



Huntcliff School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111726
Local Authority Redcar and Cleveland
Inspection number 289038
Inspection dates 24–25 January 2007
Reporting inspector Brian Blake HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Marske Mill Lane
School category	Community		Saltburn-by-the-Sea
Age range of pupils	11–16		TS12 1HJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01287 622178
Number on roll (school)	508	Fax number	01287 622299
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr John Dunn
		Headteacher	Mrs Ruth Headdon
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	24–25 January 2007	289038

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Huntcliff School, which has specialist status for the humanities, is smaller than the average sized secondary school. The school serves a socially and economically diverse area, with almost all of its students of White British heritage. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than average, including those with a statement of special educational need. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is in line with the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Huntcliff is a good school where students' attainment and overall progress are good. High quality teaching and effective leadership and management are helping the school to maintain high standards year on year.

The majority of students start at Huntcliff School with above average standards, and continue to progress well over both key stages so that, by the time they leave school at the end of Year 11, their attainment is well above the national average for five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics. The very challenging targets that are set are not always achieved, but attainment and progress are well above local and national averages at both key stages. The attainment of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory, and their overall progress good.

Students' personal development and well-being are good and the vast majority of students enjoy attending and achieving well at school. Students behave well in lessons and when moving about the school. They like the many extra-curricular opportunities on offer, and take-up has increased since the previous inspection.

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers know their students well, using praise and encouragement effectively to help motivate students to do their best. Learning activities are planned well and teachers' good subject knowledge helps provide a brisk pace to learning for the majority of students, but not always those identified as 'gifted and talented'. For these students, learning activities do not always challenge them sufficiently, or develop further their higher order learning skills, knowledge and understanding.

The overall quality of the curriculum is good, and has been enhanced by the school's specialist status. At Key Stage 4, in particular, careful attention is given to providing sufficient choice of subjects that match well against students' interests and needs.

Managers at all levels work well together, and monitoring and evaluation of provision are working effectively and are helping senior managers identify the strengths of the school, and areas for future development. Some departments analyse students' progress rigorously to identify and address weaker areas of learning, but this good practice is not yet used consistently by all staff.

The overwhelming majority of parents are very happy with all that the school does to support and help their children to achieve well. However, there is a small number that indicated they would welcome further action by the school to improve the behaviour of a minority of students whose anti-social behaviour is causing them, and their children, some concern.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide work for gifted and talented students that is suitably challenging.
- Ensure that all staff make more effective use of the school's data-tracking system, as an aid to monitoring the progress of students.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards achieved by students and the progress they make are good. The attainment of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory, and their overall progress good.

The majority of students start at Huntcliff School with an above average standard. They progress well over Key Stage 3 so that, at the end of Year 9, (end of the key stage) their attainment is well above the standard found nationally for the combined core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Good progress is maintained over Key Stage 4 so that, by the time the students leave school at the end of Year 11, their attainment is well above the national average for five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics. This good rate of progress is generally faster at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3. Across the three core subjects, overall progress is best in mathematics, at both key stages, and is slower in English at Key Stage 3. The very challenging targets that are set are not always achieved, but the school maintains its standards and progress well above local and national averages at both Key Stages 3 and 4.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Students enjoy attending school, which means that their attendance always reaches the average expected for secondary schools. Students are keen to take advantage of the many different sporting opportunities that encourage regular exercise. They also enjoy the healthy eating options provided at lunchtime, although a small number expressed concerns about the availability of different foods in the snack bar when taking lunch towards the end of the lunch period. Students feel safe in school and, although some indicated that there was some anti-social behaviour, they felt that teachers dealt with this as quickly as possible. Students are able to contribute to the life of the school, primarily through the democratically elected school council. Members who met with inspectors were encouraged by the developments since September in the way the school council is organised and run, particularly with the greater freedom they now have to use dedicated funds for school activities, and for them to select and support local and nationally nominated charities. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well across the school. Students behave well in lessons, and when moving about the school they do so in a safe and sensible way. The reward system is appreciated by the students, and helps them to recognise their achievements in a range of different activities. Those students who spoke with inspectors feel that there is good advice on post-16 opportunities in education, employment and training.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers know their students well; they build good relationships with them, which lead to good standards of behaviour in lessons. Teachers use praise and encouragement effectively, helping to motivate students to do their best. Lessons are planned thoroughly and organised efficiently. Although teachers provide lively and imaginative lessons that create a purposeful working atmosphere and help raise standards, the work provided for gifted and talented students does not always challenge them sufficiently, or build upon their prior learning.

