

Fulford School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121684
Local Authority	York
Inspection number	314082
Inspection date	20 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Wendy Ripley HMI

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1301
6th form	290
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ian Dolben
Headteacher	Mr Stephen Smith
Date of previous school inspection	8 December 2003
School address	Fulfordgate Heslington Lane Fulford York North Yorkshire YO10 4FY
Telephone number	01904 633300
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and the sixth form. They investigated the following issues: achievement and standards; personal development and well-being; teaching and learning; curriculum; care, guidance and support; and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from scrutiny of documents, analysis of parental questionnaires, checking assessment data, interviews with staff and students, and observations of lessons. Some aspects of the school's work, such as governance and its specialist college status, were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation form, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Fulford is a very popular mixed comprehensive school. It draws students from across the city of York and the surrounding areas and is significantly larger than average. Most students are from advantaged homes as evidenced by the low levels of social disadvantage and the low proportion of students eligible for free school meals. Most of the students are of White British heritage and the proportion of students for whom English is not their first language is low. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very low being around one third of the national average.

An enhanced resource provision with ten places for autistic students was created in September 2005. The school's Specialist Mathematics and Computing College status was re-designated in March 2007. The school holds a number of awards including Investors in People, Healthy Schools and the City of York's Advanced Inclusion Award (December 2006). It received a National Association of Professional Teaching Assistants award as a centre of excellence in 2004.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Fulford is a good school with many outstanding features which is held in very high regard by the vast majority of parents, according to the parental questionnaire and the school's own feedback. It provides good value for money and has good capacity to improve further. Students receive a high quality education and many additional opportunities through a good range of trips and visits and participation in activities such as citizenship days and Millennium Volunteers.

Students enter the school with standards that are above average. Transition arrangements from primary school are very effective so that students quickly settle into the life of the school and respond well to the very high expectations the staff have of them. As a result, students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress as they move through the school. Consequently, when they reach Year 11, students' GCSE results are exceptionally high compared with the national average. Students do better than might be expected given their starting points and so their achievement is good. In particular, in 2007, almost three quarters of students gained five or more GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics, a level of qualification which is particularly important for students' future education, training and employment opportunities and their economic well-being. Specialist college status has a particularly positive impact on students' achievement in mathematics, with 85% of students achieving GCSE mathematics at A* to C in 2007.

One of the main factors underlying the students' good progress is the good teaching they receive throughout the school. Teachers are very knowledgeable about their subjects and examination requirements. Very good relationships exist between teachers and students. The best learning in the very best lessons results from teachers' highly effective questioning skills and their ability to engage all students. In a very small number of lessons however, whilst teaching is satisfactory, some teachers do not actively engage students in their learning, or pay sufficient attention to the school's own guidance on assessing students' progress and what constitutes a good lesson. The school has recently introduced some sound improvement strategies to bring the standard of all lessons up to the standard of the very best. Students value the efforts teachers make to give them extra help and support both in lessons and at other times. Parents appreciate the contact made by teachers when their son or daughter has done particularly well, not only when there are any concerns.

The curriculum meets students' needs and enables them to achieve well. Able and talented students have additional opportunities and challenges. For example, they can enter GCSE examinations in some subjects early, study a second modern foreign language after school, in Years 10 and 11, or gain a GCSE in statistics. Students for whom a full GCSE programme is inappropriate spend some time in college and in the workplace on carefully planned programmes.

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. They have very positive attitudes to learning, enjoy coming to school, have high aspirations and generally high levels of self-esteem. Most are actively encouraged to do well by their parents/carers. This is evidenced by very good attendance and low exclusions, good behaviour and attentiveness in lessons. Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural awareness are well developed through the school's recently enhanced personal development curriculum and a good range of enrichment activities and fund-raising events. For example: a student led assembly for Holocaust Memorial Day; school expeditions to Sri Lanka and days visits, for example, to Beth Shalom; and numerous

awareness days such as those held recently for European languages, Human Rights and Fairtrade and alcohol awareness.

The quality of care, guidance and support provided to students is outstanding. Staff demonstrate high levels of concern for, and commitment to, students' welfare. Students told inspectors that there is very little bullying. They have adults whom they trust and can turn to with any problems and these are usually dealt with speedily. As a result they generally feel safe and secure. Good support programmes and extra study opportunities are in place to ensure that any student at risk of falling behind, for whatever reason, is helped to stay on track and make good progress. Students value the help they receive in making informed choices, for example, in choosing their subject options and deciding what to do at the end of Year 11. A small number of students and parents expressed concerns about lunchtime arrangements. The school is aware of these but has very limited options to address them because of accommodation constraints.

