



Eskdale School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121668
Local Authority North Yorkshire
Inspection number 292197
Inspection date 27 September 2006
Reporting inspector Susan Bowles HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Stainsacre Lane
School category	Community		Whitby
Age range of pupils	11–14		North Yorkshire YO22 4HS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01947 602856
Number on roll (school)	317	Fax number	01947 605748
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	
		Headteacher	Mr Keith Prytherch
Date of previous school inspection	17 September 2001		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
11–14	27 September 2006	292197

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Eskdale School is a smaller than average middle school. It educates students from east Whitby and a large rural area. Many students travel a long way; the journey can take well over an hour. The school accommodates students with disabilities. The proportions of students eligible for free school meals and with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are average. The school provides some curriculum enrichment and extended services in confederation with another middle school and a secondary school. It holds the Sportsmark Gold 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 school provides an outstanding education for its students. Standards are well above average and rising. The leadership and management give the school a clear direction which the highly committed and capable staff understands and supports. Teaching is already very good and very well managed improvement strategies are making teaching better still. Students enjoy coming to school and work hard; their excellent attitudes play an important part in making lessons and other activities successful.

Parents are proud of the school. One wrote: 'My child feels valued even when he does not excel - very important at this age', and this comment reflects the parents' high degree of appreciation of the care the school shows for each student. Teachers know the students well, and their involvement with them in the wider life of the school deepens their understanding of their needs. The quality of care, support and guidance is good and improving as systems to identify and diagnose slower progress become more effective. Teachers make good use of assessment information about what students can already do to plan further work and to encourage students to do their best. Teaching captures students' interest and they are eager to get down to work and discuss ideas. Students of all abilities achieve outstandingly well. For example, students in a lower set spoke out clearly and accurately in French in a modern languages lesson. In a science lesson, students of a similar level of ability explained to the whole class how they had worked out their solution to a problem.

Students' behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good. They say they feel there is always an adult to help with their concerns, and they also help each other. The staff provide excellent role models for the students. They set high expectations and deal sensitively but firmly with occasional lapses in concentration.

Students know the standards they are achieving, what their targets are and what they need to do to improve. Lessons have clear objectives and students are involved in assessing their progress. The curriculum is of good quality. It is broad, with particularly good provision for modern foreign languages. The school successfully overcomes the difficulties of providing a secondary school curriculum with relatively few students. In-school work experience, elements of the personal, social and health education programme and imaginative problem solving approaches used in many subjects help prepare students for future economic well-being. Extra support for literacy and numeracy results in very good progress for students who find learning difficult. Extra opportunities, such as after-school classes leading to a GCSE in statistics, are appreciated by the students who are gifted and talented in mathematics.

The leadership provided by the headteacher and the senior team is outstanding in many respects and has been crucial to improving the school to its present level of effectiveness. The governors and staff with management responsibilities share the senior staff's clear sense of direction and make a strong contribution to achieving success. They accept that they are accountable. The management at all levels rigorously reviews the quality of the school's work. High expectations of the quality of teaching

are reflected in the regular observation of lessons by senior staff, which leads to specific pointers for teachers to improve their teaching and students' learning. Opportunities for professional development are directly linked to these observations. The drive to improve the quality of teaching is a keynote of the school.

The school has made good progress with its improvement plan, including on the points raised by the previous inspection. There is a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development, and a coherent plan for improvement. This gives priority to improving specific aspects of teaching and increasing the effectiveness of monitoring individual students' progress. As a small, middle deemed secondary school, Eskdale's cost for each student is relatively high. However, it gives very good value for money because of the high quality of provision and outstanding outcomes for students. It has very good capacity to make further improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching where improvement is needed.
- Monitor individual students' progress more effectively and take action where appropriate.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

On entry, students' attainment is close to the average, as measured by national tests taken at their previous school at the end of Key Stage 2, but by the age of 14 it is significantly higher than average. The general trend of improvement is slightly above the national trend, although science shows very strong improvement. This school has been in the top 21% for achievement in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science for the past three years. In 2005, students' progress in science was outstanding and in mathematics it was in the top 5%. The cohort of students who took national tests in 2006 started in Year 7 at a lower than average level. Early indications are that their results are better than ever, particularly in English, which has recovered strongly from a dip in 2005. Students make at least good progress in all subjects, and no groups underachieve.

Standards and achievement in writing are a relative weakness. The proportion of students achieving higher grades is lower in some foundation subjects. The school is aware of these relative weaknesses. It is having success in raising the achievement of boys and of lower attaining students, and in improving English in other subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students enjoy coming to school and their behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent. This makes a strong contribution to creating an outstanding climate for learning. Many students gain from the wide range of trips and the sporting, musical and other activities offered. Some students contribute directly to the life of the school,

for example, by managing its gardens. Others develop their interests further by joining clubs in their communities, thus making a positive contribution beyond the school. Students help others and most exercise responsibility for their safety and health. They listen with respect to the spiritual and moral messages conveyed by adults, for example, in assembly. They know that their own views are listened to through questionnaires and the school council. They support charities and take a keen interest in other cultures. Attendance is slightly above average: a considerable achievement in the light of the difficult journeys across the moors some students make to attend the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Students make outstanding progress as a result of consistently effective, sometimes outstanding, teaching and their own excellent attitudes to their work. The teachers have very good subject knowledge. They use a range of teaching styles to engage students and successfully promote independent learning and learning in small groups. Most teaching provides sufficient challenge for all the students in the class. Additional learning needs are effectively diagnosed and work for these students is closely tailored to what they need to do next, so that they can succeed as well as the other students. Teaching assistants and resources are well deployed to support learning and, in some classrooms, collaboration between teachers and assistants is very good indeed. Good communication between the school and parents and carers supports students' learning well outside of school; for example, with homework.

The school identifies relative weaknesses in teaching and sets clear priorities for improvement. Teachers are currently striving to involve students in assessment, to engage students who are making slower progress, and to work collaboratively with teaching assistants.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Students are well served by the curriculum. It provides opportunities for all students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to progress and develop well. Provision for modern languages is outstandingly good. Good performance at GCSE statistics in Year 9 indicates the quality of provision for the gifted and talented mathematicians. Students are increasingly well prepared for their future economic well-being, not only in terms of functional literacy, numeracy and ICT skills but through active problem solving approaches involving higher order speaking and listening skills. These were seen in geography, science and modern languages lessons. Good links with its confederated schools, the health service and community groups help the school provide an enriched curriculum and extended services for students and their families. Education for safety and health is good and developing, as are the wide opportunities

for enjoyable extra-curricular learning. However, the impact of the extended provision, including the impact on more vulnerable students, is yet to be evaluated.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Good quality care, support and guidance for students is seen in the high level of commitment of staff to their well-being and progress. Arrangements for the safeguarding of students are regularly reviewed, and risk assessments are carefully attended to. Vetting procedures for all adults who work with students are robust. Support for transition from primary school and into the high school is very good. Some excellent features of guidance and support make a strong contribution to securing high achievement. For example, as a result of careful teaching and assessment, students understand how they can do better. Targets are usually specific, time limited, and followed up. Those students who fall behind make good progress against their targets. New tracking systems allow more effective monitoring and analysis of data. Improvement planning focuses on reducing underachievement, and the impact can be seen at class and individual student levels.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher and senior team members, well supported by the governors, have created an exemplary sense of purpose among the staff. The school's improvement plan is based on thorough and accurate evaluation and identifies very clearly both the progress made and areas for further development. The school's leaders have undertaken regular, focused observations to improve teaching quality and worked with teachers to overcome barriers to students' engagement and progress. The school's website is used well to communicate with parents. The impact is seen in the exceptional progress made by students on most fronts, in their good sense of security and well-being, and in the school's deservedly good reputation locally. The leadership and management provide the school with an excellent capacity to improve.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
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	1

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	1
The attendance of learners	2
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?	1
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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
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	1
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

As you know, your school was recently inspected and this letter is to tell you about the results of the inspection. I would like to thank you for your openness and cooperation during my visit. I enjoyed the conversations I was able to have with some of you. I appreciated the comments and opinions you gave, and those which many of your parents offered through the questionnaire.

I found that Eskdale is an outstanding school. You are set challenging targets, and results in national tests are consistently good and improving. You make excellent progress, and this is due to your own hard work as well as the skill of your teachers. The great majority of you have very good attitudes to learning, and your behaviour around the school was mostly impressive. You appreciate the many opportunities the school gives you to do well, including interesting lessons, extra help and a wide choice of other activities. You told me that in school there is always someone to help and listen, and I was able to see how you gain from the care, support and guidance. It was clear to me why most of you enjoy coming to school.

Yours is a school which always wants to do better. It is making changes so you all move forward as far and as fast as possible in your lessons and your lives. These will involve you, whether in gaining a better understanding of how to improve your work, or making choices about staying safe and healthy. I left the school confident that it will continue to improve, and would like to wish you all well for the future.