



Easingwold School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121664
Local Authority North Yorkshire
Inspection number 292195
Inspection dates 7–8 March 2007
Reporting inspector Christine Harrison

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	York Road
School category	Community		Easingwold, York
Age range of pupils	11–18		North Yorkshire YO61 3EF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01347 821451
Number on roll (school)	1370	Fax number	01347 823301
Number on roll (6th form)	257		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr N Nightingale
		Headteacher	Mrs Carey Chidwick
Date of previous school inspection	4 November 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	7–8 March 2007	292195

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large school serves the town of Easingwold and the surrounding rural area, with over a quarter of its pupils coming from York. Most pupils are White British with a few from a range of minority ethnic groups. Almost all speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds but, overall, their social circumstances are well above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the number of pupils with statements of special educational need are both below average. The school holds International School and Investors in People awards, Sportsmark, and the Careers Education and Guidance Quality Standard. It gained specialist school status in languages in September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school in which pupils achieve well, enjoy a wealth of opportunities and develop mature and responsible attitudes that equip them well for the future. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the community, both within school, in the locality and in their work for various charities.

Pupils' personal development is good overall. Relationships within the school are very good. Pupils respect teachers and value the work that they do for them. They take full advantage of a very wide range of extra-curricular activities, notably in drama, music and sport, together with exciting trips, visits and exchanges that broaden their experience and deepen their understanding. Pupils are well informed about how to keep safe and they understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Most pupils behave very well both in lessons and around school. However, pupils and several parents report a few lessons where poor behaviour disrupts learning. Pupils appreciate the improvements in behaviour, brought about by the school's procedures for dealing with such incidents, but recognise the need for teachers to use the strategy more consistently. The school provides good care and support for all its pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are vulnerable.

Pupils arrive at the school with standards that are above average and gain ground during their time in school. Hence they do better than might be expected and their achievement is good. The quality of teaching and learning is also good. Pupils experience many good lessons and speak appreciatively of how much they enjoy them. However, there are also some lessons that are satisfactory rather than good. In these lessons, the requirement for pupils to learn for themselves is often not as strong as it might be. This leads to problems in the sixth form when some students find it difficult to adjust to the increased demands on them to learn independently.

The leadership and management of the school are now good. Until a few years ago, the school's main guide to how well it was doing came from its above average examination results. As the available data improved, it became clear that, despite these results, some pupils were not doing as well as they should and others could do even better. The school's leadership team initially found it difficult to implement the changes that they knew were needed, particularly in ensuring that all the work of the school was of good quality. With determined support from the governing body, however, the necessary improvements were made and, in particular, departments and teachers began to evaluate their work more effectively. A further step was the introduction of regular monitoring of pupils' progress so that everyone knew how well pupils were doing and could take action to address any under-achievement. Several of these innovations are recent and are not yet being used to full effect. For example, there is still work to be done in ensuring that pupils fully understand the levels or grades at which they are working and precisely what they need to do to reach the next level. Nevertheless, achievement has improved and there is no longer any significant under-achievement. The establishment of these new systems, together with good planning for the future, ensures that the school is well placed for further improvement.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Standards in the sixth form are above the national average. Overall, students gain results that match predictions based on their GCSE performance so that achievement is satisfactory. Students participate enthusiastically in a rich variety of opportunities to develop their personal skills and work for the good of others in school, notably in supporting younger pupils and helping to deal with any incidents of bullying. Students are confident and articulate; they demonstrate mature attitudes to their studies and have very good relationships with their teachers. They say that staff are easy to approach and will provide personal help where necessary. The curriculum, whilst offering only a very limited range of vocational options, meets the needs of those who study GCE A-level courses. However, there is insufficient provision for the small number of students, entering the sixth form without GCSE grade C in English and mathematics, to improve their basic qualifications.

