

Heckmondwike Grammar School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107785
Local Authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	309506
Inspection dates	8–9 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Clive Moss 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	1196
6th form	419
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr K Swann
Headteacher	Mr Mark Tweedle
Date of previous school inspection	17 November 2003
School address	High Street Heckmondwike West Yorkshire WF16 0AH
Telephone number	01924 402202
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Age group	11-18
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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

Heckmondwike Grammar School is a larger than average selective school with a large sixth form. It is located in a West Yorkshire industrial town which has below average levels of affluence. The proportion of students attending the school eligible for free school meals is much lower than the national average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also much lower than the national average. More than one quarter of the students is from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds. About one fifth of the students have a first language other than English. The school is designated a specialist Technology and Modern Languages College. It is also a Training School. The main school buildings date back to the nineteenth century and much of this accommodation is cramped. The school has achieved a number of awards including the Quality Standard for Careers Education and Guidance and the Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Heckmondwike Grammar is an outstanding school. Attainment at Key Stage 4 is consistently in the top 5% of schools nationally. For the last two years all students have achieved five or more higher grade GCSEs including English and mathematics. Students make excellent progress. In the sixth form, the standards they reach are well above average. They develop into mature, confident and articulate young people as a result of the many and varied opportunities they are given to learn and contribute both to their school and the local community. Their behaviour is exemplary. Instances of bullying and racism are remarkably few. Students are clear that neither is tolerated and confident that in the rare instances when it occurs it is dealt with swiftly and effectively. Attendance is excellent. Students are encouraged effectively to adopt healthy lifestyles and prepared very well for life beyond school. Relationships between the different groups of students are harmonious. The vast majority of students feel safe and are happy at the school. They enjoy learning and respond enthusiastically to the wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer. An overwhelming majority of parents are justifiably very positive about the school and many wrote glowing endorsements of the education provided. The school deserves its excellent reputation locally.

Teaching and learning are outstanding. This leads to outstanding achievement and standards. Classroom relationships are excellent throughout the school and sixth form. Both teachers and students have very high expectations of the level of challenge, the way that tasks are to be approached and the depth of exploration that will take place. There is consistent additional challenge for the highest attaining students so that they also make excellent progress. As a result, students develop high levels of independent learning skills. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those from Black and minority ethnic groups do equally as well as their peers. The broad range of subjects offered in both the main school and sixth form are enhanced significantly by extensive extra-curricular opportunities. Students take full advantage of these and, as a result, settle very quickly into the school. The range and variety have a very positive impact on students' personal development, motivation and engagement.

The school provides a vibrant and challenging environment in which students learn and develop into responsible young people, assisted by excellent care, guidance and support. The belief that students must be supported from the outset to set their sights on high levels of academic success permeates the school community. It supports sustained success at all key stages and promotes a high level of confidence amongst staff and students alike in the ability of all to succeed. Good links with primary schools facilitate very effective transition for students.

The leadership and management of the school and sixth form are outstanding. The headteacher has established and sustained a clear direction leading to improvement. The school's leaders are highly effective and ensure that the management of the school is consistent and carried out conscientiously. The school runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The school continues to develop the quality of provision, making particularly effective use of its specialisms, for example, in developing an outstanding virtual learning facility for students and parents and also through other initiatives, such as training school status and the application of external benchmark awards, against which it tests the quality of its work. These developments have also been used to good effect in sharing expertise with other local schools. The school knows its students and its community very well. Good account is taken of the views of students and parents when making decisions about changes and improvements to the school, although a

small minority of parents believes this is not so. The school is very well placed to continue its progress. It provides excellent value for money.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The sixth form is outstanding. It is very popular and the number of students has increased significantly in recent years, as part of plans for post-16 provision in the local area. Almost all the students at the school stay into the sixth form, but many students also now join from other schools. The sixth form has managed the rapid increase in the number of students very well. As a result, many students describe the school as very friendly and supportive, including those joining from other schools. Students say they appreciate the broad curriculum, flexible timetable and academic excellence. Their achievement is consistently high because of very effective academic guidance. Sixth form students make an outstanding contribution to the school community, for example, by undertaking duties as prefects and mentoring younger students in modern languages. Teaching is outstanding overall with students making particularly rapid progress in Year 13. There is a very good system of support for those who are underachieving. Students who receive the extra support say they value it. Consequently, the retention rate in the sixth form is excellent. The arrangements for transition to university or the workplace are also excellent.

