

The Skegness Grammar School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120696
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	313719
Inspection date	22 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Bob Roberts

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	799
6th form	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr M Julian
Headteacher	Mr R Ballantyne
Date of previous school inspection	25 May 2004
School address	Vernon Road Skegness Lincolnshire PE25 2QS
Telephone number	01754 610000
Fax number	01754 763947

Age group	11–18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors, one of whom inspected the boarding provision. The inspection of the educational provision evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the quality of teaching, the curriculum and the leadership and management of the school. The inspector gathered evidence from visits to lessons, assessment data and documents, and meetings with governors, groups of pupils and school managers. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspection found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The Skegness Grammar School is a small selective school on the Lincolnshire coast. It has an average sized sixth form. Pupils travel from a wide and predominantly rural area to the school. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is very low. As a selective school, pupils have reached high standards before they enter the school. However, the school takes pupils from a wider range of ability than many other grammar schools. The school has boarding provision for around 60 pupils. A small number of pupils come from a range of ethnic minority backgrounds although all speak English fluently. The school has been a specialist college for sport since 2001 and in 2006 was awarded a second specialism in mathematics and computing.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

At its last inspection, The Skegness Grammar School was judged to be an outstanding school. It remains outstanding and is actually a better school now than it was then. Standards have risen further, the school now works more productively with a wider range of partners, and the personal development of pupils continues to be excellent. The school is more outward looking and innovative.

The standards of attainment at the school are exceptional. This is a selective school so the levels of attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE should be very high, and so they are. However, the results also indicate that pupils make good and often outstanding progress from their relatively high starting points. For example, the 2007 results showed that progress in science by the end of Year 9 had been very good, and the GCSE results in English showed the progress that pupils had made in that subject to be amongst the best in the country. The school is not complacent about its results. It accurately identifies aspects of performance that may have slipped or that could be improved further.

Besides making excellent progress academically, the personal and social development of pupils is outstanding. The excellent facilities and committed staff provide the highly motivated pupils with exceptional opportunities. Many of these stem from the well-established sports college status. This has been very well managed to develop the school as a hub of sporting participation and excellence in the region. The level of participation is high even though many pupils travel long distances to school. Other opportunities are being developed through the second specialism in maths and computing. The school is working with an ever increasing range of partners, fulfilling a genuine sense of commitment to the local community, as well as providing opportunities for its own pupils. Pupils have a strong sense of what living a healthy lifestyle means and this is reinforced by events such as the Healthy Lifestyles day. Attendance is above average and pupils enjoy coming to school. They feel very safe at school. Behaviour is excellent. The very few instances of bullying behaviour are quickly and effectively dealt with. Pupils behave responsibly and many take leadership roles that make a significant contribution to the school and the outside community. Large amounts of money are raised for a range of charities. New council structures have been established to give pupils more of a voice in the school's affairs, although these have had a limited impact at the moment. Social, moral, spiritual and cultural education is good. There are regular trips abroad and growing links with schools in other countries. Taken together with the work-related learning opportunities, including work experience and their academic achievements, all this adds up to the fact that the school is preparing its pupils for adult life exceptionally well.

The climate and ethos of the school thus allow pupils to flourish. Other aspects of provision are good. The school judges the overall quality of its teaching to be good and the inspection confirmed this view. Teachers prepare very thoroughly and provide fast-paced lessons with high expectations. A good range of methods is used. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and pupils are very well engaged in their learning. Modern technology is available in many classrooms but is not used as creatively as it might be. Questioning tends to be hard-edged and fast, although it does not always provide sufficient opportunities for exploration and discussion. The recent appointment of a member of the senior leadership team to take responsibility for improving teaching and learning is an indication of the school's commitment to providing excellent teaching. Strategies such as the creation of a Teaching and Learning

Group have begun to create a climate in the school in which teachers from across the disciplines share ideas and good practice with a common sense of professionalism.

The curriculum of the school is good. It meets the needs of most of its pupils well. There are some very good features, such as the Year 9 election project in English, which combined speaking and listening skills with citizenship. The school is beginning to experiment more. Some courses have been introduced which offer more flexible methods of assessment. A curriculum review is planned to consider ways to embed work-based learning across the curriculum for all pupils.

The care, guidance and support that pupils receive is good. Pastoral and house systems are efficient and effective at monitoring attendance, behaviour and academic progress. Homework is regularly set, there are high expectations regarding its completion and it is well marked. Arrangements for advice and guidance on to GCSE courses have improved recently. While pupils have a general idea of the grades they should aspire to, target setting is variable across subject areas. Support and help for those who need it in lessons is variable.

