



Archbishop Holgate's School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 121709
Local Authority York
Inspection number 292211
Inspection date 23 January 2007
Reporting inspector Terry Holland HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Hull Road
School category	Voluntary aided		York
Age range of pupils	11–16		North Yorkshire YO10 5ZA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01904 411341
Number on roll (school)	835	Fax number	01904 414948
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Bishop Robert Ladds
		Headteacher	Mr J Harris
Date of previous school inspection	26 March 2001		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
11–16	23 January 2007	292211

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The school remains slightly smaller than average but has grown very significantly since 2000 and is now oversubscribed. Over half its pupils come from outside of its designated catchment area. Most pupils are White British and the numbers of pupils from minority ethnic groups and whose first language is not English is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is also low. The proportion of pupils with learning disabilities and/or difficulties is broadly in line with that nationally. However, the numbers who have statements of special educational need is above average and is also high in comparison to other schools in the local authority.

The school changed its status from Voluntary Controlled to a Voluntary Aided Church of England School in 2004. A quarter of the places it offers are awarded on faith grounds, including any denomination and recognised world faiths. It was one of the first schools to be awarded Specialist Science College status in 2002. It achieved the Secondary Quality Mark in 2003 and the Sportsmark Award in 2004 and was also designated as a Leading Edge School in 2004. In 2006 it was awarded High Performing School status and its Specialist Science status re-affirmed. It also gained an Inclusion Award and was designated a National Support School by the Department for Education and Skills and achieved the Healthy Schools Award in that year. It has recently received confirmation that it has been successful in its bid for a second specialism, in vocational education, from April 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Archbishop Holgate's is an outstanding school which provides an excellent quality of education and care for its pupils. Since its last inspection in 2001 the number of pupils has grown by almost a third and the proportion of pupils leaving the school with five or

more higher grade GCSEs has increased by 40%. The growth in its popularity with parents is, of course, linked to its increasingly successful performance and the high standards achieved by its pupils. Nevertheless, to maintain and increase that level of performance alongside such growth is not always easy. In this school it has been achieved through excellent leadership that has held firm to a clear and consistent vision

and set of values: that it is through helping children and young people to develop core human, social and Christian values, linked to an ethos that clearly cares about them and

values them as individuals, that they become confident and enjoy their education and, therefore, can achieve their full potential.

This is a school, therefore, where every child does matter. It exemplifies its values by providing an environment that, in equal measure, supports and challenges the pupils to

do their best. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to a questionnaire seeking their views as part of the inspection recognise this and are very positive in their

support for the school. This inspection confirms their view that their children enjoy school, make very good progress, are safe and well supported and that the school is very well led and managed.

The majority of children enter the school with levels of attainment that are broadly average. By the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils achieve standards that are well above the average nationally. By the time they leave the school, the majority have reached standards that are significantly higher than expected given their starting points: placing the school in the top 10% nationally for achievement in 2005. Virtually all pupils gain the

qualifications they need to move on to further education or their chosen careers. The school has made significant improvements in the range of courses it provides to ensure

that the needs of all its pupils are met, particularly through applied and vocational options developed through its specialist college work. The school, therefore, not only raises their aspirations, but provides its pupils with the means to achieve them.

These high standards have been achieved through a culture that encourages high expectations of all pupils and that challenges them to work towards individual targets that will realise their potential, both academically and socially. Pupils are provided with a

balanced curriculum, enriched by opportunities for spiritual reflection and an outstanding

range of opportunities for extended study to stretch those that are particularly gifted and

talented or need additional support.

One of the school's greatest strengths is its focus on ensuring that pupils develop personally and academically. The care, guidance and support it provides are outstanding. The school knows its pupils well, enabling them to be both nurtured and challenged equally well. Senior staff, leaders of both the academic and pastoral care systems and staff supporting pupils who are most at risk of underachieving work together closely. The systems that have developed and which the school is continuing to put in place to enable this quality of support are highly effective. They work well because of the commitment and dedication of all those involved, and, because of the school's small size, they are able to work as a close knit team.

The school's success and the improvements in its performance are the result of the outstanding leadership, vision and commitment of the headteacher and senior staff, ably

supported by the governing body. The school is very well led and managed. The development of Specialist Science College status has helped to drive a number of initiatives and improvements across the school as a whole. The school provides excellent value for money.

