

# Joseph Rowntree School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	121711
<b>Local Authority</b>	York
<b>Inspection number</b>	314088
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Wendy Ripley HMI

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1180
6th form	203
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Frank Dixon
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Hugh Porter
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 September 2003
<b>School address</b>	Haxby Road New Earswick York North Yorkshire YO32 4BZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01904 768107
<b>Fax number</b>	01904 750458

---

<b>Age group</b>	11-18
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 November 2007
<b>Inspection number</b>	314088

---

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Joseph Rowntree is a larger than average school with around 200 students in the sixth form. The number of students at the school has fallen over the last few years, mainly as a result of the closure of a feeder primary school. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is low. Most of the students are White British, and the proportion of students for whom English is not their first language is very low. The proportion of students with a statement of special educational need is very low. Joseph Rowntree has had specialist technology college status since 1998. A new school building is due to be opened in September 2009.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Joseph Rowntree is a good school with some outstanding features. The headteacher provides a strong vision and clear direction. He is supported by a very able and effective team of senior leaders and managers who work very well together. They are all quite rightly held in high regard by students and the overwhelming majority of parents. The governing body is strong and committed.

Every young person really does matter and is at the heart of everything that the school does. Students enjoy their lessons and behave extremely well in class and around the school. Attendance is good and shows an improving trend. The quality of care, guidance and support provided by the school is outstanding. It makes a very positive contribution to the students' success as well as their personal development and well-being. The achievement of students is good overall, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Standards attained in external examinations are high. The school's GCSE results were the highest ever in 2007 and the performance of students of above average ability was particularly good. A small group of boys, however, are not making as much progress as they should. The school is aware of this and has implemented a range of well-targeted strategies to address this which are beginning to have an impact.

Teaching is generally good with pockets of outstanding practice. Nevertheless, there is some variation in the quality of teaching in some subjects. This is mainly because some teachers have not adopted the school's systems and guidance for lesson planning and assessment consistently enough. The school is very inclusive. Very effective provision is available to meet the needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A wide range of vocational courses is offered within the school and through partner organisations providing a good alternative to the more traditional curriculum. Students are treated as individuals and every effort is made to ensure that they are following programmes of study or 'pathways' that match their needs and aspirations. There are clear progression routes through to Key Stage 5. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities and participation rates are high. All these features of the school are strengths which make a significant contribution to students' good progress, achievement and personal development. They also encourage students to stay on in education and training either at the school or elsewhere, particularly those who would otherwise have left education.

Specialist technology college status has supported the expansion of resources and raised achievement throughout the school. Activities and developments have been shared very well with local schools. Financial management is robust and firmly focused on school priorities. The capacity to improve is good.

### Effectiveness of the sixth form

#### Grade: 2

The effectiveness of the sixth form is a strength of the school which is partly due to its outstanding leadership. Students speak very appreciatively of the excellent support and guidance that they receive. Progress is regularly reviewed. Individual tutorials with the head of sixth form ensure that students know not only what is expected of them, but also that they are fully aware of what they need to do to succeed and how they can improve on their current performance. As a result students complete their courses successfully and achieve well, reaching standards

that are above average. Good quality teaching encourages independence, fosters good analytical skills and contributes effectively to the good levels of achievement. Almost all students gain a place at their first choice higher education institution.

Good relationships with Connexions officers help to ensure that those students who do not aspire to university are well supported and guided with regard to the opportunities open to them in terms of further training or employment. Enjoyment of both the academic and social aspects of sixth form life, in addition to developments in the way attendance at lessons is monitored, has contributed to an improvement in attendance rates since the last inspection.

As well as taking full advantage of the many opportunities that the school offers in terms of enriching their personal development, students are proactive in proposing and organising events and services that reflect their growing independence and maturity. They make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider communities. For example, through classroom support and paired reading with Year 7 students, organising and staging the sixth form revue, sports coaching and drama pieces with local primary schools, and concerts and companionship for residents in a local nursing home.

Students have confidence in their teachers to teach them well – and sometimes inspirationally – and also to support them, whatever the nature of their problem. They have the utmost respect for the school's leaders and express gratitude for being known and treated as individuals. As one student said, '(here) the staff are not just interested in grades'.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise the achievement of the small group of lower ability boys to match the good standards achieved by other students.
- Ensure that the high standards of teaching, learning and assessment achieved in most lessons and subjects are achieved consistently throughout the school.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students enter the school in Year 7 with standards that are broadly average. Throughout Key Stage 3 in Years 7 to 9, students build on their knowledge and understanding and make good progress. Though results in 2007 slipped back a little from the very high levels of 2006, standards and progress both remained above average. Performance figures for 2007 show differences between core subjects, with English and students' reading in particular being relatively weaker than mathematics and science. The school believes that its concern to improve GCSE results impacted on its ability to maintain its English results at the high levels achieved in 2006. Appropriate plans are now in place to iron this out.

