

Thrybergh School and Sports College

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 106956 |
| Local Authority | Rotherham |
| Inspection number | 324496 |
| Inspection dates | 26–27 January 2009 |
| Reporting inspector | Joan McKenna |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 11–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 602 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Cllr D Pickering |
| Headteacher | Mr D Pridding |
| Date of previous school inspection | 21 November 2006 |
| School address | Arran Hill Thrybergh Rotherham South Yorkshire S65 4BJ |
| Telephone number | 01709 850471 |
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller than average school serves an area of significant economic and social disadvantage. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well above the national average. The large majority of students are of White British heritage, but there is an increasing number of students arriving from Eastern Europe, most recently of Slovakian Roma heritage, who are at early stages of speaking English. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above that usually found. In September 2008 the school gained specialist status in sport, focusing on outdoor education with science subjects. It has also gained a Healthy School's award, an Excellence in Enterprise award and an outstanding achievement award for its work on anti-bullying. The school is part of the former Excellence in Cities Action Zone, now known as Thrybergh Community Learning Partnership.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with outstanding features and it is improving rapidly. Within just a few years, it has been transformed from being inadequate to one in which almost all aspects of provision are good or better, resulting in students achieving well both academically and personally. This exceptional rate of progress has resulted from the headteacher's relentless drive for excellence. His outstanding leadership has inspired other leaders and staff to share a common determination to improve all students' education and life chances. Evaluation and monitoring is very thorough, with a great attention to detail and an emphasis on judging the effectiveness of action taken by its impact on improving students' achievement. Strengths are therefore built upon, and weaknesses are robustly tackled. The school is well on the way to becoming the outstanding school it aims to be. This is because it knows exactly what needs to be done to achieve this and because the rate and extent of the progress the school has made in recent years demonstrates an excellent capacity for the further improvement required.

Students' attainment on entry to the school is low. Their achievement has improved markedly over the past three to four years. The value being added to students' attainment during their time in school has moved from being amongst the lowest in the country to amongst the highest. However, although the standards reached by students have risen steadily since the last inspection, they are still below the national average. The school sets challenging targets for students which have been successful in promoting greater achievement. It has begun to set even more challenging ones. This reflects the determination to meet what it knows is the next priority, which is to improve achievement even further in order to raise the standards that students reach by the time they leave the school, especially their numeracy and literacy skills which are still too low.

Rigorous approaches to assessing and monitoring students' progress result in high quality academic guidance. There have been developments in the good curriculum so that it meets the needs of students better, with innovations at both Key Stages 3 and 4. It is well taught. In most lessons teachers explain clearly to students what they need to learn and plan a varied and interesting range of activities to help them do so which are well-suited to the differing needs within the class. In these lessons students make good progress. While teaching is good overall, and some is outstanding, not all is of this high quality and in a minority of lessons students' learning is less effective. This is often because teachers are trying to cover too much and students are not given enough time to consolidate or develop their understanding. Despite being in its early stages, the school's specialism is making a positive contribution to students' experiences, enjoyment and achievement in physical education and sport.

The school knows and values all of its students equally. It provides outstanding care, guidance and support to help meet the needs of all of them. It goes the extra mile for those that face additional challenges. For example, it has recently appointed a Slovakian speaking member of staff to specifically support the students arriving from Eastern Europe. As a result of this high quality provision, students' personal development is good. They behave well, have harmonious relationships with each other and have positive attitudes to their learning. They feel safe and enjoy school. The attendance of most students is satisfactory. However, despite the school's best efforts, a minority do not attend often enough.

The school works exceptionally closely, and to excellent effect, with a wide range of external partners and organisations to help meet students' specific needs, widen the opportunities

available to them and to improve its work. Its increasing effectiveness has greatly improved the school's standing in the local community, as shown in this parental comment: 'I feel my child has made fantastic progress with her achievements due to the efforts and encouragement of all staff at Thrybergh.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the standards that students reach and improve their numeracy and literacy skills.
- Improve the attendance of the minority of students for whom it is currently too low.
- Improve the consistency and quality of teaching to ensure that students learn equally effectively in all lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From their low starting points, almost all groups of students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are now achieving well at both Key Stages 3 and 4. Key Stage 3 test and GCSE examination results have risen steadily over the past few years. Data about students' current progress across the school indicates a continuing trend of improvement. However achievement is less positive for the minority of students who do not attend regularly, especially some older students and some of the Slovakian Roma students who have joined the school recently. While achievement is good overall, there is some variability across subjects. The improvement in achievement in English, for example, has been dramatic. In mathematics, while there has been progressive improvement year-on-year, it has not matched the rate seen in English.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Students enjoy their education and appreciate the efforts teachers make on their behalf, saying, for example, 'teachers in this school want to help you and want you to do well'. Students do as they are asked, and work well together in lessons. However, they are often quiet and quite passive, displaying a lack of confidence rather than any reluctance to engage with their learning. There are some notable exceptions, such as that seen in an assembly which Year 7 pupils led with considerable self-assurance. That same assembly, based on the Chinese New Year, also illustrates students' appreciation of different societies, cultures and faiths. Students adopt safe practices and understand the importance of healthy eating and adopting healthy lifestyles. They are enthusiastic about opportunities to participate in sport. Students make a positive contribution to both their school community through, for example, the school council and the local community through organising events and charity fund-raising. Students' attendance has improved, but, while satisfactory for the majority, it is still too low for a minority, especially the oldest, less engaged students and some of the recent arrivals from Eastern Europe.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

