

Harrogate Grammar School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121685
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	314083
Inspection date	10 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Anthony Briggs

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	1790
6th form	485
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sandra Dodson
Headteacher	Mr Richard Sheriff
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2004
School address	Arthur Avenue Harrogate North Yorkshire HG2 0DZ
Telephone number	01423 531127
Fax number	01423 521325

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and the sixth form. They investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, the features of teaching and learning and the curriculum that lead to consistently high academic and personal achievements and the impact of the specialist status on the whole school. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data, the school's own detailed assessment records, relevant policies and observations of the school at work, including visits to lessons and evaluation of parents' questionnaires. Discussions with staff, students and governors were held. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments as given in its self-evaluation, were not accurate and justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Harrogate Grammar School is a highly popular, mixed comprehensive community school serving the town of Harrogate and outlying villages. It is significantly larger than average. Many students are from advantaged homes as evidenced by the low levels of social disadvantage and the low proportion of students claiming free school meals. Virtually all students are from White British heritage and speak English as their first language. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average. The school holds specialist status in languages and technology. The headteacher took up post in January 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is a school of outstanding quality that provides excellent value for money. Students regard it as a 'great place to achieve' with 'lots of opportunities to really succeed' and inspectors agree. High expectations from everyone ensure that there is no room for complacency. There is a clear expectation and drive from the top that all students will achieve as well as they possibly can. The dynamic and inspirational leadership of the headteacher has had a significant influence on the quality of education and the ethos of the school in a very short space of time. Students say, 'the whole atmosphere is so positive', and staff say it is a, 'wonderful place to work'. Governance is excellent. Governors are very aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and expertly hold it to account. Managers at all levels have a clear understanding of the strengths and what needs to be improved. They work well together to provide first class leadership and innovation.

Students enjoy coming to school as demonstrated by their incredibly positive attitudes to work and their above average attendance. They behave impeccably in lessons and around school. Students demonstrate an impressive level of maturity. They have the highest respect for the adults who work with them. They treat their peers with the utmost consideration and sensitivity and older students act as superb role models for their younger counterparts. The school senate is a very professional group and contributes significantly to the life of the school. Consequently, students' views are listened to, respected and acted upon.

Students enter the school with standards that are above average. Through imaginative, exciting and consistently effective teaching, combined with their very positive attitude to work, they leave Year 11 with standards that are exceptionally high and have been so for years.

Consequently, students' achievement in the main school is outstanding. Through Years 7 to 11, students flourish academically because teachers have very high expectations of them and provide an imaginative learning experience that inspires all students to do as well as possible. Students say that lessons are 'really interesting' and 'not just about passing exams'.

Harrogate Grammar is a school which justifiably prides itself on fostering the highest standards of pastoral and academic care. Students have a very mature attitude to life and are fully aware of the importance of being healthy. They maintain a healthy lifestyle through a remarkable range of exercise and sporting opportunities, a highly effective curriculum and improved food and drink choice. Since the food on offer became even healthier, far more students now partake in school dinners. Students feel very safe and exceptionally well cared for and really value the fact that there is always somebody to share a problem with should they need to. Managers ensure that relevant safeguarding procedures are in place and regular training for staff, to keep them updated on such matters, is the norm.

Harrogate Grammar School is not just about getting students to pass exams. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and adds immensely to their well-being and personal development. Opportunities abound for students to make a very positive contribution to the work of the school and the local and wider community. Performing arts groups give regular performances throughout the locality and further afield in places such as Spain and Greece. Sports teams play throughout the region and many students become so accomplished at a particular sport that they take part in regional and national teams. Charity work is a strong feature of the lives of the students and each year several thousands of pounds are raised to benefit those less fortunate. Students develop very positive relationships with

each other and the adults they come into contact with. This is underpinned by a mutual respect and trust. They develop excellent self-confidence and are able to deal with the challenges and life changes they face. A large number of students participate in over 80 high quality clubs and after-school activities. They appreciate the way that teachers give freely of their time beyond the working day.