In Key Stage 4, students continue to make good progress. In 2007, GCSE results, with 71% of students gaining five or more A\* to C grades, were the best that the school has had, and well above average. Even when English and mathematics are included in the five subjects, the school's standards were above average. The school has achieved impressive results at the higher levels with nearly a quarter of all GCSE results being at A\* or A. The achievement of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also good and in line with other students. The school's broad student-centred curriculum makes a strong contribution to this because it ensures each student is provided with every opportunity to achieve.

Within this good overall picture of achievement and standards, a small number of lower ability boys do less well than they should and there is some variation in progress and standards between subjects. Some subjects, such as sociology, food technology, art and science have particularly good results and they exceed challenging targets. Other subjects, such as French, German and geography are less successful. To address these issues the school has put in place a number of well targeted strategies which, combined with the good use of management information, is beginning to address the variation between subjects, accelerate progress and raise achievement where it is lagging behind.

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

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 1**

This is a very inclusive school. Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Students of all abilities praise the school and speak confidently and knowledgeably about their life at school, about what the school does best and about what features are most important to them and please them the most. They particularly like how well everyone gets on together, the open space of the school grounds and the wide range of activities open to them including 'lots of sports and other clubs', trips and visits.

The school is calm and well ordered. Students move around purposefully between lessons. Warm, respectful and supportive relationships exist between staff and students. Behaviour is usually good both in lessons and around school due to a clear system of rewards and sanctions which the students helped to develop. Attendance is good and improving because of effective monitoring strategies. The breadth of provision ensures students have access to courses which meet their individual needs, are appropriate for them and provide plenty of opportunities to succeed. This means that almost all students feel good about themselves, like coming to school and find learning relevant and enjoyable. Provision for disaffected students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding as a result of expert teaching and intervention by staff, well thought through provision and careful planning by senior leaders.

The school has achieved Healthy School Status. The assessment report rightly stated that 'Joseph Rowntree is an outstanding example of how a healthy school should be'. Students are pleased with the healthy food options which are always available for them to choose from and are proud of the fact that only 5% of them are dropped off at school by car. Most of them get to school by cycling or walking. They know this contributes well to keeping them healthy and fit as well as reducing the number of complaints from local residents about cars waiting outside the school.

Students report feeling safe in school and know that there is always someone they can talk to if they have any concerns. Bullying is rare. Students say that neither students nor staff will tolerate it. On the few occasions it does happen, students say that the staff take it very seriously and deal with it very well. Sixth formers care very much about younger students and are very protective of them in this respect. Students throughout the school are very well prepared for the world of work and their future life through their academic and vocational studies, and through personal, social and health education, for example. Spiritual, moral and cultural development is well catered for through a range of activities such as 'thought for the day'.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students make good progress because teaching and learning are good and occasionally outstanding. The strengths of the best teaching in the school include clear purpose for lessons, brisk pace, variety of worthwhile activities and opportunities for independent work. Positive relationships between students and teachers and the good attitudes of learners contribute significantly to the good teaching and learning. There is, however, some variability in the quality of teaching across Key Stage 3 and 4. This is partly because not all teachers have adopted the school's approach and guidance consistently enough. Good practice is increasingly being shared to reduce the variation in teaching quality. Where teaching is less successful, planning is limited, there are fewer opportunities for interaction and tasks do not meet the students' needs. In the most effective lessons teachers frequently check how well students are learning and this secures good progress. For example, in several classrooms, mini whiteboards are used effectively to give immediate feedback about students' progress. This ongoing checking of progress is not embedded in all subjects or consistent among teachers. The marking of work varies in quality and frequency which means the potential for using it to enhance learning is reduced.

### Curriculum and other activities

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The curriculum is good with some significant strengths. It is regularly reviewed and appropriate priorities for development are identified. An interesting and effective feature is that students are involved in reviewing the curriculum. In religious education, for example, plans for lessons were changed to reflect students' views on the appropriateness of their content and delivery. The school is now in the third phase of re-designation as a specialist technology college. The impact of this status is evident in the development of good systems to raise achievement across the school. The curriculum is broad and is well matched to the individual needs of students. A particular strength at Key Stage 4 is the quality of the routes offered to students. They are guided to choose an academic and/or vocational 'pathway' which will support their success. This has raised achievement by engaging students who would otherwise become disaffected and contributes positively to the Every Child Matters outcomes. Students appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular activities which are available and a good proportion of students take advantage of the opportunities on offer.

### Care, guidance and support

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Caring for students is very much at the heart of what this school does. One of the strengths of the school is the way that the excellent procedures for guiding students are used consistently across the school, driving them forward to good achievement. Academic guidance given to all students is effective. Systems for assessing and

tracking progress are thorough, enabling teachers to set manageable individual learning targets. Most students know what is expected of them and they respond positively.