There is a range of common strengths to teaching that make learning in the majority of lessons effective. Most teachers have positive relationships with students and manage behaviour well. They have good subject knowledge and awareness of course and examination requirements which they use to make sure that students know the purpose of each lesson and how to achieve well. Teachers use a wide range of activities and resources, including new technology, to present information, capture students' attention and secure their interest. In the best lessons, teachers use their knowledge of the progress of different students to make sure that tasks are suited to their particular needs. Well focused questions check and develop students' understanding. In a minority of lessons, learning either lacks pace or, more often, is too frenetic and students are sometimes not given the opportunity for sustained periods of independent work. The marking of students' work sometimes provides them with specific guidance on how to improve it, but this is not always the case.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Examples of developments made to improve the curriculum include a new approach adopted at Key Stage 3 to promote students' personal and learning skills by giving them a greater variety of tasks and ways of working. Collaborative work with partner primary schools on this initiative is enhancing its effectiveness. Different pathways are offered at Key Stage 4 that include a greater range of courses, more vocational options and some off-site provision. These are improving students' engagement and helping prepare them better for their futures as seen as the increasing numbers who enter further education, training or employment after leaving school. However, they are not yet ensuring that all older students are engaged enough to attend regularly. Students' literacy skills are being explicitly promoted in other subjects. Strengthening their numeracy skills across the curriculum has not yet received the same focus. There is a good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities that contribute well to students' personal development. Students are particularly enthusiastic about the sports facilities and opportunities, which make a significant contribution to helping them achieve and enjoy their time in school, showing the positive impact of the specialism.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

There are very rigorous and effective arrangements for providing all students with personalised support, including any who need extra help such as those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who are at early stages of speaking English. Students feel secure and know who to turn to for advice, very confident that they will receive the guidance they need. The school works extremely closely with external agencies where necessary to provide specific specialised support and guidance, such as about options after leaving school. The school is making valiant efforts to raise attendance and has seen improvements over time. Strategies are in place to build on these developments. Child protection and health and safety practices meet current requirements. Extremely thorough and comprehensive whole-school approaches to assessing and monitoring students' progress, and the action taken as a result, are escalating their rate

of progress. Staff know students very well and set and use challenging targets with them to increase their understanding of how to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Outstanding leadership and management are responsible for the school's impressive rate of improvement. The headteacher and senior leadership team work very closely together, providing clear direction to staff about what is expected of them. They hold colleagues accountable for their performance, and ensure that they receive high quality training and personalised support to improve it. A strength of the school is its capacity to develop its own leaders and make good use of their skills. As a result, middle leadership is effective and some middle leaders have a very positive impact on improving the areas for which they are responsible. A vital tool in the school's recovery has been the critical analysis of data, particularly relating to students' standards and progress. It uses this to inform developments and check on its effectiveness. As a result, it has a very detailed and accurate understanding of priorities for improvement and provides good value for money. Governance is good. The governing body monitors the school's finances rigorously and is seeking to apply the same level of rigour to its monitoring of students' achievement. The school values its diversity and promotes equality very well. It promotes community cohesion well as a result of its good understanding of the range of needs within the school and local community. It has links that are promoting understanding of communities internationally and is developing effective practice to promote understanding of other communities in this country.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

| | |
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| How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners? | 2 |
| 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? | 1 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 1 |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress | 2 |

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

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|---|---|
| How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? | 2 |
| 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 | 2 |
| The extent to which learners enjoy their education | 2 |
| The attendance of learners | 3 |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 |
| 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 learners' needs? | 2 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 2 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? | 1 |

Leadership and management

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| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 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 |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated | 1 |
| How well does the school contribute to community cohesion? | 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 |
| Does this school require special measures? | No |
| Does this school require a notice to improve? | No |

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for being so welcoming during our recent visit. We enjoyed meeting you. I would now like to let you know the outcomes of the inspection.

I am pleased to tell you that you go to a good school that has some outstanding features. It provides a good curriculum for you and you are well taught. Teachers work hard to make your lessons interesting and make sure that work is suited to your needs. The school also tracks your progress very closely and sets you challenging targets to help you improve. As a result you are achieving well.

The school values you all and provides outstanding care, guidance and support for you. It makes sure it provides extra help to those need it. This makes you feel safe. You know that there are adults you can turn to with any worries and you are confident they will help you. Your personal development is good. You get on well with each other, behave well and do what teachers ask you to. Most of you attend regularly. You enjoy school. You know how to keep healthy and told us you enjoy participating in sporting activities. It is good to see that your school's new specialism is already making a positive difference.

Your school is improving very quickly. This is because the leadership and management of the school are excellent. Your headteacher and other leaders and staff are determined to ensure you get a very good education and are taking the right steps to bring this about. There are three things I have asked them to prioritise. I have asked them to make sure you achieve even better so that the standards you reach by the time you leave school are higher, especially in numeracy and literacy. I would like them to take further action to make sure that those who don't come to school regularly enough come more often. Finally, teaching in most lessons is good, but in a few you don't learn as effectively and I have asked that you are able to learn well in all lessons.

You can help by continuing to work hard, trying to meet your targets, and taking full advantage of the opportunities the school is providing for you. I wish you well for the future.