The school continuously evaluates its performance. This has resulted in a number of intelligent and innovative strategies that have brought about improvement. The school is

aware that in some subjects the progress made by pupils between the end of Key Stage 3 and their performance at GCSE has not been as good as might have been expected, particularly in English. Equally, whilst the achievement of pupils with statements of

special educational need is high, those with less severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities taught in mainstream classes generally make satisfactory, rather than the very

good, progress made by most of their peers. It has developed strategies to address both

of these issues which are very well integrated into its robust processes for monitoring, evaluating and managing the performance of staff. The school's track record of improvement, and the way that it continues to plan and build for the future, demonstrate

clearly that it has excellent capacity to continue to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the strong focus on improving the comparative progress and achievement of pupils at Key Stage 4 is maintained.
- Embed the work on differentiating support and teaching to ensure that all pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good or better progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

In 2005 the standards attained by pupils in Year 9 were significantly above national averages in English, mathematics and science. Results in 2006 indicate that these high standards have been maintained. 71% of pupils attained five or more A* to C grades at GCSE. Again, this was significantly above the average for schools nationally and in the local authority and maintained the upward trend in results since the last inspection. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* to G grades at GCSE has been consistently well above average. This, along with the high expectations of entries for GCSEs and the very low numbers leaving with no passes, reflect the school's success in maximising the attainment of its pupils.

These results confirm that, given their starting points, the progress made by the great majority of pupils and their achievement over time is significantly higher than would be expected and significantly higher than the national average. No groups of pupils underachieve. Results in 2005 and 2006 show that, as the attainment of pupils has risen at the end of Key Stage 3, it is more difficult to maintain an equally high degree of progress in the two years of study for GCSE. Whilst, in general, progress remains at least satisfactory at Key Stage 4, the school is aware that in some subjects, pupils have been making less progress than expected. Action has been taken to address this, including changes of leadership in key subjects and robust strategies put in place to raise achievement: these are beginning to have an impact.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and their well-being are central to the values and ethos of the school: in both respects it is outstandingly successful. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are all excellent. The social and moral values of the school are based on helping pupils to demonstrate a sense of responsibility to themselves and to others in the school and in the wider community. This is strongly embedded in codes of conduct and expectations of the pupils and, for example, in the focus of the personal, social and health curriculum and in the way that the school has embraced the teaching of citizenship. Pupils accept this responsibility well. This is evident within the school, in their charitable work, and in their roles as 'ambassadors' for the school in the community or, for example, in supporting primary schools through outreach work in sports, languages and as part of the Specialist College programme. The pupils have a voice in decision-making through the school council and use it effectively.

Parents are clear that behaviour in the school is good: bullying is very rare and dealt with positively. Attendance is now consistently above average. Those pupils interviewed during the inspection were very clear that they feel safe within the school and, importantly, understand their responsibility for ensuring that others are safe. They were also adamant that the opportunities the school gives them to be healthy, through sport, through healthy eating options and through its support for their emotional well-being, are excellent and they take full advantage of them. Pupils and parents alike are very conscious of all the school does to maximise the life chances and future economic well-being of its pupils.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and support for learning in this school are excellent. Senior managers monitor the quality of teaching effectively and rigorously. As a result the school judges that teaching is good or better in around three-quarters of lessons. The lessons observed during this inspection confirmed the school's assessments of a cross section of teachers. Given the levels of progress and achievement by pupils, it is evident that teaching overall is very effective. Teachers monitor pupils' performance accurately to ensure they are appropriately challenged. The evidence of this inspection confirms that pupils are clear about the expectations placed on them and the targets they are set to achieve. It is also clear that teachers help pupils to understand not just the competencies and skills they need to improve their performance but also how these tie in with the day-to-day lessons and the work they are doing over time.

