



Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119809
Local Authority Lancashire
Inspection number 291549
Inspection dates 7–8 March 2007
Reporting inspector Michael Maddison HMI

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

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|---|---------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Type of school | Grammar (selective) | School address | Glen Road |
| School category | Foundation | | Waterfoot, Rossendale |
| Age range of pupils | 11–18 | | Lancashire, BB4 7BJ |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01706 234500 |
| Number on roll (school) | 1297 | Fax number | 01706 234505 |
| Number on roll (6th form) | 540 | | |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair | Mr David Heap |
| | | Headteacher | Mr Marc Morris |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1 March 2003 | | |

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|------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Age group | Inspection dates | Inspection number |
| 11–18 | 7–8 March 2007 | 291549 |

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School is a selective school serving the Rossendale valley and surrounding area. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is well below the national average and there are very few students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Just under a tenth of students come from a minority ethnic background. There are a small number of looked after children. All students take an entrance examination and their attainment on entry to the school is well above average. There is a broader range of ability in the sixth form because there is a large number of learners coming into the school in Year 12 and they have a pattern of lower previous attainment. The school is a Technology College and it has been awarded Healthy School status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School is a good school with outstanding features. It is a popular school with a prestigious local reputation. Students and parents alike are overwhelmingly supportive of the standard of education and care which is provided. The school has high expectations and the students respond enthusiastically. They are proud of their school. The students are articulate and mature young people, and their personal development is a significant strength of the school.

Achievement is good and the students attain high standards. In Year 9 students' results in national tests are consistently well above average. The same is true at GCSE. Results in the 2006 GCSE examinations, for example, are comparable to those normally attained in grammar schools; they show generally good progress from students' achievements when they joined the school. These good results are the consequence of good teaching and of the students' commitment to their learning. They want to do well and this commitment to their work is seen in lessons and in their books. Teachers display excellent subject knowledge and, on the whole, lessons are well planned and delivered. Teaching is good, sometimes outstanding, but it is not yet consistently outstanding across the school because students are not being given sufficient opportunities to take a more active part in their lessons.

Relationships between staff and students, and between the students themselves, are first class. The students are confident and articulate learners and this can be attributed to the outstanding care, guidance and support which are provided by the school. This is greatly appreciated by the students and their parents. The personal development of the students is outstanding. They have excellent attitudes to their studies and they clearly enjoy coming to school, as evidenced by their positive approach and their high attendance. Behaviour is exemplary. Students are tolerant of and respectful to each other. They make positive contributions to the life of the school and the local community, and they participate fully in a good range of high quality extra-curricular activities. Technology college status has enabled the school to offer a wealth of opportunities for the students as well as for the partner schools and the wider community. Specialist school targets are regularly met and the work of the school in response to specialist status has contributed significantly to the impressive examination results.

The school is well-led and the headteacher is well-supported by an enthusiastic leadership team, an active governing body and a dedicated staff. All leaders and managers share a strong commitment to the school. The school evaluates its work accurately and leaders at all levels demonstrate a good understanding of the school's priorities. As a result, it has good capacity to improve. Senior leaders are aware that leadership and management are not as effective as they might be because the monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school are not yet conducted consistently.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are outstanding. Standards are very high and the school's thorough analysis of performance shows that the learners make excellent progress. Nearly all students in Year 11 stay on into the sixth form; this, coupled with the school's increasing success at attracting learners from a much wider geographical area, has led to a steady increase in the number on roll. A measure of the sixth form's success is that, over this period of expansion, standards have continued to improve. Learners engage in a wide range of academic courses leading to AS and A-level examinations. These are augmented by a variety of applied AS/A level courses. In addition, all students in Year 12 study AS critical thinking, whilst Year 13 students take AS/A-level general studies. Good collaboration with other educational institutions enables learners to gain a richer educational experience. The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding, as is evidenced by increasingly positive examination results. Leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding. This is demonstrated by close monitoring of sixth form provision and very effective evaluation of performance which has led to an outstanding capacity to improve. The changing nature of the sixth form, as it has grown in size, has been exceptionally well managed. This is reflected in the high proportion of learners who complete their sixth form education and go on to higher education. Very few learners drop out of courses and there is strong progression from AS courses in Year 12 to A-level courses in Year 13. Learners greatly value the outstanding care and guidance which they receive.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop students' independent learning skills by providing more opportunities for students to take a more active part in their lessons.
- Improve quality assurance by ensuring that monitoring and evaluation are conducted consistently across the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Throughout the school, standards are high and achievement is good. In the sixth form, achievement is outstanding. On entry to the school the attainment of students is consistently above average. In Year 9, students achieve well and their results in national tests are well above average. Students perform much better in mathematics than in English and science. In 2006, for example, in mathematics nearly all students attained at least Level 7 and the majority attained the highest level. In English and science however, results in 2006 were lower and they have tended to be erratic in recent years. A thorough analysis has been undertaken and strategies have been put in place to help students improve these results. At GCSE, students perform well. Although there are variations between subjects, results are very good on the whole. In 2006 all students attained at least 5 subjects at grades A* to C and the proportion of students achieving

