

Yewlands School Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107136
Local Authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	309325
Inspection dates	16–17 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Ross Parker

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	888
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Shaun Toulson
Headteacher	Mrs Angela Armytage
Date of previous school inspection	20 September 2004
School address	Creswick Lane Grenoside Sheffield South Yorkshire S35 8NN
Telephone number	0114 2329010
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Age group	11-16
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Introduction

The inspection was undertaken by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average sized school serves a community with high levels of disadvantage. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is much higher than in most schools. Most students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students from minority ethnic heritages is well below average. The school has specialist technology college status. It has experienced considerable changes in teaching staff over the past two years. The headteacher was in post at the time of the previous inspection. The school has been awarded an 'Investors in People Kitemark' and the 'Careers Kitemark' and is soon to move into new facilities developed as part of the 'Building Schools for the Future' programme.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education, which results in students achieving satisfactory academic and personal outcomes. Following significant changes in staffing, the curriculum and the new building programme the school is in a much more stable position. The leadership team ably led by the headteacher has been effective in introducing a range of new organisational structures and management processes aimed at bringing about improvement. These provide a positive basis for the school to move forward.

Students enter the school with standards that are below average and levels of literacy are low. They make satisfactory progress during their time in school, although standards remain considerably below average by the time they leave. This is because students are now making up ground lost in an earlier period of weak teaching and some poor behaviour. GCSE results have improved slowly over the past few years but school data indicate a significant increase is expected this year owing to improvements in teaching and learning. Students perform better in some subjects such as chemistry, physics, and information and communication technology (ICT) which benefit more from the school's specialism than in others such as history and communication studies which place more emphasis on literacy skills. Students' achievement in English and mathematics is broadly satisfactory. However, their continuing low standards in literacy and numeracy hinders their progress in other subjects across the curriculum and their future economic well-being.

The curriculum is satisfactory, with recent innovations beginning to show an impact in improved standards. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is meeting learners' needs more effectively by providing three clear 'pathways' for students which take account of their different abilities. A wide range of vocational courses has been introduced which is meeting the range of students' needs more fully in Key Stage 4. The quality of teaching and learning is also satisfactory overall. Some teaching is better and the level of challenge motivates students to learn well, but the quality is not consistent. Teachers do not always take enough account of students' different capabilities and then tasks do not ensure that all students make maximum progress in lessons. Students are not always involved actively enough in lessons. Academic guidance is satisfactory and developing. Students' progress is checked regularly and the resulting information is analysed to identify where extra support is needed. This information is not always used consistently to inform teaching. Marking does not always show students how they can improve their work and reach their personal targets. There are positive arrangements in place to help meet students' diverse and often severe personal needs and there is good liaison with external agencies to provide additional support where required.

Students' personal development is satisfactory overall. Most are keen to learn and do what is asked of them willingly and quietly. The majority enjoy good relationships with each other and with teachers. Most also behave appropriately and attend regularly. The great majority of parents express satisfaction with the school, and particularly appreciate the way transition from primary schools is supported.

The school has made satisfactory progress in developing its technology specialism which is having a positive impact in many areas but this is not yet consistent across the school. There have been significant recruitment and staffing issues but these have now been addressed. Challenging targets are set and the school is close to achieving these. Curriculum development in science, for example, is providing more opportunities for students and examination results

have already improved in these courses. Outreach work through the 'family of schools' is building capacity for further improvement in standards, for example, by supporting developments in science in primary schools. New technologies are being used within the school to add challenge and motivation through curriculum initiatives such as 'Skills for Learning'.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides a very clear sense of direction focused on improving learning and achievement across the whole local community. This involves promoting fundamental changes in students' aspirations and is already starting to impact on their standards and achievement. The award winning 'family of schools' initiative aimed at building capacity for improvement across the whole 0 to 19 education provision is having a positive impact in improving provision in the school. A well developed system of monitoring, review and evaluation results in a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. These systems are now more focused particularly in relation to teaching, learning and students' achievement. Governance is good. The governors share the leadership's vision, are well informed and supportive of developments. Resources are deployed efficiently and the school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards and achievement across the curriculum, particularly in relation to students' skills in literacy and numeracy.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching and ensure that lessons are well matched to all students' abilities and involve them more actively in their learning.
- Improve students' understanding of how they can improve their work and reach their targets.

