

# Horbury School - A Specialist Language College

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	108280
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wakefield
<b>Inspection number</b>	309644
<b>Inspection dates</b>	18–19 June 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Josephine Nowacki 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	1078
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Richard Dennett
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Deborah Duncan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 February 2005
<b>School address</b>	Wakefield Road Horbury Wakefield West Yorkshire WF4 5HE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01924 282740
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors. Another of Her Majesty's Inspectors shadowed the inspection but was not part of the inspection team.

## Description of the school

Horbury school is an average sized mixed comprehensive school, situated to the west of Wakefield. The school is a specialist language college.

Most students are drawn from the immediate locality, embracing a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is just below the national average. Nearly all students are from White British backgrounds. The school has a fully comprehensive intake and overall attainment on entry is average. However, the number of middle and high achieving students coming to the school has been higher than average in the last three years. The proportion of students on the register of special educational needs is average. The number of students with formal statements of need is below average.

Horbury School holds awards for Investors in People and Healthy schools. It has the Sportsmark and International status. The school offers extended service provision in adult and family learning and after-school catch up support.

Since the last inspection the school has been through a major capital building project. This has led to significant daily disruption. Also since the last inspection, there has been a considerable turnover of teaching staff, with around half the current teachers being new to the school.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Horbury School is an improving school which provides a satisfactory education for students aged 11 to 16. There are a number of good aspects. Since her arrival at the school in 2005, the headteacher has shown great determination to raise standards, increase achievement and to improve the life chances of all students. Supported by the senior leadership team, she has steered the school successfully through a particularly turbulent period in its history: extensive building works and a significant turnover of staff.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Senior leaders have an increasingly good understanding of the school's overall strengths and weaknesses, although inspectors found that a few strengths had been overstated. Actions to tackle weaknesses are appropriate and are beginning to have a positive impact. This can be seen in the marked improvement in the proportion of students gaining five good GCSE grades in 2007 and also in the number of students who left school with at least one qualification. However, although standards have risen and achievement has improved, they are satisfactory. At Key Stage 3 many students are not making the progress they could. A range of strategies are in place to tackle this. Senior leaders are increasingly active in developing the role of middle leaders and in holding them to account. There is evidence of good practice in middle leadership; however, this is not yet consistent.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory with an increasing proportion that is good or better. This is leading to rising standards and improving progress. In good lessons, teachers use probing questions and interesting learning activities to extend students' knowledge and understanding. However, teaching remains variable across the school. In some lessons teachers do not challenge students' thinking and expectations of students are not high enough. On occasions, there is too much focus on what the teacher is teaching rather than what students are learning and achieving.

The curriculum is satisfactory and improving. Recent initiatives include the introduction of more vocational options at Key Stage 4. A fast track course in modern foreign languages enables higher ability students to take their GCSE a year early. Further curriculum changes are planned for September 2008 and this exemplifies the school's determination to ensure that the needs of all learners are met. It is too soon to judge the full impact of the recent changes. However, the school's own data and results from recent examinations indicate that results are continuing to rise.

The care, guidance and support provided for students is good and this is having a positive impact on the personal development of most students. However, personal development is satisfactory overall because inspectors agree with some parents that the behaviour of a small minority of students is not always as good as it should be. Some parents also had concerns about bullying in the school. Despite this, students themselves say they feel safe and incidents of bullying are rare.

Given the difficulties faced by the school, good progress has been made since the last inspection. Capacity for further improvement is good.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement at Key Stage 3.
- Improve the consistency of teaching and learning.

- Improve the behaviour of a small minority of students.

A small proportion of the schools where 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**

Standards are improving. In 2007 results in the standard attainment tests at the end of Year 9 rose to national average levels. There is clear upward trend of improvement in English and mathematics. Nevertheless, by the end of Year 9, many students did not make the progress they could.

Results improved significantly in 2007 at Key Stage 4. The percentage of students who achieved five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE was above the national average. Results in GCSE mathematics increased markedly to the national average. Students performed above national average levels in art and design, drama, combined science and information technology. Results in English fell to below the national average in 2007. In a few other subjects, including French and Spanish, results were lower than those found nationally. Most students, including those with additional learning needs make satisfactory progress. Boys of middle and lower ability, make slightly less progress than their peers.

Through its own self-evaluation the school has identified areas of underperformance and where it needs to do better. Significant staffing issues have been resolved. The senior leadership team is taking robust actions to tackle underperformance in subjects. Effective systems are in place to identify students at risk of underachievement and to challenge the more able. For example, high ability students in Year 9 are completing their GCSE French course a year early. This also exemplifies how the school's language specialism is being used to drive up standards. Work seen during the inspection showed that the improving trend in rising standards is continuing and that most students make at least satisfactory progress. The school is on track to meet its targets.

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

### **Grade: 3**

Students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This is exemplified in the way they support one another in the vertical tutor system and in the interest they have developed in other cultures through the international aspect of the school's specialist status. They are also aware of the range of cultures in their own society. The school has worked hard to improve attendance and it is now good. Enjoyment of school is satisfactory because while most students say they enjoy school, some lessons lack challenging activities and diminish students' enjoyment in their learning. Students say they feel safe because they know who to go to if they have problems and are confident that they will be listened to.

Actions taken to improve behaviour, including close monitoring and a culture which rewards positive behaviour have been effective. Behaviour is now satisfactory. The level of exclusions has been high but it is decreasing. However, there remains a small minority of students who subvert the learning of others in lessons and a few who exhibit immature behaviour around school.