What the school should do to improve further

- No areas for improvement were identified of which the school was not already aware and taking appropriate action.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Standards of attainment on entry to the school are well above average. Students make excellent progress and reach exceptionally high standards by the end of both Key Stages 3 and 4 and the sixth form. There are no major differences between the rates of progress made by different groups of students at the school. The total average points achieved by students at the end of Key Stage 4 have increased much faster than the national average since the last inspection of the school in 2003.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students are very proud of their school. They feel safe and very well cared for. They are consistently challenged to give of their best and enjoy excellent relationships with the staff and their peers. They enjoy school life greatly and this is reflected in excellent attendance. Students show excellent attitudes to work in lessons. They are keen, interested and work very well individually, in pairs and small groups. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and highly valued by parents. Students make a major contribution to the life of the school, for example, through the school council and the 'Year 9 befrienders', who provide help and support to younger students. They carry out their responsibilities with diligence and enthusiasm. Students develop an impressive range of workplace and other skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Teachers manage activities very well and, as a result, students engage intensely with learning. Teachers model the best ways of approaching tasks and an exemplary level of intellectual curiosity, both of which have a profound impact on students' attitudes to learning. They mark students' work extremely well. There is a constant focus on how well the work demonstrates specific skills or levels of understanding and what needs to be done to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum offers an extremely wide range of learning opportunities which provide excellent pathways to further study and employment. Students benefit from exemplary flexibility which enables them to combine early examination entry; distance learning packages; Open University courses; and additional and out-of-school studies, for example, in Latin, law, Mandarin or philosophy, or to specialise in particular areas. Extension activities are provided for the most able students who understandably say that they face a continuous, rigorous, but healthy challenge. There are extensive opportunities for students to develop workplace skills, including work experience abroad and opportunities for voluntary work placements during holidays.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students speak very highly of their teachers' commitment and the support they receive both in relation to learning and any personal matters. The procedures for child protection and health and safety are robust. Considerable care is taken over students' induction into Year 7 and into the sixth form, with additional support provided for those with particular needs. Older students rightly speak positively about the guidance they are given when choosing options for Key Stage 4 and post-16. The very small proportion of students who do not stay on to the sixth form receive extra support in making choices, which ensures that they also are guided effectively. The school has a rigorous, consistent system of assessing and monitoring students' progress. This system is used very well to identify students at risk of underachieving and plan effective interventions.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The headteacher and the senior leadership team have shown excellent leadership in establishing and promoting thorough, detailed and rigorous self-evaluation procedures throughout the school, with a relentless focus on raising standards to the highest level. Senior leaders are

supported well by managers at all levels. Data are used very well to set targets for students and the school that are both realistic and challenging, and then to evaluate the work of the school through rigorous performance management. As a result, the school has sustained very high standards over several years. The introduction of new courses in statistics, information and communication technology, community languages and drama, often after analysis of students' and parents' views, illustrate the school's commitment to continuous development. Governors support the school well and have a good understanding of the needs of the school.

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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?	1	1
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?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
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	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	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	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 me and my colleagues and making us welcome when we visited your school recently. We spoke with you in lessons, around the school and in groups, looked at your work, read the results of questionnaires filled in by your parents/carers and spoke with some of your teachers. Here is a summary of our main findings, which I hope will be of interest to you.

- Heckmondwike Grammar is an outstanding school. It is very popular with both yourselves and your parents.
- It is led and managed very well.
- The progress you make is excellent. This is the result of the very high expectations you and your teachers have of yourselves and of the level of challenge you are given in lessons.
- You enjoy being at school and feel that the teachers care about you. The quality of the care, guidance and support you receive is excellent. This makes a very important contribution to the progress you make at school.
- You enjoy the very wide range of courses and extra-curricular activities on offer at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.
- You enjoy lessons and feel safe at school.
- The headteacher and the staff at the school have a good understanding of what needs to be done to make things even better.

Many of you already make an excellent contribution to the school and I am sure you will want to do everything you can to support the staff in making Heckmondwike Grammar an even better school.