Students leave the main school with the skills and knowledge they need to ensure their future economic well-being. They are more than ready for the next stage in their education. For most, this is further education and a very high percentage stay on into the sixth form where they know they will continue to do well.

Specialist language and technology status is central to all aspects of the school's work and a wide range of subjects has benefited from curricular initiatives promoted by the specialisms. The impact on teaching and learning throughout the school and on whole-school standards has been significant. Funding has been used well to ensure all students throughout the school gain from the latest technology. This has helped with independent learning and the use of new computer software. The curriculum is richer for the increased focus on languages and the new equipment in the food technology suite is highly valued by students. Many of the exceedingly ambitious specialist targets have been achieved. However, results in French have not been as high as expected and students are now to have a choice of language at GCSE. Partner primary schools have enjoyed specialist input and expert help with developing a Key Stage 2 French curriculum but, although strong, the impact on the wider community has not been quite as successful.

The school works well with parents and has their overwhelming support. Parents appreciate the way in which the school offers so much to their children in order for them to flourish as well rounded individuals. They typically comment, 'This is an excellent school and we are so thankful our children come here.'

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Sixth form students are highly focused committed learners who enjoy school very much. They are appreciative of the good quality teaching they receive and the above average results they leave school with. Their personal development is enhanced by an outstanding range of curriculum opportunities including over 30 A-level courses and highly popular International Baccalaureate (IB) courses. The range and diversity of the extra-curricular activities is a particular strength. The sixth form has a good reputation in the area. Consequently, a large proportion of students enter the sixth form from other schools. Students achieve well and leave Year 13 totally prepared for further education or employment. Many know exactly what careers they want and have mapped out their future pathway accurately as a result of expert guidance. For example, in 2007, 60% of the students gained places in the top 25 universities in the country and many move on to universities in Cambridge or Oxford. Students say and inspectors judge that teaching is not quite as creative in the sixth form and that the imaginative approaches that make teaching so inspirational in the main school are not always carried forward into sixth form lessons. Nevertheless, students are taught what they need to guarantee good examination grades and secure their future economic well-being. Students' personal development is exceptional and the opportunities provided for them to flourish as mature individuals are substantial. The leadership and management of this large sixth form are outstanding. Clear strategic vision combined with a wholly professional approach results in focused leadership at all levels. Students are well known to staff and the levels of care and support they receive are of the highest

standard. They know that if they work hard they will do well. Students, parents and teachers are understandably proud of Harrogate Grammar School.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teaching in the sixth form is as effective and exciting as that in the main school in order to further raise standards and students' achievement.

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	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	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	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?	1	2
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	1	
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

Inspection of Harrogate Grammar School, Harrogate, HG2 0DZ.

I would like to thank you for making our visit to your school so enjoyable. We were really impressed with the way in which you openly told us about what you liked about Harrogate Grammar. Your comments were very helpful and enabled us to focus our inspection and check on just how well your school is doing. We agreed with many of your thoughts and have judged your school to be outstanding, which is the highest grade we can give. Please take the time to read through the report and see how we have agreed with your views and how we have incorporated some of the things you said.

There are many things that your school does very well. One of the biggest strengths is the way everybody expects to do well. This is shown in your excellent attitudes to work and the way you help each other and generally behave around school. You were very keen to tell us about the variety and range of out-of-school clubs and teams you have and we agree that this is something special. You also said that you felt that your teachers were firm but fair and that they treated you as mature young adults. We agree that relationships are excellent. We were also impressed with your school senate and the mature way in which meetings are undertaken and the impact it is having on improving the school. You said that the headteacher and the senior managers were strong and we certainly agree.

We know that in the main school you receive imaginative and consistently high quality teaching that results in you all doing exceptionally well. We feel that this imaginative style of teaching drops a little in the sixth form and that teachers need to retain some of the creative approaches they use in the main school rather than just focusing on getting you through your sixth form examinations. We are convinced that this will allow you to achieve even higher results.

Thanks again for your excellent contribution to the inspection. It was a pleasure to visit your school.