Leadership and management at all levels of the school are good. The school is becoming more outward looking and open to new ideas. It is expanding the range of its links and partnership activities at all levels, international, national and local. It is engaging productively with a range of agencies such as the local council's children's services on child protection and welfare matters. New technology is being embraced to improve the school's effectiveness in innovative ways, for example the in-house management information system and the new video-conferencing suite. The senior leadership team has been re-structured to include a new focus on the quality of teaching and to develop the school's specialisms. Links between the senior leadership team and heads of department are much improved. There is better accountability, more communication and more opportunity for middle leaders, as well as teachers across the school, to participate and contribute to the school's development. Staff broadly welcome the more inclusive, less segregated, climate in the school. Nevertheless, there are still areas for improvement. Departmental plans are linked to the whole school plan but systems for monitoring and reviewing progress are still being developed. The analysis of exam results does not sufficiently inform departmental plans. In its analysis and reporting, the school does not currently meet all the requirements on race equality.

The governing body supports the school effectively. Financial management is good. Despite the fact that so many pupils were on study leave at the time of the inspection, over 150 replies were received to the parent questionnaire that was part of this inspection process. The responses were very largely supportive of the school. The small number of concerns centred on teaching and behaviour, issues that the inspection did enquire into. The school's self-evaluation was cautious in its judgements, indicating a leadership team that is keenly aware of the areas for development and has an excellent capacity to lead further improvements.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Study leave and preparation for examinations meant that there were no sixth former students present during the inspection. However, standards remain above average and the evidence suggests that pupils make good progress. There is no reason to doubt that their personal development continues to be outstanding, as it has been in the main school. The curriculum is good. Evidence suggests that leadership and management of the sixth form are good.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 8

The Children's Directorate inspected boarding provision in October 2007. The overall quality rating was satisfactory. Nine areas for improvement were identified, drawn from the National Minimum Standards for Children's Services. The school has made good progress with improving what it provides and there is a good standard of care. A sample of pupils was asked about relationships generally and all said that they were good and that there was no bullying. Typical of the views of many, a pupil said, 'We all get on.' Staff keep detailed and up to date records of pupils' accidents and injuries, with an explanation of what happened and any actions taken. Sanctions for misbehaviour are recorded in one central record and evacuation drills occur regularly.

The links between care staff and teachers are satisfactory. Two house tutors live in Wainfleet Hall and they provide a good link between school and boarding provision. Pupils commented that they would like to see more teaching staff visit them out of school hours.

The boarding provision has a good effect on pupils' personal development. A key indicator is that pupils take on a high proportion of the responsibilities around school, in spite of their small number. Pupils commented that they become more responsible for themselves and have a wider circle of close friends. The meal menus and opportunities for physical activity contribute well to pupils' good health. Pupils identified areas where they would like to see improvement. These include a greater choice at meal times and for the computers in Wainfleet Hall to function reliably.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching further by establishing clear systems and responsibilities for quality improvement, target-setting and the sharing of good practice across the school
- Improve systems for analysing, reviewing and reporting progress, including those required by race equality legislation

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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	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?	1	1
The effectiveness of boarding provision	2	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

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

² IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
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	2	
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

23 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Skegness Grammar School, Skegness, Lincolnshire. PE25 2QS

As you know, your school was recently inspected and this letter is to tell you about the results of the inspection.

The Skegness Grammar School is an outstanding school. You make at least good and often excellent progress in your subjects and consequently the standards you reach are exceptionally high. The climate of the school is clearly one in which most of you feel secure and flourish. As individuals, your personal development is excellent. Being a sports college has resulted in the school becoming a centre of excellence in sport and many of you participate in the wide range of sporting provision. Having become a specialist school for maths and computing more recently, this is also beginning to provide you with opportunities. Attendance is above average, your behaviour is excellent and many of you make a substantial contribution to the school and to the local community. It is a school with a real sense of commitment to the local community.

The headteacher is leading the school well as it becomes more outward looking and involved with a wider range of partners at international, national and local level. The school is open to ideas and innovation, and there is an exciting sense of what is possible, not least through new technology. You have a committed and enthusiastic staff who work very hard and are highly committed to getting the best outcomes for you. The curriculum of the school is good, although it could be more flexible. The teaching you receive is good and the teachers have high expectations of you. The majority of those parents that responded to the questionnaire used as part of the inspection were very supportive of the school.

The school is not complacent and knows it could improve further still. There are aspects of teaching which could improve as well as the ways in which the work of the school is analysed and reported.

I wish you all well for the future.

Bob Roberts

Lead inspector