



Ossett School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108276
Local Authority Wakefield
Inspection number 288061
Inspection date 24 January 2007
Reporting inspector Anthony Briggs

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Storrs Hill Road
School category	Community		Ossett
Age range of pupils	11–18		West Yorkshire WF5 0DG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01924 232820
Number on roll (school)	1726	Fax number	01924 302852
Number on roll (6th form)	372	Chair	Mr David Drake
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Headteacher	Mr Martin Shevill
Date of previous school inspection	11 November 2002		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
11–18	24 January 2007	288061

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Ossett School is much bigger than most secondary schools. It also has a larger than average sixth form. Students come from a wide variety of backgrounds but overall their social circumstances are above average. The school's population is stable with slightly more boys than girls in the main school and the reverse in the sixth form. Nearly all students are of White British heritage with a few from a range of minority ethnic groups. Almost every student speaks English fluently. Few are eligible for free school meals. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than average. The school has specialist status in technology and sports and has achieved Investors in People status, the Healthy Schools Award and Sportsmark Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

'This is an excellent school with a strong sense of discipline' and 'school is really worth getting up for' are two of the views expressed by parents and students. Everything the school does is very good and many aspects of its work are exemplary. Consequently, inspectors confirm the school's view that it is providing an outstanding education for its students and gives excellent value for money. Students feel very safe and extremely well cared for, achieving well with obvious enjoyment and pride in their work. They say they all get on with each other and this is reflected in their high level of attendance. An understanding of the importance of following a healthy lifestyle is fostered through exercise and a variety of healthy food options, which students really enjoy. Parents speak very highly of the school and are pleased with the progress their children make. This is summed up by one parent who stated: 'I am extremely grateful that we live in the catchment area for this school.' However, some parents would like to have more opportunities to meet with all the teachers rather than just their child's form teacher. Teachers are very knowledgeable about their subjects and enthusiastically pass their skills on to the students, inspiring them to learn. Relationships are excellent and are underpinned by mutual trust and respect, resulting in highly motivated students and an atmosphere that is conducive to high quality learning. Standards have been consistently above average and students achieve well. However, GCSE results dipped further than predicted in 2006. Although new tracking procedures are in place, managers have not yet ensured that they have been adopted by all teachers to prevent any more surprise results. The outstanding curriculum has a wide range of options that meet the needs of all students exceptionally well. It is enhanced by a vast array of extra-curricular activities which are enjoyed by the students. The impact of the specialist technology and sports status has produced strong links with partner primary schools and the local community. Learning resources have also improved significantly. These technology and sports subjects are helping to drive up standards throughout the school. The significant improvements since the previous inspection have not happened by chance: they have been carefully managed. The visionary leadership of the headteacher, in conjunction with the strengths of the other managers, relentlessly strives to improve the school. Governors understand how well the school is doing and what needs improving and it is this shared approach that creates the outstanding capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Strong evidence for the personal development of students in the school is provided by the sixth form students, who are confident, sensible and articulate young adults, clearly very well prepared for the next stage of their education or working lives. They relish the additional responsibilities they have and enjoy being treated with respect. Students joining the sixth form from other schools find it friendly and welcoming. Standards in the sixth form are above average and students achievement is good. The good quality of teaching and learning and a stimulating curriculum with superb

enrichment activities enables the students to achieve well in all subjects, especially vocational ones. There are additional vocational opportunities for sixth form students provided through strong partnership with a neighbouring college. Students feel cared for and confident that problems will be sorted. However, they have concerns with the independent learning modules (IMODs) where students say they need more guidance and follow-up from teachers to make the modules more useful. The leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding and ensure that students gain the correct qualifications to continue their education. Students are particularly proud of the new sixth form building which they say has improved their status in school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Sharpen the tracking of progress and the monitoring of teaching to avoid any unexpected dips in students' achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Standards are above average and students achieve well throughout the school. GCSE results are better than might be expected in relation to students' standards when they arrive in Year 7. The proportion of students gaining five or more grades A* to C is especially good and almost all students gain five or more passes at grades A* to G. Good progress is largely a result of consistently good teaching but students' own enthusiastic attitude to learning is also an important factor. Students gain very good results in design and technology, reflecting well the school's specialist status and contributing positively to whole school performance against demanding targets. Students make good progress overall in English and excellent progress in mathematics, both of which are important for their future economic well-being. GCSE results dipped slightly in 2006, the result of problems with new examination syllabuses and some inexperience among teachers preparing students for examinations. The school's assessment records show that students are on track for better GCSE results in 2007.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school is justifiably proud of students' excellent personal development. Students enjoy school and their attendance is very good. They are enthusiastic about their learning and work very hard. The previous inspection report identified this as a school where it is 'cool to learn' and this remains the case. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent, with a particular strength in the social element. However, the school recognises that it could do more to increase students' racial and cultural awareness. Students are well informed about how to keep safe and the importance of a healthy lifestyle is reinforced through lots of sporting activities and a strong emphasis

