

# Graham School Science College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	121675
<b>Local Authority</b>	North Yorkshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	301981
<b>Inspection dates</b>	1–2 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Angela Headon HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1325
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr C Coole
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Garry Hancock
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 October 2003
<b>School address</b>	Woodlands Drive Scarborough North Yorkshire YO12 6QW
<b>Telephone number</b>	01723 366451
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<b>Age group</b>	11–16
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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Graham School Science College is a larger than average secondary school with science college status, situated in Scarborough. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is around the national average and the number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national figure. The majority of students are White British. The school was awarded specialist status in 2004 and has achieved a number of awards including the Financial Management Standard, SportsMark Gold and Investors in People status.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Graham School Science College is a good school, which is highly regarded within the community it serves. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive. One parent wrote: 'Graham School is a fantastic place for learning and developing potential in all children.' Students generally enjoy their education and they have a positive approach to learning, which is well demonstrated by their good behaviour in lessons and around the school.

The school has a strong commitment to improvement and provides a welcoming, orderly and safe environment within which students can learn. In recent years, the quality of teaching and learning has been a key focus for the school as it strives to raise standards further. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, with some outstanding practice. As a result, students are fully able to make the progress required to achieve well at both key stages. The school, however, recognises that, in some areas, students are not yet fully involved in understanding how they are able to improve to reach the challenging yet achievable targets set by the school.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and vulnerable students are well cared for and achieve as well as their peers. The pastoral and mentoring support given to students in the Student Support Base is particularly well focused and reflects the inclusive ethos of the school.

Standards at Key Stage 3 and 4 are significantly above average and overall, students make good progress. Progress between Years 7 and 9 is particularly good with an improving trend of attainment in science and mathematics. At Key Stage 4, the achievement of most students continues to rise with two thirds of students attaining five or more GCSE grades at C or above, and over half gaining grade C or above in both English and mathematics in 2006. The focus on improving learning and achievement within the school is strong and standards and achievement are good.

Curriculum changes at Key Stage 4 have been well considered and provide a good blend of opportunities for all students. The new vocational courses are a developing strength and effectively engage students' interest. Together with extensive enrichment through extra-curricular activities, students are well prepared for the next stage of their education or employment, supporting their economic well-being. Specialist science status has enhanced provision across the curriculum, particularly through the use of information and communication technology in lessons and effective community collaboration. The status has had a significant impact on raising standards, particularly in science and mathematics.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a clear agenda for improvement, which is wholly shared by the senior leadership team. His skilful leadership promotes an ethos of inclusion and achievement, where the success of every child does matter. The school is fully aware of its strengths and areas where improvement is needed. The reshaping of the school's senior and middle leadership structure has been carefully designed to secure further improvements and to ensure students achieve well in all aspects of school life. Systems to monitor and evaluate the quality of provision are embedded. However, although teaching and learning are monitored extensively, the findings are not always drawn together robustly enough to ensure consistency and a focus specifically on the quality of learning.

Staff and resources for learning are well deployed and the school has effective arrangements to develop its entire workforce through high quality training. The success of recent initiatives, the focused leadership of the headteacher, the good support of the governing body and school

leaders, and the dedication of staff ensure that the school's capacity for further improvement is good.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- To build on the best practice within the school to ensure that all students understand what they need to do to improve.
- To monitor, more effectively, the teaching and learning within the school.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Students enter the school having achieved broadly average results in their primary schools and they leave with standards which are significantly above average. This represents good progress. The school's 2006 results in national tests continued to show an improving trend of attainment in the number of students gaining five or more GCSE grades at C or above. Results in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 4 improved; there was also a significant increase in the proportion of students attaining a C grade or above in both English and mathematics. At Key Stage 3, standards are rising in science and mathematics. The school exceeded its targets in all core subjects at the highest levels, where results were significantly above national figures. Overall, students make particularly good progress between Years 7 and 9.

The school continues to set challenging targets. It has carefully considered and implemented a range of effective intervention strategies to support specific curriculum areas and groups of students in raising standards further. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress and achieve well.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Students' personal development is good. Both in class and around the school students demonstrate good attitudes and behaviour. Attendance is satisfactory and broadly in line with the national average. The trend of attendance is improving and the school is in line to meet its targets. Students show good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, with particular strengths in moral and social development. The school community works well together and students show respect for each other. Students say they feel safe and happy at school. Cultural development is strong in the area of performing arts and is satisfactory in students' appreciation of world cultural traditions. Students demonstrate good understanding of issues related to their health and safety, and many participate in sporting activities. The curriculum allows students to contribute to the community, and students' achievement and participation in an increasingly vocationally orientated curriculum provides a good foundation for their economic well-being. There are good opportunities for students to take responsibility. The school council is developing in its effectiveness, but its impact and communication with the school community are considered by some students as capable of improvement.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge, class management is strong and good relationships are evident. During the last two years the

school has placed an emphasis on improving practice, with a particular focus on the use of assessment in lessons. This is beginning to be effective in helping some students, particularly the more able, to gain a clearer understanding of how to improve their work.

