



Thrybergh Comprehensive School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106956
Local Authority Rotherham
Inspection number 295658
Inspection dates 21–22 November 2006
Reporting inspector John Young HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Arran Hill
School category	Community		Thrybergh, Rotherham
Age range of pupils	11–16		South Yorkshire S65 4BJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01709 850471
Number on roll (school)	591	Fax number	01709 854561
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs S Blakemore
		Headteacher	Mr D Pridding
Date of previous school inspection	31 March 2003		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	21–22 November 2006	295658

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors. When Thrybergh School was inspected in May 2005 it was judged to require special measures. Since then it has been visited four times by one of Her Majesty's inspectors and Additional Inspectors who have monitored its progress.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school. The students are mainly White British. The number who speak English as an additional language (EAL) is low, but has increased because the school has recently admitted a small number of Eastern European and West African students. Most students live in areas containing significant pockets of deprivation and the proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is three times the national average. On entry into school students', attainment is well below average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also above the national average. The school has gained the Sportsmark Gold award and is an accredited training centre for the European Computer Driving Licence. Thrybergh School is part of the local Education Action Zone (EAZ).

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Thrybergh is now providing a satisfactory standard of education for its students and provides satisfactory value for money. Some aspects of its work are good. Over the past 19 months Thrybergh has transformed itself from a failing school into one that now meets the needs of the great majority of its students effectively. This is an improving school and, although there remain areas for development, it has come a very long way in a relatively short period of time thanks to clear and firm leadership. It has good capacity to continue this improvement.

The school has successfully addressed many of the areas for development highlighted by the last inspection and has improved in virtually every aspect of its work. It is effectively tackling the deeper-rooted and on-going challenges of the legacy of previous underachievement of students in order to raise standards and improve attendance. Thrybergh is now an inclusive school where every child really does matter and it is totally committed to ensuring all students are given the necessary opportunities to achieve to their full potential. Students and staff are once again proud of their school. The improved aspirations of students, alongside the high expectations of many staff, have contributed directly to the school's improvement. Students are making satisfactory progress at this school because of their positive attitudes to learning, better teaching and the appropriate care, guidance and support they receive, together with a well matched curriculum. However, their attendance, although better, particularly amongst those students who have joined the school in the last two years, remains too low overall.

Although improving, the overall standards reached by students are still low when compared with the national average. However, their achievement is satisfactory and they make progress at a rate that is broadly in line with what is expected given their starting points. This is confirmed by the latest available achievement figures and by inspectors' observations of their work during the inspection. Notwithstanding the good strategies now in place, the school knows it still has further work to do in improving standards.

The new senior leadership team has been key to the school's transformation and have strategically engineered the improvements in the school's work. Leadership and management at all levels are now effective and ensure that the school has clear educational direction and functions well on a day-to-day basis. More rigorous monitoring and accurate evaluation of the performance of students, staff and the school as a whole is helping to further promote students' achievement. Governors are also very effective: they undertake their duties very well and are providing the challenge and support needed to ensure that improvement is maintained. The school is once again popular with parents. They recognise the value of the school's work and feel their views are taken into account. The school is fortunate to have a number of highly

supportive partners, including the local authority and the EAZ, who have played their part in ensuring the school is no longer causing concern.

Although the school's overall effectiveness is now satisfactory its performance in two respects, namely the standards attained by students and the overall rates of attendance, remain inadequate. Before its next section 5 inspection Ofsted inspectors may visit the school to monitor the progress that it has made in remedying these weaknesses. The school would receive two to five days notice of such a visit.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve the achievement of students.
- Build on existing strategies to improve the attendance of students.
- Ensure classroom teachers consistently make use of assessment to precisely match the learning activities to the students' needs.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are well below the national average but students' achievement is satisfactory when set against their starting points, which is well below average on entry. Students of all ages are currently making satisfactory progress in lessons and in their written work. Results for 2006, in the national tests in Year 9, suggest that students made satisfactory progress overall in Key Stage 3, though some are not doing as well as they should in English.

The school is only just emerging from a situation where the education provided for students was inadequate. The legacy of underachievement by older students as they have moved up through the school is taking time to overcome. Students who left school in 2005 had experienced inadequate teaching during their time in school. In particular, their progress in Years 7 to 9 was poor. As a result, although they made steady progress in Years 10 and 11, they could not make up the ground they had lost. Hence their GCSE results were not as good as they should have been and many students still underachieved. Provisional results for 2006 show a very significant increase in the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C, which now stands at 39%. These results were 15% higher than in 2005 and 10% higher than at any time in the school's history. Unfortunately, a group of lower attaining students with significant previous problems in attitudes and attendance gained no GCSE passes and this had a severe impact on the school's overall results. Nevertheless, the school was successful in ensuring that most were able to move on to further training or employment. The school is well aware that all students need to gain appropriate qualifications and is working hard to ensure that, from now on, they do. Assessment records suggest that almost all students in Year 11 are on track to achieve five or more passes at grades A* to G.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The personal development and well-being of students are satisfactory. The significant improvement in attendance over the last year, together with a big reduction in exclusions, is clear evidence of the improvement in the personal development of many of the most challenging students. Nevertheless, while the attendance of students in Years 7 and 8 are now in line with the national average it remains low in Years 10 and 11 and attendance is still unsatisfactory overall. Students are usually well motivated and come to lessons prepared to settle quickly and learn.