on eating healthily, as reflected through the Healthy Schools Award. Almost half of students take part in extra-curricular sporting activities, reinforcing the school's recent award of a second specialism in sport. The number of students taking school meals has increased significantly since the introduction of healthier choices. Students' behaviour is exemplary in lessons and around the school. There are various councils where students take responsibility and make their views known; they also represent the school on several other consultative committees. The school prepares students well for the future world of work but acknowledges that some of the enterprise opportunities are not yet available to all students.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students learn well because teaching is consistently good and often outstanding. Relationships between teachers and students are excellent and this is reflected in the way in which students work extremely hard and behave brilliantly. Classrooms are calm and productive places where students are highly focused and really keen to learn. 'We are all here to learn' sums up the way most students think. The specialist status funding has improved the quality and availability of resources and this has enhanced the way students learn. Students are pleased with the way many teachers have recently tailored lessons to focus on their individual learning needs. Students prefer creative lessons that keep them actively involved and where there are 'no right or wrong answers'. They enjoy these lessons where 'we learn for ourselves' and 'express what we think'. They are less keen on lessons that involve them sitting and listening. Although many teachers have adopted this more imaginative style of teaching, not all fully engage the students in every lesson. A new improved assessment tracking system has been introduced but is not yet used consistently by all staff. Consequently, students say that they do not get the same amount of detail from each subject.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum for all year groups, including the sixth form, is extremely effective in meeting students' needs and interests and enabling them to achieve well. In Years 7 to 9, dance and drama provide extra opportunities that strengthen students' personal development. In Years 10 and 11, students choose from four pathways providing a wide range of options. Students of any age who are having difficulties in coping with the curriculum are well supported by the 'Crossroads' team. The success of this strategy is indicated by the very high proportion of students who make good progress in school. The school offers a superb menu of extra-curricular activities, with particular strengths in physical education and the creative and expressive arts; these enable students to

follow up particular interests and widen their experience. The strength in physical education has been recognised nationally through the Sportsmark Award.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school takes excellent care of all its students, including those who are more vulnerable and need extra support. Arrangements for child protection, for checking staff and for ensuring students' health and safety all meet current requirements. Students report that any isolated incidents of bullying are quickly and effectively dealt with by the school. There is an integrated approach to the services provided for students, such as for promoting their health and for counselling those having difficulties. Students are confident that there is always somebody to turn to should they have a problem or concern. Parents appreciate the care that teachers and other members of staff provide for students. However, they have some concerns about the review days for Years 7 and 8 rather than a full-scale parents' evening. They would prefer to have more contact with subject teachers at an early stage.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The headteacher, senior leaders and governors are totally committed to getting the best deal for the students. They are highly self-critical and are not complacent about the work of the school or about the ways in which they want it to further improve. Middle managers are strong and play an important role in determining the way forward. The headteacher has very high expectations and a clear vision for the school; this is respected and shared by staff, parents and students. There has been a raft of initiatives implemented since the previous inspection and things have improved greatly. For example, the highly valued, newly built David Drake sixth form building and the redesignation of specialist status with the bonus of a second specialism in sport have considerably enhanced learning. Regular and rigorous review and evaluation of performance keep everybody on the ball and have resulted in some underperforming staff moving on. Although the dip in results in 2006 was predicted, managers did not expect it to be as big as it was. Consequently, new procedures for tracking students' progress have been introduced but are not yet rigorous enough. There is a strong commitment to developing the skills of staff. Professional development is seen as a crucial tool in improving the way teachers teach and managers manage. The result is a workforce that strives to better itself: this can only be a good thing for the students. Governors are extremely knowledgeable and many have educational or business expertise. They hold the school to account and understand how well it is doing. All issues raised at the previous inspection have been dealt with. Consequently, the school demonstrates outstanding capacity to improve.

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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>	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?	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ 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	2

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for making our visit to Ossett School so enjoyable. We were very impressed with the way in which you openly chatted to us about your school. Your comments helped us to focus our inspection and find out just how well your school is doing. We agreed with much of what you said and were very impressed with how good your school is. We have judged it to be outstanding which is the highest grade we can give. If you get chance, you should read through the full report to see how we have agreed with your views and how we have incorporated some of the things you said.

You told us that you enjoy coming to school and that the teachers and other staff make you feel cared for and safe. We were impressed at the pride you show in your school and the way you value the great range of out-of-school clubs and activities on offer. We thought your understanding of the importance of staying healthy and your enthusiasm for the new healthier food was very impressive. Your comments about how you learn were very perceptive and you showed us how you know you are doing well in a successful school. Some of you explained how you learned more in lessons that involved you in practical activities and how these were better than when you just sit listening to the teacher. Some of you were aware that GCSE results dipped a little in 2006 and you wanted to make sure that your results were better. We agreed and we have asked your headteacher and the teachers to keep a closer eye on how well you are doing in all your subjects so that you all do as well as possible.

You feel that your views are taken into account and you enjoy the responsibilities you are given. You told us how impressed you are with the improved resources and the new sixth form building and the way that lessons are becoming more active and interesting. You also said how much the school has improved and that you feel the headteacher and other managers are doing a good job. We agreed with all these points and have written about them in the full report.

There is no doubt that you and your parents are pleased with Ossett School and we can see why. It is clearly an outstanding school!