A* to A grades was more than double the national average. Students from minority ethnic groups do well, as do those who need extra support. Students attain good results because they receive good teaching, they have very positive attitudes to their studies and they strive to achieve the best results. Their achievement overall is good but there is scope for even higher achievement and for more students to attain the highest grades. Standards in the sixth form are excellent. Retention rates are high and so are pass rates. Learners make excellent progress and in 2006 over half of all grades achieved at A level were at grades A and B.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The personal development and well-being of students are outstanding. Students' attitudes towards learning are extremely positive and they are very keen to achieve as well as they possibly can. This helps to explain their good achievement. Students' behaviour is exemplary. They enjoy coming to school, and this is reflected in their excellent attendance, which is well above national levels. Students are particularly proud of their school, and respond very well to its values and expectations. Relationships are very good; students get on very well with each other and with staff. As a result, the school is a friendly and well ordered community. Students say they feel very secure and know how to deal with incidents of conflict; they are confident that the school will swiftly help them resolve any issues that concern them. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Moral and social dimensions are especially strong, and students are being prepared well for life after their school years. A well taught personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship programme successfully guides their personal development, dealing well with issues relating to drugs, sex, careers and relationships. Students make very positive contributions to the school and their community, for example, through their extensive charity and fundraising initiatives. They value the good opportunities to take responsibility as 'buddies', peer learning mentors, or by serving on their year councils. These experiences help students to grow in maturity and self confidence. Healthy living is promoted well. The recent Healthy Schools' Award reflects the increasing range of healthy eating options available. Whilst time given to physical education is not generous, a high proportion of students actively participate in a good range of extra curricular sports and fitness activities. Participation in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme is notably high and this helps to develop leadership skills. High standards in literacy, numeracy, and computer skills contribute effectively to the preparation of the students for their adult working lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Teaching and learning are good and enable students to achieve high standards. Lessons are well organised and this helps students to make good progress. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and give clear explanations. There are very strong relationships between teachers and students. Students develop their understanding and confidence through mature debate and discussion. They are prolific workers, are keen to learn and take great care with all aspects of their work. Students are challenged in their work and stimulating learning opportunities are provided but this does not happen in all lessons. Work is marked frequently, and students receive useful guidance that supports their learning. Written comments commonly indicate the standard attained, what has been done well and what could be improved. However, this is not consistent across all subjects. Students know what they are expected to learn and respond in lessons with enthusiasm and with commitment. The recently established teaching and learning group is encouraging the use of more varied approaches to teaching and learning. This development is in its early stages but there is evidence that it is having a positive impact upon learning. In the sixth form teaching and learning are outstanding. In the rest of the school most teaching is good, sometimes outstanding, but it is not yet consistently outstanding across the school because students are not being given sufficient opportunities to take a more active part in their lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that the curriculum is good. The programme of study at Key Stage 3 is broad, balanced and fully meets statutory requirements. It has improved since the previous inspection, for example, students now experience a more comprehensive PSHE and citizenship programme. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 provides a very good range of GCSE subjects for students to study. A strong feature of the curriculum at Key Stage 4 is the opportunity for all students to study at least one modern foreign language and many often study two. The school has started to adapt the curriculum at Key Stage 4 to make it more responsive to individual students' needs with the introduction, for example, of separate GCSE science subjects in Year 10. All students are helped to prepare for future employment through an effective work experience programme. However, opportunities to extend their skills for their future economic well-being through vocational courses and enterprise activities are not well developed. There is very good provision for higher attaining students by the provision of GCSE additional mathematics and AS critical thinking courses. An innovative and enriching aspect of the curriculum is the recently established programme

