

# Horsforth School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	108092
<b>Local Authority</b>	Leeds
<b>Inspection number</b>	324706
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 September 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Josephine Nowacki HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	1397
Sixth form	271
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Roland Meredith
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr S Jex
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 September 2005
<b>School address</b>	Lee Lane East Horsforth Leeds West Yorkshire LS18 5RF
<b>Telephone number</b>	0113 2265454
<b>Fax number</b>	0113 2265401

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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Horsforth School is a large mixed community comprehensive school situated to the north west of Leeds. It is a popular school and always oversubscribed. Horsforth School is a specialist science and mathematics college.

The school draws from Horsforth and the surrounding areas, embracing a range of social backgrounds. The majority of students come from relatively favoured circumstances, but there are significant numbers of learners who come from socially disadvantaged areas. Nearly all students are of White British heritage. Learners arrive in Year 7 with a full range of attainment but overall, attainment is above the national average. The number of students in receipt of free school meals is below average but above the average for North West Leeds. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than the national average. The school population is stable.

Horsforth School holds many awards. Examples include: Local and National Healthy Schools; Sportsmark; Rolls Royce Science; Artsmark (Silver); the Inclusion Chartermark and Leeds Standard for Careers Guidance.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Horsforth School offers a calm, safe and happy environment in which students feel valued and enjoy their education. It is a good school with many significant outstanding features.

Achievement is good and standards are exceptionally high. The proportion of students who leave school with five higher grade passes at GCSE is significantly above the national average. All students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress. The personal development of students is outstanding. Students are confident and their behaviour in and out of lessons is exemplary. They are developing good practice in healthy living, often through the excellent range of sporting activities available to them.

Specialist college status has helped improve results in both specialist subject areas of science and mathematics at Key Stage 4. Teachers in science and mathematics have led developments across the curriculum, including the use of electronic learning resources. There has been an increase in numbers opting for science subjects in the sixth form. Specialist status has also led to the development of a wider range of courses. In Key Stage 4, all students study GCSE statistics in Year 10. School data for 2008 indicate that results are high and above the national average. Whilst the school has struggled to deliver some of its programme of activities to the wider community because of a lack of take-up, it has supported partner schools and regional educational institutions extremely well.

Teaching and learning are good and there is much that is outstanding. Most lessons are challenging because teachers have high expectations of their learners. The curriculum is good and improving and meets the needs and interests of learners well. The school's specialist status in science has been used effectively to support developments in other areas of the curriculum. The quality of care and support that students receive is outstanding. There are many examples of best practice in the school including the excellent provision for a small number of Year 7 students who the school has identified as needing extra support, especially with their literacy skills. As a result of this provision, these students improve their skills rapidly, gain self-confidence and settle quickly into school life.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, with excellent support from a strong and experienced leadership team and the governing body has steered the school successfully through major changes and staffing difficulties. He has set a clear direction for the school and is unequivocal in his determination to ensure that all students succeed, whatever their ability. Collaboration and engagement with the local community, local schools and other partners is outstanding and benefit students. An overwhelming majority of parents are supportive of the school and hold it in very high regard.

The school has made good progress in tackling the main issues raised in the last inspection. Leaders and managers have a clear understanding of both the school's strengths and areas where improvement is needed. Inspectors agree with the school's view that it has good capacity to improve further.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 3

The sixth form is well managed and is improving. Standards of attainment at GCE A level are good. Students generally make satisfactory progress when compared with their prior attainment at GCSE. In recent years, results on AS courses have been significantly below the national

average and many students did not make as much progress they could. The school has taken action to address this issue and as a result, attainment on AS courses improved markedly in 2008. The curriculum is good. There is a broad range of academic subjects and some vocational provision which meets the needs and interests of current learners well. Most learners complete their courses and a very high proportion of them progress to higher education, employment or training. However, the school recognises that more work needs to be done, through collaboration with other providers, to broaden the range of vocational options and to secure the existence of some subjects where current enrolment numbers are small. Although progress in the sixth form has been slower than the rest of the school, strengths and areas where it needs to improve have been identified. Strategies to address issues, such as low performance at AS level, are already having a positive impact.

