

Hipperholme and Lightcliffe High School and Sports College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107578
Local Authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	309437
Inspection dates	3–4 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Josephine Nowacki HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1235
6th form	140
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Holly Bottomley
Headteacher	Mrs Karen Mort
Date of previous school inspection	24 November 2003
School address	Stoney Lane Lightcliffe Halifax West Yorkshire HX3 8TL
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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

This is a popular school with a fully comprehensive intake, although the majority of students are of broadly average ability on entry. Almost all students are White British. At the time of the inspection, the number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (including statements of special educational need) was lower than found nationally. There is a higher proportion of boys than girls in most year groups.

Hipperholme and Lightcliffe School has specialist sports college status, with mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) as additional subjects. The school is accredited as a Healthy School and holds the Investors in People and Investors in Pupils awards. Sixth form provision is offered in partnership with Campus Calderdale.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school. Achievement and standards are satisfactory. The proportion of students achieving high-grade passes in GCSE English and mathematics is increasing rapidly. Nearly all students leave school with at least one qualification. Most students make satisfactory progress, but boys of average ability and some high ability girls make less progress than they could. Strategies are in place to tackle this and are beginning to have an impact.

Personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Students enjoy most aspects of school life and are involved in a good range of sporting activities to help keep them healthy. Attendance is above the national average. Behaviour around the school is generally good, but in a significant number of lessons where teaching is dull, students lose interest and this results in behaviour which disrupts learning. Students say they feel safe and any incidents of bullying are dealt with swiftly.

Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that teaching and learning are satisfactory. The school recognises that the current satisfactory teaching needs to become more varied and lively in most areas of the school. Although good and outstanding teaching has been identified, especially in physical education (PE), there is limited sharing of good practice across the school.

The curriculum is satisfactory. Improvements in Key Stage 4 include more vocational options to meet the needs and interests of more learners. Intervention strategies aimed at students at risk of underachieving are beginning to have a positive impact. The school is a specialist sports college. This faculty is well led and managed and has some of the best practice in teaching and curriculum development in the school.

Students receive good care and support. High quality care is provided for vulnerable students and good support is given to those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, systems for tracking and monitoring students' academic progress lack coherence. Good practice is seen in English, mathematics and PE, but is not widespread.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school has undergone considerable change and this has been managed very well by the headteacher and her senior team. Senior leaders and staff share a strong commitment to continuing school improvement, but there are shortcomings in the way the school monitors and evaluates its own performance. Middle and subject leadership is improving but is variable.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Tracking and monitoring of students' progress are rigorous; students know their targets and understand what they have to do to achieve them. Standards at GCE A level show a trend of continuous improvement over the last three years and are just under the national average. Many students make good or better progress when compared to their prior attainment at GCSE, although there is some inconsistency across subjects. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good because there is a clear focus on raising standards and achievement. Students value highly the quality of careers and higher education (HE) guidance they receive. Progression to HE is good. Links with other schools through Campus Calderdale are developing and this has increased the range of curriculum

options available. Most students speak warmly of their time in the sixth form and appreciate the individual support they receive from their teachers.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the process of monitoring, evaluating and reviewing by managers at all levels.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in order to raise academic standards.
- Establish a consistent approach to target-setting and monitoring students' academic progress.

A small proportion of schools where overall effectiveness is judged to be 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: 2

Inspectors agree with the school that overall achievement and standards are satisfactory. The trend in performance since the last inspection has been variable across both key stages and in most subjects, although recently there has been more notable improvement.

Most students enter Year 7 with standards that are broadly average, with some variation between subjects and year on year. In 2005 the standards attained by most students in Key Stage 3 were significantly below the national average. In 2006, overall results improved and provisional school data for 2007 indicate further improvements, markedly so in mathematics. Standards in ICT, a weakness in the last inspection, have also improved recently, but they remain below average. Too few students attain at the highest levels in all core subjects. By the end of Year 9 most students make satisfactory progress except boys of middle ability and those with statements of special educational need.

The proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C passes at GCSE was significantly below the national average in 2005. Results improved in 2006 but provisional school data indicate that they have declined in 2007 and remain below average. However, the number of students who pass GCSE English and mathematics with A* to C grades has increased significantly since 2005 and is now at the national average level. Almost all students leave school with at least one qualification. There is some variation in the achievement of different groups of students. Overall progress by the end of Year 11 is satisfactory, although boys and some high ability girls do not achieve as well as they could.

The school has recognised that standards and achievement are too variable and that they must improve for all students. A number of strategies are in place to tackle underachievement, including the use of student data to set more challenging targets. Some of the strategies are beginning to have a positive impact, but there is still much inconsistency across subjects.

In the sixth form, pass rates at GCE A level are improving to just under the national average. Most students make good progress. In a few subjects where achievement is not as good as it could be, actions are in place to address this.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Moral and social values are better developed and this is shown by students' good behaviour around the school. There has been a substantial reduction in the number of exclusions, and serious behavioural incidents are rare. However, behaviour is satisfactory overall because there is low level disruption in lessons where teaching does not sufficiently engage the learners. Attendance is good and well above the national average for all year groups. An alternative curriculum has resulted in improved attendance for some disaffected students in Years 10 and 11.

Students generally enjoy being in school, although they do not enjoy some lessons where the teaching is lacklustre. They like the extra-curricular activities which include a good range of sports. Students show good awareness of healthy lifestyles but, despite this, many decline the delicious healthy options available in the canteen. Most students say they feel safe, and that incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly by their teachers and other staff. However, some younger students say they feel less secure in the rush for buses at the end of the school day. There is an active school council which has been effective in countering bullying, but older students are not always convinced of its general effectiveness.

Preparation for the next stage of students' education or training is satisfactory; nearly all students leave the school with at least one qualification, including basic skills.

Personal development and well-being of sixth form students is good. A well designed programme of personal, social and health education helps to prepare them well for their future, either in work or at further or higher education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school's assessment that teaching and learning are satisfactory leading to satisfactory achievement is accurate. Although there is variation in the quality of teaching across the school, the amount of good teaching is improving. A small amount is outstanding, especially in PE and in some areas of English. In the sixth form, teaching and learning are good because teachers' expectations of the students are high and there is good focus on developing their higher level skills of critical analysis.

Where teaching is good and better, students are given varied and interesting tasks which motivate them. In PE there are very good examples of students enjoying the opportunity to assess their own and each other's work. Teaching assistants are deployed well; they provide effective support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and for all students who need extra help. However, the better teaching is not yet widespread and much teaching is only satisfactory. In these lessons teachers talk too much, their expectations of the students are low and tasks lack sufficient challenge, especially for the more able. As a result, some students who are usually well behaved become inattentive and low level disruption emerges.

Systems for tracking and monitoring students' progress are good in PE, English, mathematics and the sixth form, but elsewhere in the school they are underdeveloped. Homework is regularly set and promptly marked but the quality of marking varies between subjects. Where it is good, teachers give helpful comments to show students how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is satisfactory and effectively meets statutory requirements for all groups of students. The school provides a balanced curriculum and, in the light of its specialist status, places appropriate emphasis on ensuring all students in Key Stages 3 and 4 have access to high quality sports provision. Sixth form students say they would like more provision for PE.

The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 has improved; it offers academic courses and an increasing range of vocational options, including hairdressing. The school is aware that the range of vocational pathways needs to improve even more, particularly for those who are less motivated by traditional academic courses.

Literacy and numeracy skills are assessed when students join the school in Year 7 and, where appropriate, they are given classes to develop their basic skills instead of studying a second modern foreign language in Key Stage 3. However, the school is aware that this provision needs to be more flexible to enable students who make sufficient progress in their basic skills to move back into the mainstream curriculum.

