Teachers have good subject knowledge; this is put to good use, especially in the sixth form. The school is led impressively by the headteacher and new appointments to the management team of the school mean the school is now set to move forward with renewed vigour. The school has addressed all the issues identified at the time of the last inspection and shows good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding sixth form. Students enter with well above average standards and make excellent progress; they leave with results which are exceptionally high. This is directly due to outstanding teaching and very high levels of student motivation. A wide range of courses very closely meets the ambitions and aspirations of all students, and almost all who start courses finish them. In 2005, almost every student who completed Year 13 went on to higher education, with a significant number gaining entry to top universities. The support and guidance which students receive are excellent. The sixth form is very cost effective.

What the school should do to improve further

- Investigate the quality of learning in Years 10 and 11 so that students in these years make the same rate of progress as in other years.
- Establish clear priorities for future whole school developments.
- Ensure that the personal, social and health education and citizenship (PSHCE) programme is fully effective and meets pupils' needs.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Achievement and standards are good in the main school and outstanding in the sixth form. Students have well above average standards on entry to the school that are maintained throughout and reach exceptionally high levels in the sixth form. Students consistently meet the targets set by the school for Key Stages 3 and 4, and exceed them in the sixth form, where results are superb. Nearly all sixth form students go on to higher education at age 18. Pupils make very good progress in the main school from Years 7 to 9. However, performance data show, and the school agrees, that a small but significant number of pupils make slower progress in Years 10 and 11, and that more students are capable of achieving the highest GCSE grades. By the time students leave the school, literacy and numeracy skills are highly developed. The school has few pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. They too make good progress and achieve as well as other students. The school has raised standards significantly in those subjects identified in the previous inspection as in need of improvement; however, French and information and communication technology (ICT) still have room to improve further.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development is good. Students respond very well to the school's tradition of high expectations and benefit from a good all-round education. They work hard to achieve academic success, especially in the sixth form, and this stands them in good stead for their future economic well-being. Attendance rates are well above the national average and show that students enjoy coming to school. Most students are confident and articulate. They contribute enthusiastically to lessons and enjoy very good relationships with each other and their teachers. The students feel safe and free from intimidation.

Students make very good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They appreciate the opportunities to learn about other cultures and the richness and diversity of their own society. They show respect and consideration for others. Stimulating assemblies and lessons develop effectively their spiritual awareness. The school's deep and extensive commitment to sport encourages healthy lifestyles, and opportunities to participate in the arts and charity work extend their commitment to the wider community. For example, the school's 'Big Band' gives regular performances in the local community and has ventured abroad into Europe.

Good progress has been made in recent years in introducing a PSHCE programme into the curriculum. The course covers a wide range of areas and gives emphasis to health related matters, such as drugs and sex education and personal safety. However, students say that the quality of lessons and teachers' commitment to the programme are variable. The school has yet to evaluate the suitability or effectiveness of the PSHCE course,

so it is not clear how great an impact this important subject is having on students' personal development.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Teaching is good in the main school and outstanding in the sixth form. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and their enthusiasm inspires students to make rapid progress in many lessons. Students consistently make significant creative and intellectual efforts in lessons. Relationships are excellent. In the very best lessons, well planned and interesting tasks motivate the students so that they become deeply engrossed in their learning from the outset. These lessons have pace, variety and dynamism, particularly in Years 7 to 9, and even more so in the sixth form. This leads directly to very good achievement and progress for these groups of students. Where learning is less effective, teaching does not always fully mesh with the learning needs of all students, with the result that some pupils struggle to cope with the demands made by the teaching. Opportunities for independent learning in Years 10 and 11 are sometimes missed, for example, by failing to encourage the use of ICT for research purposes. As a result, the progress made by some learners is hampered.

Assessment arrangements are good. The school's strategy for using information gathered on how well pupils are progressing is thorough. It is used more effectively in some subject areas, notably mathematics and English, than in others. Most teachers mark work in a constructive way which clearly guides the students on how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

In the main school, the quality of the curriculum is good; in the sixth form, it is outstanding. The main school curriculum is traditional and academic and, as such, it fully meets the needs of a selective and able intake of boys. The optional courses in Years 10 and 11 are drawn up after consultation with pupils and their parents, so they are relevant to students' views of what they need. The issues raised in the last inspection have been addressed. However, whilst the school has made progress in the provision for ICT, further improvement is needed if students are to use it fully as a tool to support their learning. The quality of careers education is satisfactory overall. In general, the curriculum provides a good level of challenge, but the school recognises it could do more to identify students who are gifted and talented to provide them with even more opportunities to excel.