Social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. Students act responsibly, are made aware of their rights and responsibilities and there is an improved cultural awareness. Students are gaining an understanding of what equality, particularly race equality, means. Students say they now enjoy school. Relationships between students and with teachers are good: there is mutual respect which contributes to a positive ethos throughout the school and a shared, positive attitude to learning. In a Year 7 assembly some Year 8 students confidently presented a fashion show they had prepared in an enterprise session to a very appreciative audience. Both increased time for physical education in Year 10 and the healthy eating options available at lunch time make a good contribution to encouraging students to adopt healthy lifestyles. Students can articulate their opinions clearly and many would benefit from more responsibility within the school. The school seeks the views of students regularly, but the school council does not provide sufficient opportunity for students to influence school life. There is some interaction with the wider community but less than is seen in many similar schools.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is currently satisfactory overall, although some outstanding and some good teaching was observed during the inspection. In most lessons teachers manage behaviour well. They establish a climate within which students feel confident to play a full part in lessons and which ensures that learning is seldom interrupted. Teaching assistants make strong contributions to lessons, for example, by supporting students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Other aspects of teaching are too variable. Teachers provide activities that broadly reflect the range of abilities within each class. As a result, the majority of students learn satisfactorily. However, while teachers have an accurate view of the current levels attained by each student, this information is not used consistently to plan tasks that challenge them all to try equally hard. Typically, the highest attaining students within each class are not given work that is significantly more difficult. Teachers often advise students what they need to do in order to reach their target levels. In general, though, students are not expected to take sufficient responsibility for their own learning, for instance, by

evaluating how well they have performed and enabling them to focus on how they could improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is now good and provides well for the needs of all students. However, many of the changes are new this term and have not yet had time to have a significant impact on students' achievement. In Years 7 to 9 the curriculum has been extended to include drama which, in addition to extending students' cultural experience, also provides important opportunities for developing self-esteem and oracy skills. There is satisfactory provision for information and communication technology.

The curriculum in Year 10 has improved significantly this year, providing the students with more appropriate opportunities to achieve. The school now offers a good range of vocational courses in addition to the academic subjects. Students have responded positively and enjoy their optional courses, though several would have liked more advice on which options were best for them. Some courses take place in colleges and the school monitors this carefully to ensure that quality is maintained.

The school provides a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities, including sport and a range of visits, clubs and revision classes. Students' involvement in sporting activities is satisfactory. However, many students do not get involved in any activities and need further encouragement to do so. The school's links with the EAZ has enriched curricular provision and students' benefit from a range of work related learning and enterprise activities, which help to prepare students for their future working lives.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory level of support for its students and there are some strengths. Considerable effort has gone into identifying students with particular needs and providing them with suitable support from teaching assistants, or through individual programmes of learning. Although it is relatively recent, this support is improving attendance and attitudes. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported in some lessons by teaching assistants and all teachers are aware of these students' particular needs. Students with EAL are provided with specific support and often those with very little English receive additional support from the class teacher and friends. Students are assessed thoroughly and given targets for achievement, though currently there is no overarching assessment policy. Registrations and assemblies emphasise the importance of attendance and the school takes bullying seriously and involves all parties in measures to deal with it. Students feel safe now because there are always teachers and senior staff around the site. Careers guidance and preparation for the next stage of education is well integrated into the personal education programme. Child protection procedures and risk assessments are up to date and meet requirements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management of the school are good overall and senior leadership is outstanding in some respects. The headteacher is very committed and is ably supported by his senior and middle managers in providing very clear educational direction. The impact of leadership and management is very evident in the way key areas of weakness identified at the time of the last inspection have been successfully tackled and improved. The introduction and embedding of effective monitoring and evaluation procedures are helping to improve the quality of provision and impacting positively on the achievement of students. Staff are held to account for the quality of their work through performance management, while being well supported by on-going training and professional development opportunities. Self-evaluation is systematic and takes account of the views of all parties, including parents and the students. The school has a good sense of its strengths and weaknesses and this has informed its development planning.

The turnaround in the school's fortunes is testament to the ability of managers to develop a sense of corporate responsibility amongst staff and to skilfully align the various expertise of all the staff so that increasing numbers of students are given appropriate opportunities to reach their potential. The school's commitment to inclusion means that equality of opportunity is promoted very well. Any discrimination is effectively tackled so that all students achieve as well as they can. Procedures for safeguarding children are satisfactory and student's well-being is satisfactorily promoted.

Links with parents are now good. Governors have a very firm grasp of how well the school is performing and they are well placed to provide both challenge and support. They do this very effectively. Compliance with statutory requirements is good and resources are deployed and used effectively to provide satisfactory value for money. The school has received high quality support from the local authority, the school improvement partner and from the EAZ. It works well with a number of additional providers and partner schools to enhance provision and further promote student well-being and achievement.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
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?	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
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	3
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

Thank you for talking to us and making us so welcome on our recent visit. We saw your lessons, looked at your work and read the results of questionnaires completed by you and your parents/carers: they proved very helpful.

Here is a summary of our main findings which I hope will be of interest to you.

- Your school has improved a lot during the past 19 months and, because you are now receiving a satisfactory standard of education, we have taken it out of special measures.
- You've helped make things better by improving your behaviour and your attitudes to learning and by attending more regularly. However, some of you, particularly in Years 10 and 11, need to improve your attendance further.
- Teaching has improved and the new systems in place mean that you are now clearer about what is expected of you and what you need to do to improve further.
- You now feel proud of your school again. You are enjoying school, feel safe and you know who to approach if you have problems.
- The curriculum is good. It is well matched to your needs and interests and you now have the chance to gain workplace skills that will contribute to your future, but more of you should take advantage of the extra-curricular opportunities available.
- The quality of care, guidance and support you receive contributes to the satisfactory progress most of you are now making during your time at the school.

In order to make further improvements you need to support staff in their efforts to:

- raise standards and improve the achievement of all of you
- build on existing strategies to improve your attendance
- ensure teachers consistently use their assessment of how well you are doing to match the challenge of your work to your needs and to involve you more in checking how well you are doing and what more you can achieve.