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

- Improve achievement in the sixth form.
- Broaden provision in the sixth form through collaboration with other providers.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Attainment on entry is above the national average. At the end of Year 9, students consistently reach standards that are well above the national average. The school sets challenging targets in each of the core subjects and in 2007 all of these targets were exceeded. Mathematics is a particular strength at Key Stage 3, with significant numbers of students attaining the higher levels. Progress has improved in both English and science, has remained strong in mathematics and is now good overall. The school's own analysis of the most recent 2008 data suggests that this positive trend has been maintained.

Standards in Key Stage 4 are above average in all subjects. Students perform well above average in English, mathematics, science and in a range of other subjects including art, design and technology and history. The school has identified students at risk of underachieving and has implemented successfully a range of improvement strategies. All groups of students now reach very high standards at GCSE and equivalent. The percentage of students achieving five or more GCSEs at grade C or above, including English and mathematics has risen markedly in recent years. The school's data for 2008 indicate that the proportion of boys achieving five higher grade passes at GCSE was greater than the proportion of girls.

As a result of good teaching, challenging targets, high expectations, careful monitoring and targeted support, the progress students make in their time at school has improved and is now good. The slow progress made by boys, an issue in the last inspection, has been tackled. Students with learning disabilities and/or difficulties and those with significant needs achieve at least as well as their peers.

Around half of the sixth form achieved grades A or B at GCE A level in 2007 and in 2008. However, there are inconsistencies in performance across subjects. Pass rates at AS level have improved recently and are now above average. The school recognises that some students make slower progress in the sixth form than would be expected from their GCSE results. A range of strategies have been put in place to tackle this issue. The most recent school data for AS level provide evidence that achievement and standards in the sixth form are improving; inspectors agree.

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

### **Grade: 1**

The personal development and well-being of students are outstanding and strongly supports their ability to achieve high standards. Students really enjoy all aspects of their school life and this is mirrored in their outstanding attendance. They have a clear understanding of the importance of regular exercise and participate well in the extensive range of sporting and other extra-curricular activities. They also have a good understanding of nutrition and the need for a healthy diet as a result of the school's very strong focus on this within the technology curriculum.

The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Work to promote good race relations and equality of opportunity is a strong element of the school's culture. This is exemplified by an exhilarating Year 11 assembly where all students were invited to consider the need to value the rich diversity of other cultures. Despite being a large school, students and their parents say there is a strong sense of belonging, creating a family atmosphere. Students demonstrate a high level of respect for both adults and their peers. A behaviour team has been highly effective in reducing the inappropriate behaviour of a minority of students. As a result, behaviour is outstanding both in lessons and around school. Students say they feel safe and know who to go to if they need help. They say that bullying and intolerance rarely occur.

Opportunities to develop students' community involvement through the school council and involvement in local national and international events are extensive. Sixth formers are actively involved in supporting and mentoring younger students in school. They take responsibility for some extra-curricular activities and their work in primary schools, acting as mentors and running sports' days, is highly valued. Students respond enthusiastically to charity appeals, often running their own events to raise money. This work, together with high standards of literacy and numeracy, and lessons devoted to helping students understand personal finance, develops their workplace skills very well.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Inspectors agree with the school's view that teaching and learning are good with much that is outstanding. The school has invested considerable resources to improve teaching and learning. The result of this investment can be seen in the outstanding results attained by students at the end of Years 9 and 11.

In the good and outstanding lessons, teachers' enthusiasm for their subject is contagious, the pace is lively and activities are varied and challenging. Teachers use questions skilfully and encourage students to think for themselves. As a result, students enjoy learning and are kept on their toes. A comment from one student, 'I love maths lessons.....the teacher makes us work hard, but it's just so good!' exemplifies the school's strong focus on encouraging students to love learning. In a minority of lessons that are less effective, teachers tend to talk too much and there are too few checks to ensure that students understand the content of the lesson. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good and there is some outstanding teaching. However, there are significant pockets of satisfactory teaching which results in inconsistent achievement across some subjects in the sixth form.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

Students enjoy a broad and balanced curriculum. The range of courses is constantly reviewed and improved to match the individual needs and interests of all students.