The school has taken a number of innovative steps to ensure that pastoral staff and teaching staff can develop a holistic view of each pupil and can monitor both their academic and personal development in order to provide the support and guidance

they need to meet their learning targets. It has also recently launched an initiative, 'Learning to Learn', drawing together and fully integrating work already in place in order to further consolidate the successful use of assessment and differentiation of work to meet the needs of both the most and least able and to embed literacy across the curriculum. As such the school now has a very real model of personalised learning in place.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum for all its pupils, with a number of outstanding features. The curriculum is enriched by a very extensive and excellent range of extension courses and opportunities, particularly in sport and sciences, and for those who are identified as being gifted or talented in any specific field or subject. Its Specialist College status has enabled the school to successfully introduce a range of applied and vocational GCSE 'pathways' in Key Stage 4 and a work-based learning course; these enable pupils to study the mix of academic and vocational subjects that most meet their needs. The school has worked hard to find ways to meet the requirement that all pupils in Key Stage 4 have sufficient access to a programme of study in information and communication technology (ICT). Its previous attempts have been thwarted by the rapid growth in numbers joining the school, but some innovative curriculum planning and use of resources mean that the school is now able to ensure that this requirement is met.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support provided to pupils are outstanding. The many strengths of this aspect of its work permeate the school, as they do this report, and are a key factor in its success. The school fulfils its responsibilities for safeguarding all children very well: all its statutory duties are fully met. The school works well with a range of partners and other agencies and uses the local authority's children's services database YorOK, and its support services, very effectively.

Pupils who are most vulnerable and most at risk receive excellent support within the school, including counselling, and through very effective liaison with a range of external support agencies, including mediation services such as Face to Face and The Bridge Centre. The Learning Support Centre, a small unit within the school, provides supervised and very effective support for those pupils who are struggling with personal or social problems in their lives or in the general school environment. It operates an open door policy for pupils who need some respite. Pupils use this facility responsibly and continue their class work whilst there, supervised by specialist staff. The centre is also the hub of the specialist support provided for those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The quality of the school's work was recognised in 2006 by an Inclusion Award. Its leading role in developing vocational educational links and in the coordination of 14 to 19 education in the area ensures a strong partnership and good liaison with the local college and schools providing

post-16 education. The results of this are evident in the success rates of pupils moving on to further education or their chosen careers.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership and management of the headteacher and senior staff are outstanding and are at the centre of the school's success. The school's vision, its core values and its remarkable improvement are the result of the tireless commitment of the headteacher and the contributions of senior managers. Those qualities have been recognised by the designation of Leading Edge school status and as a National Support School. The individual qualities and contribution of the headteacher have been recognised by his being designated as a National Leader of Education.

One of the school's great strengths is the collective responsibility and accountability that has been developed between senior and middle managers leading the strands of carefully integrated academic and pastoral support that is enabling so many pupils to succeed. A very well structured performance management system is helping to ensure that high quality teaching and learning is securely embedded and that the school's key areas for continuing development are consistently addressed in the management of subject areas. Here again, it is a measure of the leadership and ethos of the school that, as with the pupils, accountability is matched by very effective support where development is needed. The areas for development identified at the last inspection have now all been tackled. The governing body provides effective challenge and support and makes a good contribution to the management and direction of the school and the achievement of its pastoral and academic goals.

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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
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	1
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?	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?	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?	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	1
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
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, I recently inspected your school and this letter is to tell you the results. I would like to thank you for your openness and cooperation during my visit. I enjoyed meeting some of you and appreciated your comments and opinions. A significant number of your parents also completed a questionnaire to give me their views of the school. This was most helpful, so please pass on my thanks to them.

I found that yours is an outstandingly good school. These are some of the things I thought were most impressive.

- The leadership and management of the headteacher, the senior staff and all those staff who are leading on the many things the school does to help you develop personally and socially.
- The care, guidance and support to help you achieve your full potential. I agree with many of you, and your parents, that the teachers in the school 'go the extra mile' for you.
- The excellent job the school does in helping you to be healthy and safe, to enjoy your education, to be responsible young people, to make a positive contribution to the school and the community and in giving you a good start for the future.
- The way the school has very high expectations of you in the way you behave, in what you can achieve and in the way you will take on that responsibility.
- The way that you do respond and play your part in this: you really do know what's expected of you and the targets you are set and most of you are making really good progress and achieving well.
- The way that the school is organising the courses that you can study to suit all your needs and the extra opportunities you get to develop your talents or get the extra support you may need.

All of this really adds up to an excellent education for you.

Despite being so successful, like all really good schools, there is still scope to improve. The headteacher and the deputy headteachers know what to do and I have agreed with them that the school needs to ensure that:

- all of you make as much progress as you can, particularly those that need additional support
- all of you work hard together to help to sustain your good progress in the last two years building up to exams.

I left the school confident that it will continue to improve. As before, you will be very important to ensuring that happens. I wish you well in the future.