The quality of teaching and learning in sixth form lessons is good, with teachers using their good subject knowledge carefully to structure lessons that respond to the needs of students. However, the school has identified a need to develop students' independent learning skills, as some students find it difficult to cope with this aspect of the transition to sixth form study. This is a contributory factor to some students not doing as well as they should in AS level examinations at the end of Year 12. All students are very positive about their choice to stay on at Easingwold and feel well prepared for life after school. Students receive good information about their progress and feel well supported. Nevertheless, there are some weaknesses in guidance that result in a few students embarking on courses for which they are not well suited. In addition, the school does not identify quickly enough, at the start of Year 12, those students not doing as well as they might. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory overall because they are not yet fully effective in ensuring that students achieve well. However, self-evaluation is more precise than for the school as a whole so that leaders have a good understanding of what needs to be done, together with a determination to raise standards. Hence there is good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the rigour of monitoring and use it to ensure consistency, particularly of teaching and learning, across the school.
- Make better use of assessment information to monitor pupils' and students' progress and quickly pick up and remedy any under-achievement.
- Improve the curriculum for students following Level 2 courses in the sixth form.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Standards are well above average and pupils' achievement is good. Most pupils make satisfactory progress through Years 7 to 9 and results in the Year 9 tests are above average, as might be expected from their standards when they enter the school. Pupils' progress accelerates in Years 10 and 11. The 2005 GCSE results, which are the most recent validated results, showed that most pupils had made satisfactory progress overall during their time in school. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more grades A* to C was well above average. Almost all pupils gained five or more grades A* to G. However, there was some under-achievement among lower attaining boys. The 2006 examination results showed a marked overall improvement. In particular, the school's value added information shows that lower attaining pupils made much better progress than they did in the previous year. The school met its appropriately challenging 2006 targets for Year 9 and exceeded them in Year 11.

The school's monitoring information shows that almost all the current Year 11 cohort are on track to meet their individual targets and many are likely to exceed them. Pupils of all ages are generally making good progress in lessons and in their written work. This is largely a result of the good teaching they receive but their own conscientious attitudes and enthusiasm for learning also play an important role.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and firmly based on the school's clear statement of values. Good understanding of other cultures is successfully encouraged through school assemblies and a strong programme of citizenship and religious education, together with many visits and exchanges, particularly as a result of the school's specialist status in languages. Pupils benefit from a bustling, cooperative atmosphere where bullying is rare and issues such as healthy living and caring for others take high priority.

Pupils' enjoyment of school life is evident in higher than average attendance. Continuous individual attention and group activities such as circle time sustain pupils' positive attitudes. One pupil in Year 7 declared, and others agreed, that the school was 'a fun environment for trying new things'. Inspectors confirmed several parents' concerns about the behaviour of a few pupils, although the vast majority displayed mature and positive attitudes.

Pupils' participation in class is good, ranging from spirited discussion and diligent individual work in good lessons to patient but passive attitudes when teaching is less challenging. Pupils feel safe around school, and value the emphasis on praise, reward and recognition of effort. Many appreciate the benefits of the school's language

specialism and international status including the exchanges and contacts with schools abroad. They benefit from the numerous opportunities the school offers for enterprise, taking responsibility and serving the local and wider community. Pupils are articulate and confident and acquire the good literacy, numeracy and teamwork skills they will require in the workplace.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Inspectors agree with the school that the quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers use their very secure subject knowledge to plan lessons carefully. They establish positive, purposeful relationships with clear boundaries in classrooms. Hence, pupils know what is expected of them, both in terms of effort and behaviour. Teachers make skilful use of questioning to establish pupils' existing knowledge, test their understanding and move them on to the next stage of learning. Most pupils work hard in lessons and are confident in asking for help when they do not understand, thus contributing significantly to their learning.

However, there are areas for improvement in teaching in the minority of lessons that are satisfactory rather than good. In these lessons, work is not always well matched to all pupils' capabilities, especially in providing enough challenge for the more able. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning and to introduce more variety into lessons is under-developed in several subjects.