In the sixth form, pupils are able to study a wide range of subjects, including some not commonly found in other sixth forms, such as archaeology. The links that have

been established since the previous inspection with Skipton Girls' High School have been beneficial and have opened access for students to a rich curriculum. An excellent feature of the work is the prominence given to providing higher attaining pupils with opportunities to achieve at the highest levels. In particular, the number of pupils taking the Advanced Extension Awards has increased markedly over the last three years, with the majority of Year 13 pupils preparing for it in the current academic year. Preparation for the examination has also led to the school further broadening its curriculum by, for example, introducing a course in critical thinking, which is much appreciated by the students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school provides good guidance, advice and support for its students. Students are very pleased with the school's transition arrangements from primary school into Year 7. There are good procedures for ensuring their health and safety, and child protection procedures are fully in place. Students are well informed about progress to higher education. Their progress is well tracked and monitored. A particularly strong feature is the regular reporting to parents and discussion on each individual's progress with the form tutor.

No formal arrangements exist to gauge students' views. The school is aware of this and sees the need to develop a student council. However, despite this, students feel that any concerns they have as individuals are taken seriously and acted upon effectively.

The school responds well to individual comments and concerns raised by parents. However, the school is aware that only very limited formal procedures are in place for parents to express their views on issues relating to the school and the quality of education it provides. This would assist the school in its forward planning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Leadership and management of the school are good. The leadership of the headteacher is very impressive and he presents a particularly good role model to pupils and staff. Leadership is keen to raise the rate of progress pupils make in Years 10 and 11 even further to be in line with other year groups; there is no complacency. Management is good in the main school and very effective in the sixth form. In recent years, the senior management team has suffered from considerable disruption because of ill health and absence. To some extent, this has impeded progress in planning for the future and has led to much time and energy being spent on the day to day running of the school. However, new appointments are giving the school new impetus and management is now well set and eager to move on. The school's leadership and management team

knows the school very well and identifies correctly its strengths and where it can improve further. For example, it has identified a need to define the roles and responsibilities of middle managers more closely and to evaluate in greater depth the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning. It misses an opportunity, however, to consult the views of parents and students systematically in evaluating its effectiveness. Improvement since the last inspection has been considerable under the present headteacher. The issues identified then have been addressed and money has been spent wisely to improve accommodation and facilities. The governing body is well led by the chair of governors and, in the last three years, has started to define and develop its role as a 'critical friend'. Governors know the school well and have established good procedures for holding the school to account, including those for financial control.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

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

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	1
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

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
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	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	1

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	1
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	1	
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

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
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
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
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
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
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
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
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, three colleagues and I recently spent two days inspecting your school. Thank you for making us welcome and for helping us to find our way around. Thank you also to the students who gave up much of their lunchtime on Monday to talk to us; your views were most helpful in enabling us to reach our judgements. This letter aims to give you a summary of what we found.

We think Ermysted's Grammar School is a good school and that the sixth form is outstanding. We were very impressed by the test and examination results you gain; in the sixth form, the general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A-level) results are superb! You obviously make good progress throughout your time at the school and enjoy everything it offers, not only in lessons, but the wide range of activities on offer outside the normal school day. Your school is very well led by your headteacher, who is very keen that every one of you does as well as he is able. Your teachers go to a lot of trouble to prepare lessons, which are demanding and interesting. You work hard with your teachers and get such good results because of this. We were very impressed with your behaviour in lessons and around school. All the students we spoke to were proud of their school, and quite rightly so.

In order to make the school even better than it is now, we have suggested that the school investigates how well students in Years 10 and 11 are learning, because we feel that the rate of progress you make in these years dips a little. In addition, we have suggested that the quality of your PSHCE programme is checked to make sure it is meeting your needs.

You have a very important part to play in the continuing success of Ermysted's Grammar School and we are sure you will continue to work hard and take advantage of everything it is offering you.

We wish you every success in the future,