Procedures for the safeguarding of students are in place, ensuring that students learn in a safe environment. Parents have every confidence in the school because they know their children are in safe hands. Pastoral care provided for vulnerable students is exceptional. Valuable support is provided by a variety of external agencies. Staff know the students well and are highly committed to understanding the students' individual needs and circumstances. They are very effective at communicating these swiftly and sensitively between each other, which ensures that any individual problems or issues are dealt with and all students feel supported and achieve as well as they can. The school takes account of the views of students and is very successful in enabling the student voice to be heard.

Students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are also extremely well supported. Their progress and the quality of the help they are given are monitored very effectively. Consequently, they too achieve well in relation to their personal targets.

An effective rewards system has contributed to a reduction in the number of exclusions. Excellent arrangements are made for the transition of pupils into Years 7, 10 and 12. Advice for students on their future options in education, employment or training is excellent. It is well considered and concentrates on the needs of the individual. Detailed information on the performance of individuals is carefully used to guide students onto appropriate courses in the wide-ranging 14–19 curriculum and set them realistic, yet challenging, targets.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, senior leadership team and middle managers, such as the heads of year, are quite rightly held in high regard by the overwhelming majority of parents according to the parental questionnaire. The school and its students are regarded positively and affectionately within the local community. Students say they have enormous respect for the headteacher and leadership team because they lead by example, know and care about each of them individually, and are highly visible around the school.

The headteacher has an outstanding ability to scan the horizon. He has successfully taken account of recent developments in education and the demands of the world of work and joined these up effectively with the needs and views of students to create provision which is broad and accessible. The senior leadership team and middle managers work very well together. They have a strong vision and a clear sense of purpose. This is shared by governors and is effectively communicated throughout the school.

There is a positive attitude and good teamwork throughout the school. Its self-evaluation is honest, reflective and accurately identifies the key areas for improvement. Inspectors agree with the school's own judgements. The use and analysis of management information is good, having been strengthened through the school's raising achievement activities. Performance management systems are robust and there is a good balance between accountability and support, enabling the school to achieve challenging targets. There is an appropriate range of professional development opportunities matched to priorities in the school's development plan and to the needs of individual staff.



The wider community is actively welcomed into the school. Managers have worked extremely hard to develop innovative and mutually beneficial partnerships with the local community. Strong partnerships developed across York with other organisations such as the North Yorkshire Business and Enterprise Partnership (NYBEP), Trident and local further education colleges have contributed significantly to the provision on offer to students. Communication between the school and the governing body are good. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities well. They demonstrate high levels of commitment and support and hold the headteacher to account. Governors are knowledgeable and well-informed about the school and educational developments in general. All of the governors and the chair in particular, are investing significant amounts of their time into consultation and planning for the new school which is due to open in September 2009.

The school promotes equal opportunities very well because of the breadth of learning and extra-curricular opportunities it offers. This ensures that all students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who might otherwise be disengaged, can participate in the full range of provision and activities.

Financial management is secure and robust. It is well focused on an awareness of the changing circumstances the school faces, including falling rolls and the new school building. Resources are effectively deployed to meet the priorities identified in the school improvement plan.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**

## 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
---	----------------	-------

### 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	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
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	2	
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	2	
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	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?	1	1

<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>	2	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	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	1	
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

Inspection of Joseph Rowntree School, YO32 4BZ

Thank you for contributing to the recent inspection of your school. We enjoyed meeting you, seeing you at work and hearing your views. Joseph Rowntree is a good school with some outstanding features. You are clearly proud of your school and almost all of you enjoy being there. Here is a summary of our findings which we hope will be of interest to you.

- External examination and test results are good and have been improving since 2004. Students at Key Stages 3 and 4 and in the sixth form achieve very well. Students achieved the best GCSE results ever this year. Students of all abilities make good progress, although a small number of boys are not making as much progress as they should. The school knows this and knows what it needs to do to address this.
- Teaching is good overall and it is excellent in some lessons, and teachers know their subjects well. In the best lessons, you are given a good range of interesting tasks to complete. You understand your targets and know what you need to do to reach or exceed these. However, in a small number of lessons and subjects the standard of teaching and how you are assessed could be better and your targets are not as clear as they might be. We have asked the school to improve the quality of all teaching and your involvement in lessons to match the best.
- You have very good working relationships with your teachers and each other.
- You are prepared well for life when you leave school. The range of courses on offer both in your school and in partnership with other organisations is very good, as is the number of extra-curricular activities. You enjoy these very much and participate well.
- Your behaviour in and out of lessons is good. There is very little bullying. We were very impressed with the support and mentoring that students provide for each other.
- The care, guidance and support that you receive are of the highest quality. There is outstanding work going on to support anyone needing help to get back on track.
- The headteacher is retiring next September as you will know. You do not need us to tell you what a good headteacher he has been because you told us how much you like and respect him, how he knows each one of you individually and has cared for you and encouraged you to do well.

Thank you all again for contributing to the inspection and for making us feel very welcome. We would like to congratulate you all for being such good ambassadors for your school. We believe you should be proud of yourselves because you are polite, helpful and work so hard to succeed.