Students are aware of the need to adopt a healthy lifestyle through healthy eating and regular exercise. Preparation for future economic well-being is satisfactory; an increasing proportion of students leave school with at least one qualification. Students make a positive contribution to the school through the many student voice groups, through work in the local community and by raising funds for charities.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with a significant amount that is good. This is beginning to have a positive impact on achievement and standards.

Most teachers have good subject knowledge and plan their lessons well, although a few do not draw on available data to prepare for and meet students' needs. In the good lessons, students are motivated, engaged and encouraged to think independently. Lessons have a fast pace and students are challenged to achieve well through involvement in a variety of stimulating activities. As a result, students gain confidence and make increasingly good progress. In the less effective lessons, there is an over reliance on worksheets and students are often passive. In some lessons, teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are too low. As a result, students lose interest and a few, especially those in Year 8, start to misbehave and disrupt the learning of others.

Teachers track effectively how students are doing in their subject and set individual targets. Most students are aware of their targets but not all know what they need to do to get to the next level. Marking is variable. Where it is good, for example in English, teachers let learners know what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve further.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory with an increasing range of courses for students in both key stages. All statutory requirements are met. Recent changes to the Key Stage 4 curriculum, designed to better meet the needs of learners of all abilities, includes more vocational options and a fast track course in GCSE science for more able learners. Many of these options are offered in partnership with the local further education colleges and other schools. Weaknesses in the citizenship programme, identified at the last inspection, have been addressed, although the school has plans to strengthen this still further. Specialist language status is beginning to make a significant impact on the range of modern languages on offer throughout the school. For example Year 7 take a 'carousel' of languages, including Japanese, Mandarin Chinese, French, Italian, German and Spanish to whet their appetites. Higher ability students take GCSE French a year early.

Although a full assessment of the recent curriculum changes will take longer, they are already bearing fruit; students feel they are being challenged and are more motivated. As a result, standards are rising.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good and have a positive impact on the personal development and well-being of most students. Transition arrangements are good so that students entering Year 7 are well-prepared for their new school. Students in general feel well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Arrangements for the safeguarding of students are robust. Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and enables them to make similar progress to their peers. Links with outside agencies are well established and enables the school to provide high quality care where it is needed. The number of students leaving school who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) is reducing. A range of initiatives including the 'IMPACT' centre, is beginning to be successful in improving the behaviour of some 'hard to reach' students. However, the school recognises still more needs to be done to tackle this issue.

Processes for setting targets and monitoring students' progress are beginning to be embedded. Students know what level they are working at and what targets they are aiming for. They are less clear about what they need to do to improve in some subjects because marking is inconsistent. Also, not all teachers use available data on students' current attainment to inform their planning and to ensure that work is sufficiently challenging.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

The headteacher provides strong leadership and is well supported by governors. She has high aspirations and knows what she wants to achieve. Issues from the last inspection have been tackled. Many improvements have been made despite an extensive building programme and long periods of unsettled staffing. The recently strengthened team of leaders and managers supports the headteacher well and together they have created a climate where staff feel involved and can contribute to the future of the school.

Although there is a tendency to overplay what it does well, the school has identified its strengths and where it needs to improve. Priorities for improvement are set out, although not all action plans focus clearly enough on raising achievement. Nevertheless, progress and standards are rising. This is demonstrated in the above average number of students gaining five A\* to C grades in the 2007 examinations. These are the best ever results the school has achieved and represents good progress since the last inspection. Yet, although standards in Years 7 to 9 are rising, they are not rising as quickly as in Key Stage 4. In the main, this is the result of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning.

Middle leaders are enthusiastic and are becoming effective. They understand their role and the importance of evaluating the performance of their departments in order to raise standards. However, there is still some inconsistency in the way this is carried out across the school. Governance is good. Governors hold the school to account for all that it does and use their expertise to provide effective support for senior leaders.

Developments resulting from the school's specialist status in languages is well managed and is beginning to have a clear impact across the school. For example, students' growing personal

development, their awareness of other cultures and their increasing success in examinations, owes much to the school's specialist language status.



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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 <sup>1</sup> 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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	2
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

<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>	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	2
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

Inspection of Horbury School - A Specialist Language College, Wakefield, WF4 5HE

Thank you for welcoming us during our recent inspection of Horbury school. We appreciated the time we were able to spend talking to you about your work and general life at school. As a result of our visit, we have identified a number of strengths and areas for improvement.

- Many of you are making at least satisfactory progress. The number of you making good progress is increasing, but we still think it could be better at Key Stage 3.
- The number of you gaining five grades at A\* to C in GCSE is improving and above the national average.
- Most of you behave well, but we agree with some of your parents that the behaviour of a few students is disruptive, particularly in lessons.
- The headteacher is a strong leader who has managed the school well through a difficult period.
- There is a lot of good teaching in the school. It is satisfactory overall.
- The curriculum is improving and offers an increasingly wide range of subjects and ways of studying to suit your needs and interests. We were impressed by the opportunities for some of you to be able to sit examinations early, particularly in modern foreign languages.
- Staff at the school work hard to provide good care and support for you.
- Your attendance is good.

This is what we've asked the school to do.

- Improve results and make sure you all make at least good progress at Key Stage 3.
- Make sure that all teaching is good or better so that you can all do as well as you can.
- Tackle the poor behaviour of some students around school and those who stop others from learning.

You can be proud that your school has improved since the last inspection and we think it is on the right course to improve further. You can do your bit by working hard and making sure that your behaviour is good at all times so that it does not stop others from doing their best.