In the best lessons, teachers plan carefully and use skilled questioning to challenge students of all abilities. Students are given specific feedback on their progress, both verbally and in workbooks. In a number of lessons, good examples of peer and self-assessment were observed, encouraging students to think for themselves and confidently use assessment to improve. As yet, however, this best practice is not firmly embedded in the work of all teachers. Systems for tracking students' progress are well used to help teachers focus closely on individual performance. Challenging yet achievable targets are appropriately set for all students.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

An interesting and well balanced curriculum enables students to make good progress. In Years 7 to 9, the curriculum ensures that all students are able to build good foundations for future learning and economic well-being. It is well supported by the learning resource centre where students can develop their independent learning skills and undertake individual research.

In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum has been thoughtfully revised to meet the needs, interests and aspirations of students. It is doing this with increasingly good effect, as shown by steadily rising standards. School leaders are keen to keep abreast of current educational developments, and this is reflected in the growing partnership with other schools and colleges in the area. An increasing emphasis on vocational education and work-related learning reflects the demands of students, parents, and the local economy. More than half of all students in Years 10 and 11 follow some aspect of vocational learning. There is a very good enrichment programme enjoyed by the students which include sport, the arts and educational visits as well as extra classes to prepare for examinations.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school makes good arrangements for the care of students. All legal requirements are met and the school has good systems to ensure students' health and safety. Support arrangements contribute well to the good achievement and personal development of students. Students comment favourably on the helpful advice they are given, both in lessons and in career choices. Academic monitoring is good and students are fully aware of their target levels and grades.

The school has demonstrated its commitment to help all learners through the introduction of the student support base. This complements and adds to previous additional support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The high quality work of the student support base is much appreciated by students, some of whom have experienced traumatic events. As one student reported, 'I don't know what I would have done without the support.' Across the scope of the school's pastoral system, students and parents comment favourably on the arrangements.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's leadership has been a force in ensuring that the school has made consistent progress in recent years, and is now achieving above average standards. His commitment to improving the quality of teaching, through the careful deployment of advanced skills teachers and the work of the 'Innovations' group, has been particularly successful. The school's specialist science status has been well used to broaden the curriculum and to improve performance, especially in science and mathematics. It has enhanced partnership working with local businesses, schools and further and higher education establishments. These links are good.

The senior leadership team is equally committed to raising standards. Meetings between the directors of the learning centres and subject leaders provide good opportunities to assess the quality of students' work and the progress that they make. Teachers with responsibilities speak of 'a common sense of purpose and of clear direction'. They feel empowered, but accountable, in their leadership roles.

The school's general arrangements for checking the progress of students are good. Systems for monitoring teaching and learning are satisfactory, but do not sufficiently take into account the quality of students' learning when reaching overall judgments about effectiveness. Overall self-evaluation is accurate, and used increasingly to move the school forward.

Governors are well informed, are very supportive and are ambitious for the future of the school. They are increasingly confident in understanding the school's strengths and in holding leaders to account for areas requiring development.

The areas for improvement from the previous inspection have all been successfully addressed. The school provides good value for money.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
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	2

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	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
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 Graham School Science College, Scarborough, YO12 6QW

Following our visit to your school, we would like to thank you for making us feel welcome and for talking with us in lessons and at social times about your experiences. As well as looking at your work, we read the questionnaires completed by your parents and carers. This proved very helpful.

We are pleased to tell you that your school is a good and improving school, which provides you with a good education.

This is a summary of our findings, which we hope will be of interest to you.

- Your school is well led and managed and there are clear plans on how to improve further.
- Overall, you make good progress and achieve good standards in your examinations
- You are well cared for, guided and supported in your personal development.
- You have the opportunity to study a range of subjects, which are well matched to your interests and ambitions.
- Your behaviour in lessons and around the school is good.

Although your school is good overall, we have asked the governors, headteacher and staff to continue to improve the school in some areas. These are:

- to ensure that in every lesson you always know how to improve further to reach the challenging targets you have been set
- to monitor, more effectively, the quality of teaching and learning across the school.

We are sure that you will be able to play your part in this by talking to your teachers about how you can reach the highest levels and grades in your work.

We hope you continue to enjoy your time at the school and wish you all every success in the future.