A good range of extra-curricular activities contributes to students' enjoyment and to their personal development. The inclusion of the Junior Sports Leader's Award has been successful in developing the leadership and teamwork skills of many students, especially those who are at risk of disaffection. However, a programme of extra-curricular activities for talented students lacks coordination. This is currently being addressed.

The curriculum in the sixth form is good. Partnership arrangements with other providers enable the school to offer a good range of academic options at advanced level, and vocational subjects at both advanced and intermediate levels.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school provides good care and support for students. Guidance is satisfactory overall. In English, mathematics, PE and the sixth form, student data are used effectively to set individual targets and monitor students' progress. However, across and within most other subject areas and in the provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, systems for target-setting and monitoring academic progress are inconsistent. Nevertheless, intervention programmes aimed at students in Years 9 and 11 identified as at risk of underachieving are beginning to be successful.

The school cares for vulnerable students well and has good links with external agencies and health professionals to ensure the needs of individual students are met. Effective support is given to those students with learning difficulties: specialist dyslexia support is being developed. Health and safety procedures are well embedded and underpinned by risk assessments. Child protection procedures are in place and meet statutory requirements. Arrangements to help

students settle when they transfer from primary school, from Year 9 into Year 10 and into the sixth form, are good. Students speak highly of the advice they receive about careers and the support they receive with applications to university.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The headteacher and senior leaders have successfully brought the school through a period of significant change including a considerable building programme, the adoption of two additional specialisms, and major restructuring of staff responsibilities. Staff share a commitment to raising standards and improving achievement: the headteacher, supported well by her senior staff, gives a clear lead on how this can be done. The ability of middle managers to follow and work to this lead is variable but improving. The management of the sixth form is good and leading to improving standards and high achievement.

Much work has been done on a range of issues and recent improvements in English, mathematics and ICT show that actions have been effective. However, managers at all levels do not check the school's performance incisively enough to identify what works well and why, and where further improvements are needed. Self-evaluation at both school and subject level is limited in its usefulness; the school was unable to come to precise and accurate judgements on some key areas of its work and was too generous in its grading of others. Target-setting to raise standards is challenging but, on occasions, unrealistic.

Financial management is clear and well organised. Governance is satisfactory. Governors play a central role in planning the direction of the school and especially in the development of specialist status. They are supportive but their knowledge of the school's academic performance is limited. The school gives satisfactory value for money. The school demonstrates satisfactory capacity to improve because it has successfully tackled a number of issues identified at the last inspection and is beginning to raise achievement and standards, especially in English and mathematics.

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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	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	2
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	3	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
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	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	2
The attendance of learners	2	2
The behaviour of learners	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	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	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	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	2
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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and sharing your views. Many of your parents returned a questionnaire and this was helpful as we were able to take their views into account.

Hipperholme and Lightcliffe High School and Sports College is a satisfactory and improving school. Your headteacher and all the staff are committed to raising your achievement and are putting in place the opportunities for you to do so.

We found you enjoy coming to school and your attendance is good. You like lessons when teachers make them interesting by using different ways to help you learn. You especially enjoy PE and the extra-curricular activities available to you.

However, some lessons are dull and are not helping you reach the standards you are capable of. We think you behave well around the school but, in some lessons, where there isn't enough to interest you, behaviour is not as good as it should be and prevents you from making good progress. Teachers and all staff at the school work hard to ensure that you are well looked after and safe. You told us that they deal with any bullying very quickly. However, some of you and your parents said that getting on the school buses needs to be improved because it is a bit rushed and not very safe.

Sixth form students feel supported by their teachers and you said you really appreciate the individual help you get. Most of you make good progress and achieve grades that are above expectations. However, there are a few subjects where results could be better.

There are a number of ways we think the school can improve further and these include:

- improving the methods of tracking your progress in each subject so teachers will know more quickly if you are having any problems and not achieving as well as you should
- making sure all lessons are interesting and challenging to help improve your achievement
- improving the way the school checks its work.

You can help by behaving in all lessons, trying your hardest and continuing to contribute your views through the school council.