Teachers are making good use of an increasing amount of student performance data to set challenging targets and check students' progress; this is helping students to be clear about what they have to do to improve their standards. However, some students at Key Stage 4 are still unsure about how to achieve these targets in the short-term. Marking of work is good, giving students a clear idea of how well they have done and what they should do to improve the quality of their work further. Careful assessment of needs and well targeted support make sure students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are challenged and make good progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The overall quality of the curriculum is good, and meets well the needs of all students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The planned curriculum includes all National Curriculum subjects, and is enhanced with a good range of sports, arts and recreational activities out of lessons. At Key Stage 4, a good balance of subjects is provided, and careful attention is given to ensure that a sufficient choice of subjects matches well against students' interests and needs.

The specialist school status enriches the curriculum overall, particularly in the humanities. Innovative work to provide digital learning resources complements well the teachers' work in developing alternative ways to focus on the identified learning needs of the students. The growing use of information and communication technology is enhancing learning across the school. A particular curricular strength is the specialist transition provision to guide students in Years 10 and 11 into further education, employment and training. Enriched by practical opportunities, the work-related curriculum takes account of local job opportunities such as tourism and social care. This provision gives students good opportunities to develop skills, and to identify very clearly their progression beyond school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The school has effective procedures to help students move from primary to secondary school, which complements the overall good quality of care provided for students. Health and safety procedures conform to local authority guidance and thorough risk assessments are carried out for all school trips. Child protection procedures are in place. The school provides very good support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and for other vulnerable students. There is good quality and well focused in-class learning support, including one-to-one support provided by the learning mentor. A strong pastoral system helps students feel valued and happy, and make good progress. Monitoring of academic progress by pastoral leaders is developing satisfactorily, and is already good in many subject areas. There is a good mentoring programme for Year 11 students, which is contributing to the well above average standards being achieved. Careers education and guidance are good, and have been enhanced by the appointment of a transition mentor to ensure students are well prepared for the next stage in their education. The vast majority of parents are very happy with the care and guidance their children receive, and say their children feel safe and happy at school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides good leadership, giving clear direction to the school and its staff. She is well supported by an able and enthusiastic senior leadership team, which has a shared vision and commitment to continuous improvement. Regular monitoring of teaching, through a rigorous programme of lesson observations and work with subject leaders, is helping to raise standards and share good practice. Subject leaders value the high quality support and challenge they receive from the senior team, and have embraced the need to evaluate their work by using pupil assessment data to track students' progress and to identify underachievement. Some departments, for example, science and English, already analyse assessment results rigorously to identify and address weaker areas of learning, but this good practice is not yet used consistently by all subject areas. Day-to-day management is effective and the school runs smoothly. Performance management is good. The school's self-evaluation is detailed and accurate and shows that senior managers are aware of the school's strengths and where it needs to improve.

Governors know their school well, and are aware of what needs to be done to improve further. They are ambitious for the school, totally committed to doing the very best for the students, supportive and hardworking. They carry out their responsibilities effectively, including challenging the school and holding it to account.

Financial management is secure. Specialist college funding is used well to improve provision and help raise standards. Staff and resources are well deployed, and the

school achieves good value for money. Issues from the previous inspection have been addressed and the school has good capacity to improve further.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	3
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
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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?	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	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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	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

Huntcliff School

Marske Mill Lane

Saltburn-by-the-Sea

TS12 1HJ

24 January 2007

Dear Students

You will know that I recently visited Huntcliff School with two colleagues to inspect how well the school is helping you to achieve the best that you can in your education. We enjoyed our visit very much, and I should like to thank you all for the help that you gave inspectors and, in particular, your willingness to talk openly and honestly about being a student at the school; you were all very courteous and helpful. I should also like to thank the parents who returned the inspection questionnaire. Many raised important points that inspectors considered very carefully during the inspection.

You have a good school. The standards that the vast majority of you achieve by the time you leave school are higher than those we would expect to see in secondary schools.

Teachers provide you with many different opportunities to enjoy your life in school, both in and out of lessons. You told inspectors that you feel safe in school, and that you trust your teachers to support you as well as they can. The teaching that we saw was good, although inspectors feel that more challenging work could be planned and provided for those of you who have been identified as 'gifted and talented'; we are asking that the school improves this aspect.

You have lots of opportunities to participate in school activities, and the range of subjects that you study is helping you to enjoy what you do, and achieve well. Your behaviour during the inspection was good, although a very small number of parents would like this aspect to improve further so that it does not affect how well you do in your lessons, or how much you enjoy attending school.

The headteacher and her staff want you all to do well, and they are well aware of what needs to be done to help you achieve to the best of your ability. You have an important part to play in this also, by working hard to do the best that you can. Although the school uses the 'data-tracking system' to monitor how well you are doing, and to help those who could do better, we are asking that it ensures all staff make full use of the information they have, in order to help you achieve even higher standards.

I wish you all the very best for your future.

Brian Blake

Her Majesty's Inspector