The leadership and management of the school are good. Resources are used very effectively. Governors take their responsibilities seriously and provide good support and challenge. Self-evaluation is accurate and the school is aware of its strengths and areas for development. An outcome of this awareness has been the recent expansion of the senior leadership team to ensure that it has the capacity to improve further. In keeping with its specialist status, the school has enhanced and increased its information and communication technology (ICT). A new head of ICT has recently been appointed and has moved swiftly to secure improvements for all students and to develop new programmes of study. In addition, the school has increased the time allocated to ICT for Key Stage 4 students to two and a half hours per week. The school has strong links with local schools and uses its specialist status in a variety of ways within York, for example, through mathematics master classes and summer school provision; contributing to the development of a virtual learning environment and providing and hosting professional development opportunities for staff in York schools and nationally. The school's leadership team has recognised the need for middle leaders to take greater responsibility, especially for planning and monitoring. This is appropriate, as is the training it is providing to equip aspiring middle leaders for their roles.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding sixth form where students enjoy their learning and make excellent progress. Students join Year 12 with standards that are above average and leave with standards that are exceptionally high. Independent analyses of results show that their achievement is outstanding. Teaching in the sixth form is excellent with much academic rigour and a strong emphasis on the development of independent learning and research skills. There is a good range of AS and A2 subjects for students to choose from. Students are extremely well motivated and work very hard so that their learning in lessons is constantly reinforced and extended by independent study beyond the classroom. Advice, guidance and preparation for progression into education and employment when students leave school are excellent. Almost all students receive an offer of a place at their first choice of university. Sixth form students spoke highly of the management of the sixth form and the relationships they enjoy with staff and each other. While social space and accommodation are limited they accept this with good grace because of all the other advantages the school provides them with and because they understand that it is not feasible to expand this at present. Sixth form students consider that they are fully consulted and their voice is heard and responded to. They are extremely proud of the

contribution they make to the life of the school and the local community, for instance, through peer mentoring, the student council and the Valentine's dance for local elderly residents.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teachers adhere to the school's assessment strategies and model for 'successful lessons at Fulford 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?	2	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	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

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	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
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	1
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?	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?	2	1
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	2	2
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	2	
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 contributing to the recent inspection of your school. We enjoyed meeting you, seeing you at work and hearing your views. Fulford is a good school with many outstanding features. You told us that you enjoy school and feel safe in it because there is very little bullying and you have an adult you can go to if you need help or advice. You think the best and most important things about your school are, 'the learning and the teachers'. Here is a summary of our findings which we hope will be of interest to you.

- When you join the school in Year 7, you settle in quickly in your new environment and are eager to learn as much as you can. Your attendance is very good and you behave well in lessons. You make very good progress as you move through the school and the results you achieve are exceptionally high compared with the national average.
- Your parents/carers actively encourage you to do well.
- You have very good working relationships with your teachers and each other. Teaching is good overall. In the best lessons, you are given a good range of interesting tasks to complete, teachers keep you focused and involved and you are clear about how you are being assessed and what you can do to improve. However, a very small number of lessons could be better. We have asked the school to make sure all teachers stick to the school's assessment strategies and its guidelines for 'successful lessons at Fulford school'.
- The care, guidance and support that you receive are of the highest quality, which means you stay on track. This also contributes to how well you do and how positively you feel about learning and the school.
- You are able to participate in a lot of enrichment activities which help you to develop exceptionally well as healthy and happy young people with outstanding spiritual, social and moral skills.
- You are proud of your school and your achievements and you enjoy making a positive contribution to your school. For example, through peer mentoring and the school council and to the wider community through fund-raising such as the 'skipathon'.
- Some of you (and some of your parents) are not happy with the lunchtime arrangements, but it is difficult for the school to make improvements because of the limited space it has available for the dining room.
- The sixth form is outstanding. You flourish and do exceptionally well academically. You receive excellent support and guidance from your tutors and the sixth form heads in particular. Sixth form students make a strong contribution to the life of the school. You are consulted regularly and your voice is heard and taken into account. The only down side is the limited social space which you accept with good grace because of the very many other positive features and benefits you gain from being in the sixth form at Fulford.

Thank you all again for contributing to the inspection. We believe you should be proud of yourselves because you work so hard to succeed and achieve so very much as a result. We wish you well for the future.