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

Although the standards attained by all groups of students have been exceptionally low in recent years, school data and evidence drawn from lesson observations show there is now clear improvement in both Key Stages 3 and 4, and the achievement of different groups is broadly satisfactory overall. Nevertheless, there is some difference in performance between groups of students. Some boys, for example, are less motivated and perform less well than girls. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. The most able students only fully fulfil their potential in the school's specialist subjects. This is because the major emphasis in the past has been on supporting the majority of students to reach national benchmark levels in Key Stage 3 and 4 tests and examinations. The school's action to ensure that all groups perform equally well, with a particular focus on improving the attainment of boys is beginning to show improvements in standards and achievement. The students' achievement in literacy and numeracy now has the highest priority across the school. The school sets challenging whole-school targets, but it did not meet them in 2007, especially in Key Stage 3. It met some, but not all, of its specialist targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The majority of students say they like school, particularly enjoying practical and specialist subjects which provide interest and challenge. They respond well to teachers and try hard to meet their expectations with regards to learning and behaviour, though they lack independence. A small minority, however, are silly in lessons and this slows their pace of learning. The school has taken positive steps to reduce this by improving the consistency of teaching and the appeal of the curriculum. As a consequence behaviour has improved. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Awareness of multicultural diversity is less well developed as students have limited opportunities to mix with people of other backgrounds, and cultural enrichment across the curriculum is uneven. Students are aware of what it means to eat healthily and, while some choose not to do so, they appreciate and participate well in the wide range of opportunities to be involved in sport. Contribution to the community is good, particularly at Key Stage 4, with students talking with pride about gaining qualifications as peer supporters and being involved with governors' committees. Students feel safe, though some feel that adults deal with bullying incidents inconsistently. Attendance is below average and affected by a minority that resist the school's concerted efforts to improve it.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning although variable is satisfactory overall. Where teaching is good, the securing of students' interest at the outset, challenging questioning and a brisk pace help students to achieve well. Teachers consistently outline what they want students to learn and the activities to be covered at the start of lessons so students understand what is expected of them and understand the context of their learning. Teachers use partner work and group work particularly well to add variety and provide opportunities to develop communication skills. Relationships are generally positive and classes appropriately managed, resulting in most students behaving as expected. Sometimes even in good lessons, a minority of students occasionally disrupt the learning of others because of their silly behaviour. In the less effective lessons, the tasks set in lessons are not always closely matched to students' differing capabilities. Also teachers do not always plan a sufficiently varied range of activities to ensure that students enjoy and become actively involved in their learning. Marking of students' work on the whole gives good feedback to them on how they can improve but this is not as yet consistent in all subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Recent changes to the satisfactory curriculum are helping it meet the needs, interests and abilities of all students more fully. In Key Stage 4 there is an increasing vocational dimension and effective links with the workplace. These developments are already increasing students' motivation and demonstrating capacity to improve achievement at GCSE and equivalent levels. Careers education and guidance continues to be a strong feature of the school with a good range of provision for enterprise and work related learning. The school's focus on 'Skills for Learning' is a bold attempt, in collaboration with the Yewlands family of schools, to reshape learning across Key Stage 3 around skills which will support improved learning and independence

through to adulthood. It is already showing in the improving attitudes, aspirations and attendance of younger pupils. A good range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities, together with a wide variety of activities offered by the inclusion team, contributes effectively to students' enjoyment and personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care has a high priority within the school such that a senior learning mentor is a member of the senior leadership team, and this contributes significantly to the positive relationships between staff and students. A wide range of systems provide thorough and effective support for particularly vulnerable groups. For example, the way the curriculum is organised for those Year 7 pupils who are unable to cope with the demands of the secondary curriculum meets their needs well, as does the nurture group supporting pupils experiencing emotional difficulties. Good links with external agencies ensure that appropriate specialist help is available. Procedures for child protection, including health and safety procedures and risk assessments, are secure and used as examples of good practice within the local authority. At senior management level, students' academic progress is beginning to be tracked thoroughly and analysed carefully, though personal development is not monitored as closely. The resulting information is used in a variety of ways, for example, to identify additional support for students not on course to attain particular levels or grades at the end of each key stage. Students are not consistently aware of their targets or how to meet them through teachers' marking.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The recent restructuring of the senior leadership team, which places a heavy emphasis on improving teaching and learning, has been effectively completed. Staffing difficulties have been overcome and a well managed programme of support for the weakest and least experienced staff has improved the quality of teaching. The whole-school and curriculum improvement plans reflect a clear understanding of the barriers which have undermined achievement in recent years and outline appropriate actions to tackle them. The budget deficit is being managed effectively. Challenging whole-school targets are now set and systems for tracking students' performance are increasingly robust. Many recent changes have been planned to exploit the potential of the new building programme although it is as yet too early for them to have demonstrated their intended impact. Nonetheless, there is an emerging picture of success in many areas of the school. For example, the school has continued to progress during a potentially difficult building programme, behaviour is improving, rates of achievement are beginning to rise and the new science curriculum has supported improved standards. These improvements illustrate the school's good capacity for improvement.

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Annex A

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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 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	2
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?	3
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	2
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	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 with us during the inspection of your school. This letter is to let you know the results of the inspection.

Your school is giving you a satisfactory education. This is because the provision it makes for you, such as the curriculum and the quality of teaching are satisfactory and many of you achieve satisfactorily in your academic studies and personal development. The quality of care and support is good and is helping to improve relationships, behaviour and your attitudes to learning. There are other positive aspects, such as the outstanding collaboration between all of the local schools. Your school has had many changes recently, including new teachers, and a significant new building programme. Some other changes have been made to try to improve the school for you but it is too early for these to show their full impact on your test and examination results.

Most of you like school, attend regularly, behave appropriately, get on well with each other and with your teachers and do what you are asked to in lessons and around the school. However, a minority of you do not attend regularly or behave well. The school is working to improve these aspects for those of you concerned. We have asked the school to improve some other areas. You make satisfactory progress in your learning, but the standards many of you reach by the time you leave school are not at the level expected for 16-year-olds. We have asked the school to raise the standards you reach and improve the progress you make; making sure it is equally good in all subjects and especially in literacy and numeracy. The quality of teaching is satisfactory, and we have asked the school to make it more consistent, ensuring that tasks in lessons take account of your different needs and you have more opportunities to be actively involved in lessons. We have also asked that you receive more feedback on how to improve your work.

You can help by becoming more involved in lessons, responding to the guidance you are given on how to improve your work and making sure you all attend regularly and behave well.

I wish you and your teachers all the best for the future.