The school appropriately recognises that good use of assessment information is critical to raising pupils' achievement. It is making steady progress in improving the consistency and precision in the way this data is used but pupils are not always as well informed as they might be about just how well they are doing. At its best, regular marking helps pupils by showing what they need to improve, but marking is not yet of consistently good quality across and within all subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum in Years 7 to 11 is well matched to pupils' needs and interests and enables them to achieve well. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 study all the required subjects, with the added benefits of learning a second language and over two hours of physical education per week. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is even broader, offering a wide range of GCSE subjects, including a choice of three languages, and single or double award science. There are only two vocational courses, and the school is aware that there is scope to extend the range of vocational subjects. However, the current curriculum meets the needs of the majority well. In addition, the school provides

carefully planned individual timetables for pupils for whom a heavily weighted academic curriculum is not appropriate. These pupils may follow an alternative course leading to a qualification in life skills, as well as spending one or more days in the workplace. Pupils enjoy these courses, which help them plan and prepare well for future education or employment. Many pupils of all ages take part in the very wide range of extra-curricular opportunities, including activities in sport, music and drama. As a recently designated specialist school for languages, the school offers a valuable programme of exchanges, visits and links with schools abroad, all of which give opportunities for pupils to improve their language skills and develop their understanding of life in other communities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Effective care, guidance and support for pupils reflect the school's strongly inclusive ethos. Positive, good-humoured relationships between staff and pupils create a purposeful and supportive ambience. Hence pupils are confident to share any concerns with their teachers and with sixth form students who act as listening partners.

Teachers have good knowledge of pupils' needs and potential. They use commendations well to recognise effort. Their use of sanctions to maintain pupils' involvement is less consistent. Setting individual targets for all pupils and tracking their progress over time have only recently been introduced and are not yet being used as effectively as they might.

Staff identify the needs of vulnerable pupils, giving strong support to them and their families. Thoughtful induction processes help new pupils to settle in. Older pupils get effective advice about courses and career paths they might choose and this has been recognised in the award of the Careers Education and Guidance Quality Standard. The few pupils at risk of disaffection receive well-tailored support and guidance, which keep them engaged. The expertise of many external agencies is utilised to beneficial effect.

Policies and procedures for health, safety and child protection are subject to regular review although not always well known by all staff. The school meets all current requirements for ensuring that pupils and students are safeguarded.

Care, support and guidance in the sixth form are satisfactory overall. Sixth form students receive the same good care and support as other pupils. However, there are weaknesses in the advice on choosing courses, and the tracking of their progress at an early stage in Year 12, so that some students do not do as well as they should in their AS courses.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The headteacher and her senior team provide good leadership and the school improvement plan has an appropriate focus on raising the achievement of all pupils and students. Senior leaders and governors are receptive to new ideas and advice and have recently initiated a number of important changes that are invigorating teachers and staff. Improvements include a new and effective procedure for assuring the quality of the work of subject departments. This system is taking over from less formal arrangements for monitoring and it still lacks the necessary rigour to make sure teachers are consistent in the way they plan lessons and mark work. Nevertheless, this and other initiatives are raising achievement. When Year 11 pupils were asked what they liked about the school, they referred to the school's aim to become 'a world class school where every individual is inspired with a lifelong love of learning'. Imaginative links with a number of schools abroad reflect the International School status. The school holds the Investors in People award, indicating its strong encouragement of staff to extend their skills through additional training and qualifications. The governors are heavily involved in the work of the school and a powerful engine for change. In view of the low spending per pupil and the good achievement, the school provides very good value for money.

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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?	2	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

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	3
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	3	
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	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 very much for making my colleagues and myself so welcome when we visited your school on Wednesday and Thursday. As you know, the purpose of the visit was to check on how well the school is doing. We are particularly grateful to those of you who told us about your experiences in school. The information and opinions you provided were very important to us in making our judgements.

We agree with you that this is a good school. The quality of teaching is good so that you learn quickly and do well in tests and examinations. You told us that you enjoyed school and we were certainly impressed by the atmosphere in school and the very good relationships between you and your teachers. We judged the wide range of extra-curricular activities, in which so many of you are involved, to be a major strength of the school. The involvement of sixth form students with the main school is another strong feature and I very much enjoyed the assembly for Years 9 and 10 where a sixth form student used his basketball experiences to illustrate the importance of potential, opportunity and gratitude.

Nevertheless, there are a few aspects of the school that could be improved. In particular, we are asking the school to monitor its work more closely to ensure that you learn as quickly and efficiently in all your lessons as you already do in many of them. In the sixth form, we have identified a few gaps in the curriculum for particular students. We also want teachers to make better use of information about your current levels or grades to pick up on any areas where you are not doing as well as expected. We hope that you will play your part and think carefully about how you could make even better progress.

We very much enjoyed meeting you and wish you every success in the future.