enabling free access to musical instruments and instrumental tuition for all students in Year 7. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities which extend and support students' education. The sixth form curriculum is outstanding and is very well matched to the needs and aspirations of the student body.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Care, guidance and support throughout the school are outstanding. The school provides a positive place for students to learn. They say they feel valued as individuals, listened to and looked after. As a result, they are confident and outgoing, both in and out of lessons. Procedures for child protection and health and safety measures are firmly in place. Well-considered support and guidance are given to higher attaining students, and to those who find learning difficult at times, helping them to make good progress. The view of one student sums up the views of most, 'The school is brilliant at helping us with any problems.' Students and their parents speak very highly of the extensive arrangements that smooth the transfer from primary to secondary school. As a result, students settle quickly to their new surroundings. The guidance programme ensures that students receive good support and information when making their subject choices at the end of Year 9, and when deciding on their subsequent career and Post 16 opportunities. Almost all continue into the school's sixth form. Effective links are maintained with parents through regular reports and parents' evenings. They are highly satisfied with the school; both they and their children appreciate the outstanding care provided by staff. Support for vulnerable students, including looked after children, is both sensitive and effective. Students' academic progress is carefully tracked across the school using a variety of systems. Students mainly know their targets and how well they are doing. Those doing less well than they should are given effective support to bring them back on track. The high level of pastoral and academic concern for students' welfare helps them realise their potential, and underpins their good progress, enjoyment, and well-being.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Leadership and management are good, and in the sixth form they are outstanding. The headteacher provides a clear vision for the development of the school and he is ably supported by an enthusiastic senior leadership team and a dedicated staff. Governance is good: governors are well informed; they take an active role in the life of the school and their wealth of knowledge and experience enables them to be effective. However, they do not challenge the school sufficiently over the progress made by students. They are committed, though, to the development of the school and to securing its future by building on its reputation for promoting high standards. Day-to-day management is effective and, despite the restricted nature of the site and

the accommodation, the school runs very smoothly. This is also a testament to the maturity of the students. Sound financial management ensures staff and resources are well deployed and the school gives good value for money.

The management has developed comprehensive systems for self-evaluation and it has linked the outcomes of these reviews to school development priorities. As a result, the school improvement plan accurately identifies key areas for development and suggests appropriate strategies for delivery. The school has tackled the issues raised in the last report. Subject leaders accurately evaluate the work of their departments. They use assessment data effectively to monitor students' progress and identify and support those students who are at risk of underachieving. Leaders and managers recognise that they will be held to account for their performance. However, they are not as effective as they could be because the checking of their performance is not conducted consistently well across the school.

Inspection judgements

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

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? | 1 | 1 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 | 1 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 | 1 |
| 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? | 1 | 1 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 1 | |
| 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 | 1 | |
| How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 1 | |

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? | 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? | 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 | 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 | 1 | |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities | 2 | |
| 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

Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School

Glen Road

Waterfoot

Rossendale

Lancashire

BB4 7BJ

9 March 2007

Dear Students

As you may be aware I led the team of inspectors which recently visited your school and, on behalf of the team, I would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome. We greatly appreciated the time you spent talking to us and we found your comments very helpful. As well as coming into lessons and looking at your work, we read the questionnaires completed by your parents. Like you, they were very supportive of the school.

We were very impressed on our visit and our view is that you attend a good school which has some outstanding features. The sixth form is outstanding, as are the care, guidance and support you receive and your general personal development. The school has many other strengths; these are some of them.

- You receive a well balanced and broad education which is of a high standard.
- You enjoy coming to school, you achieve good results in national tests and examinations and you make good progress.
- You are extremely well behaved in lessons and around the school.
- You have excellent attitudes to learning and are eager to do well.
- You make the most of the good range of extra-curricular activities.
- Your teachers work very hard on your behalf and you respond well.
- The school is well led and well run.

You are working at a standard that is well above average but we think you could do even better. We have asked the headteacher, the staff and the governors to help you achieve even higher standards. We are asking them to make sure that you are given more opportunities to take a more active part in your learning. In effect, we do not think you are always as actively involved in your studies as you might be! Though the school is well led and well run, we think that systems for quality assurance could be stronger.

We very much enjoyed visiting your school and I would like to thank you once again for being so friendly and polite. You are a great credit to yourselves and to your school.

I wish you all every success in the future

Yours sincerely

Michael Maddison

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools