

Sherburn High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121695
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	292207
Inspection dates	12–13 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Leszek Iwaskow HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	883
6th form	141
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Roger Child
Headteacher	Mr Carl Sugden
Date of previous school inspection	24 September 2001
School address	Garden Lane Sherburn-in-Elmet Leeds West Yorkshire LS25 6AS
Telephone number	01977 682442
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Age group	11-18
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Sherburn High School is a smaller than average 11 to 18 comprehensive school. It serves the village of Sherburn-in-Elmet and other smaller surrounding settlements. Students come from a wide range of backgrounds, but a legacy from the old coal mining days reveals pockets of multiple deprivation and a narrow skills base in the local area. Numbers have decreased slightly in recent years. The ethnic background of the students is almost exclusively White British. Numbers eligible for free school meals are below the national average. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly below the national average, although those with a statement of special educational need are above the national average. Many of these students have emotional and behavioural or moderate learning difficulties. Students' skills on entry is slightly above the national average. The school has been a specialist science college for the last two years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Sherburn High School is an improving school and inspectors agree with the school's own evaluation that it provides a satisfactory standard of education. The school is facing a period of change as it strives to alter practice and improve teaching to meet the changing demands of students in the twenty first century. The need to raise performance has led to a realisation that the culture and entrenched practice in the school needed challenging and changing. This coincided with the appointment of a new headteacher two years ago. The firm foundations that have been laid should enable his successor to move the school forward, challenge weak practice and raise achievement further. Standards are satisfactory overall. A focus on improving classroom practice is having clear benefits at Key Stage 3 but still has to impact effectively on achievement at Key Stage 4. Mathematics remains an issue and there are concerns about English. The sixth form is inclusive and many students make at least satisfactory progress. However, a small number of students still struggle because they lack the basic skills to access more academic work at A level.

The school has a welcoming ethos and many students comment positively about their experiences. They benefit from, and enjoy, the many opportunities offered to participate in sport, visit different places and experience the joys of theatre or a museum. However, they and their parents are concerned about the behaviour of a minority of students who disrupt some lessons, especially where the teaching does not engage their interest. Teaching quality varies across the school from teacher to teacher and subject to subject. Students are rightly proud of their achievements, whether in examinations, on the sports field or on the stage, for example, in a production of Shakespeare or *Fiddler on the Roof*. They particularly enjoy those lessons where they can be involved practically and engage collaboratively. Where teachers direct their learning they can become too dependent and do not develop those skills of thinking and enquiry that can help them in later studies. Although they are made aware of the need to lead healthy lives, students can slip easily into a culture that promotes an unhealthy lifestyle. Younger students settle in well and the school works hard with its partner primary schools to make their transition as stress free and enjoyable as possible.

There is a clear commitment to improve the school and make it central to the life of the community. The science specialism promotes this aspect by providing innovative days that raise awareness of science related issues among both adults and youngsters. Primary schools benefit both from the expertise and from support offered to improve science in their own schools. However, the school acknowledges that impact on improving practice across the school has been limited.

Communications within the school have improved and teachers and subject managers feel they are being empowered to take more responsibility to improve provision in their subjects. However, impact varies from subject to subject and some managers' efforts are not always focused on the important issues that need addressing.

Parents and students are generally appreciative of the changes being made and are impatient for these to impact more noticeably on results. The school has made the difficult decision to change direction and is now in a stronger position to make a difference and improve the lives of both students and the community as a whole.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The school actively encourages students with a wide range of abilities to stay on in education. The vast majority of these students go on to complete their courses with some success. There is a good retention rate and consequent transition to higher education or employment. Students express a satisfaction with the way they are supported and there is a very positive atmosphere in the sixth form. The overall academic progress of sixth form students from their starting levels is satisfactory. In 2007, the school's analysis shows that students who had attained good GCSE scores made good progress. However, some of the lower achieving students have difficulty in making the transition to the new courses because lessons do not always take sufficient account of the wider ability range. The tracking of student achievement and the monitoring of intervention strategies is inconsistent and can impact on progress, particularly of the lower ability.

The curriculum provision is satisfactory. Within the constraints of a small sixth form, the school offers a reasonable range of academic courses along with a few vocational options and less academic courses linked to work placements. There is, however, insufficient provision of courses aimed to ensure that all students leave with good key skills in mathematics and English and very restricted opportunity for the students to develop personally in their understanding of ethical and moral issues.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement at Key Stage 4, particularly in mathematics and English.
- Improve teaching and learning so that they are of a consistently high standard across all classrooms.
- Make management at all levels more accountable to ensure that provision is at least good in all areas.
- Improve the behaviour of a small minority of pupils to ensure that provision for the majority is not disrupted.
- Utilise the specialist science status more effectively to improve provision across the broader curriculum.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Standards across the school, including the sixth form, are satisfactory overall. Students enter the school with levels of standards similar to the national average. Progress through the school is satisfactory and by the end of Year 11 the majority of students are achieving GCSE results similar to those nationally. There are, however, differences between the key stages. The school has successfully concentrated on improving its Key Stage 3 results and most students are now making good progress in this key stage. In the national tests at the end of Year 9, the school is now above the national average in English, mathematics and science, despite a dip in 2007. In Key Stage 4 progress is generally satisfactory, but there continues to be under-achievement

in mathematics and English. The 2007 GCSE results dipped from the high point of 2006, particularly when English language and mathematics are included, and were below target. Too many students are failing to gain a GCSE Grade C in both of these core subjects. In contrast, pupils did very well in geography and information and communication technology. Specialist science school targets were achieved in 2006, but not all in 2007. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and make progress similar to other pupils. A small group of pupils identified for specific school action, mainly because of behaviour problems, underachieved. In the sixth form, students enter with a wide range of prior achievement and overall these students make satisfactory progress in their courses. The school continues to achieve standards similar to the national average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The personal development of students, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Spiritual and cultural development overall is limited, although religious education contributes. The greater majority of students enjoy school and have a good attendance record while exclusions are below the national average.

Behaviour is satisfactory. Classrooms are usually able to function as places of learning and the school is a well-ordered community where students generally feel safe and take responsibility for their own behaviour. However, where teaching is weak students lose interest, become restless and can disrupt lessons.

Students have the opportunity to serve on the school council as well as year councils. The school council is well served by some very able and enthusiastic students who are aware of the democratic process, their role as representatives and the need to manage a budget. Where heads of year are interested and involved these councils perform a very good service to the school. For example, Year 7 supports transition arrangements and makes a positive contribution to the process. However, many older students show indifference and this attitude is not helped by some inconsistent management of the provision by some staff.

The school actively promotes staying healthy in relation to diet, exercise and personal health. Not all students choose the healthy options on offer and evidence of unhealthy food being consumed on the premises, especially from packed lunch boxes, is to be seen around the building and the grounds.

A strength of the school lies in the positive and effective response of students to the many enterprise initiatives provided by the school and its partners. This is enhanced by extended school initiatives that are drawing the community together. This spirit of enterprise extends to good links with local industry and many fund-raising initiatives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the past two years, the school has made a considerable effort to apply National Strategy teaching and learning approaches in a bid to raise standards

and achievement. This has brought about improvements in Key Stage 3 results, but has had less impact on standards at GCSE. Students learn well in lessons where teachers vary activities, set challenging tasks and use a range of teaching and learning styles. They enjoy opportunities to work collaboratively and are appreciative when teachers encourage them to assess their own and others' performance. Students especially benefit from those occasions when teachers involve them in active discussion. These changes have not yet impacted consistently across the school and both unsatisfactory as well as outstanding lessons were observed during the inspection.

Teachers themselves are very positive about how the new strategies have encouraged greater sharing of ideas and good practice. There are, however, a significant number of lessons which still tend to be teacher led and do not sufficiently involve the pupils in their own learning. Students are passive and compliant at best, or exhibit challenging or disruptive behaviour. Inconsistency across the school is also reflected in the quality of assessment and marking, with variations in the regularity with which some departments and teachers award levels or grades, or give constructive feedback.

In the sixth form, the majority of teaching is good, but not all teaching has sufficient impact on outcomes. Lower-achieving students are allowing their more able fellow students to dominate the lessons and tend to follow rather than contribute. Tasks set are not always tailored to meet their individual needs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The curriculum of the school is satisfactory, but does not meet statutory requirements in the case of religious education provision in the sixth form. The large number of non-specialist teachers involved compromises the quality of provision for citizenship. Different levels of subject knowledge, commitment and confidence in delivery are affecting the consistency of the outcomes. Specialist science status has had little impact so far on the rest of the curriculum. However, it has enabled local primary schools to benefit from the 'rolling laboratory'. This initiative offers experiences not usually available to pupils at Key Stages 1 and 2, as well as encouraging the sharing of good practice.

The Key Stage 3 curriculum is broad and balanced, with the opportunity for higher-attaining pupils to study a second foreign language. Given the constraints imposed by size and restricted funding, the school meets the needs of its Key Stage 4 students well. Apart from a wide range of GCSE courses, there are a range of vocational options and opportunities for taking up more work-related courses off site. Early consultation with prospective sixth form students during Year 11 enables the school to plan the post-16 curriculum according to students' requirements, given the small numbers involved. While this provision is usually successful, there is a lack of any formal promotion of key skills.

There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities, trips and visits that enhance students' enjoyment and support the delivery of the curriculum. Sport, drama and music are particularly well represented. Participation is good, despite the fact that many students have some distance to travel home.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Provision for the care, guidance and support of students is satisfactory. There are sound strategies to help students to learn appropriate behavioural and social skills. The behaviour code is clearly displayed throughout the school and the students usually adhere to it.

Provision for students with additional needs is good. Teaching assistants are well trained and make a good contribution to learning. The two separate units designed to support these students are very effective. Parents and external agencies are encouraged to support the school in this work. These partnerships have been successful and resulted in some significant successes. Support for the more able students is less well developed and there are considerable inconsistencies across subjects. The school is aware of this and is keen to further develop its programme for gifted and talented students. The use of staff mentors, to support borderline students in Key Stage 4, is valued.

All procedures for the safeguarding of students are in place. In their lesson planning teachers are required to consider health and safety issues. However, students arriving for lunch in the canteen area do not always behave appropriately in a narrow confined space. This compromises safety. Attendance is broadly in line with national expectations. It is monitored effectively and appropriate action is taken as soon as concerns are noted. The personal and social education programme ensures that students are aware of the dangers they face from drugs, poor diet and the Internet. Tutorial and personal development programmes have been in place for all year groups for several years, with the exception of Year 8. This has been rectified this year. The delivery of this programme has been inconsistent and students have experienced interrupted progression in their learning. It is too early for the revised arrangements to have had an impact.

A significant strength in the care of students is the good links with local schools and colleges that promote community cohesion through very effective transfer arrangements and shared provision for a variety of courses in Key Stage 4. Academic guidance, including the setting and reviewing of targets throughout the school, is in place. However, it is not fully impacting on achievement, particularly at Key Stage 4, due to inconsistencies in application across subjects and classes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The vision and leadership of the headteacher, appointed two years ago, has laid the foundations for future improvement. The need to change a culture of complacency in the classroom, provide greater consistency in the teaching and raise achievement, particularly in mathematics, was recognised. The school has made some progress to this effect; senior management has been refocused and the need for change has been acknowledged. Improvements in Key Stage 3 have been a success. There is now a stronger emphasis on developing classroom practice, supported by an extensive programme of staff training. Middle managers appreciate the encouragement and opportunities being given to enable them to re-energise the work in their subjects. However, review and

monitoring systems are not being used in a consistent or robust way to enable all departments to identify and focus on specific areas that need developing. Line managers do not sufficiently challenge teaching or management where these are less effective.

The impact of science specialist status is more apparent outside the school with especially good links with primary schools and through highlight events such as 'Science Week' and 'Alive 07', where the focus was on raising nutritional awareness in the community. Impact in the school is acknowledged as being less apparent although a clear plan of action is now in place to rectify this. The process of setting targets, both in terms of stretching students and raising expectations of subjects, is only adequately challenging. As a result, the overall pace of change has been too slow and needs accelerating.

A majority of parents are generally appreciative of the efforts being made to make their children's experience rewarding as well as enjoyable. They are particularly appreciative of the improvements that are being put in place to make their children feel secure and challenged. However, concerns were expressed about disruptive behaviour in some lessons, inconsistency of teaching and weaker performance in some examination subjects, especially mathematics and English.

The school makes good use of the resources available and works well within the budgetary constraints of being a smaller than average school. Governors play an active role in the life of the school and are aware of the changes that need to be initiated if the school is to progress. Governance is satisfactory. Currently the school provides satisfactory value for money. Systems are being put into place to raise expectations. There is now good evidence for a willingness to improve, move the school forward and create a culture where student and parental aspirations can be raised and realised.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
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?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
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

Inspection of Sherburn High School, Sherburn-in-Elmet, LS25 6AS

This letter is to tell you about our recent visit to your school to inspect the quality of the education you are experiencing. The inspectors particularly enjoyed meeting you and talking to you. We learnt much about your lessons, the activities you are involved in and how you are treated and looked after. What you had to tell us was very valuable and helped us come to the decision that Sherburn High provides you with a satisfactory standard of education. You were aware and appreciative of the changes and improvements that have occurred over the last two years since Mr Sugden became your headteacher. However, there remain areas that still need to be even better and you can also play your part.

You particularly enjoy lessons where you can become more involved practically. You enjoy having to find things out by yourselves rather than being told by your teacher. You also enjoy those lessons where you can work together. Your teachers are aware of this and over the coming months they will be working hard to bring about improvements. These should make many more lessons interesting and enjoyable and will help you to understand how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve. Most of you want to succeed and are annoyed when a small minority of students sometimes disrupt lessons. For your part, you must ensure that you support your teachers by not interrupting some lessons through shouting out and being inattentive. Many of you benefit and do well in school particularly in your first three years. However, you could do better, especially in mathematics, English and at GCSE level. In order to do so you need to make that extra effort and ensure you complete work to deadlines and to the best of your ability.

Your school is a specialist science college and your younger brothers and sisters benefit from the good work carried out in their primary schools. Your parents enjoy community events such as 'Alive 07' where science is brought to life and they can appreciate how it benefits and improves their lives. Over the coming months, the school is going to ensure that science has a higher profile in the every day life at school and will help you to improve both academically and encourage you to lead more healthy lives.

We have asked your school to put improvements in place as soon as possible and you should begin to notice the differences soon. The school may also receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector in order to check that all is going well. I am sure you will give your teachers all the help and support they need to build on the strong foundations that are already there. If everyone in the school pulls together we are sure you will find your stay in the school becomes an even more worthwhile and rewarding experience.

We wish you every success in the future.