Strong features of the curriculum in Key Stage 3 include the opportunity to study two languages in Year 7 and to work towards a GCSE equivalent qualification in information and communication technology (ICT) in Year 9. Around 20 students in the current Year 7 benefit from belonging to a 'transition' group. This provision is highly effective in enabling this group of young students to gain self-confidence so they can settle into school life quickly. The school's status as a specialist science college involves all students in starting GCSE courses in Year 9.

In Key Stage 4, higher ability students are able to sit examinations in English and mathematics a year earlier than usual. In religious education, all students are entered for the first part of their GCSE course at the end of Year 10. A small number of students, at risk of underachieving, follow a bespoke work-related programme which combines core GCSEs with more vocational elements. The sixth form curriculum offers a good range of GCE A and AS subjects and some vocational courses. However, the school is aware that there is a need to review the Key Stage 5 curriculum to reflect the changing needs of their students in the future.

An excellent range of extra-curricular activities enables students to pursue their interests especially in sport, music, art, drama. Participation rates are high.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The care, guidance and support for students are of the highest standard. This is a priority of the school and is valued by both parents and students. Excellent use is made of external agencies to provide focused support for vulnerable students and their families. Potential barriers to learning are identified and measures to remove them are put in place swiftly and effectively. Year 7 students with low levels of literacy join a 'transition' group. This, and the outstanding support from their teacher, has enabled them to improve rapidly and, as a result, their self-confidence has grown considerably. Realistic and challenging targets are set and understood by all students. Good quality marking and checks on progress ensure that students understand what they need to do to improve. As a result of the outstanding guidance and support all students, including the most vulnerable, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those at risk of underachieving, make good progress. Careers education and guidance are excellent, helping students to make well informed choices about their future.

At the time of inspection, all statutory requirements for child protection and safeguarding were in place.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a strong vision for the school in which every student has the opportunity to reach their potential. He has built an extremely effective team of senior leaders who provide very clear direction to the school. The school has rigorous quality assurance procedures in place which, alongside well targeted training, have

improved teaching and ensured good achievement by the time students reach the end of Year 11. Middle leaders are becoming increasingly involved in evaluating and improving their own departments.

The headteacher has been instrumental in creating an environment where all students are valued highly, want to learn and work together very harmoniously. Community cohesion is outstanding. Links with partner institutions are strong and parents think very highly of the school. Whilst the effect of improvements has been slower to impact on results in the sixth form, leadership of this area is now good with strategies for development securely in place.

Governance is good. Governors know their school well and hold the school to account effectively. The school provides good value for money and has good capacity to improve further.

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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	3
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	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2	

<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	1
The attendance of learners	1	1
The behaviour of learners	1	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	1

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	2
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 eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	

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

Inspection of Horsforth School, Leeds, LS18 5RF

Thank you for being so welcoming when we visited your school. We very much enjoyed our visit and particularly enjoyed meeting you and watching you work. I am delighted to tell you that your school is a good school and many aspects of it are outstanding. Your teachers take care of you exceptionally well and give you very good guidance. You told us that you have fantastic opportunities to develop your interests and talents and we were pleased to hear that you enjoy coming to school.

The school is very welcoming and all of you show high levels of respect for each other and the staff. You have many opportunities to develop your involvement with the community through the school council and local, national and international events. Teaching is usually good and sometimes it is outstanding. The results that you attain at the end of Years 9 and 11 are outstanding and you make good progress. We were impressed by the ways in which your teachers make lessons interesting for you. You play your part by behaving in a mature and sensible way both during lessons and at social times. In the sixth form teaching is also good, but there is a greater proportion that is satisfactory than there is in the main school. Progress in the sixth form is satisfactory. We think the curriculum is good, but we have asked the school to make sure that there is an even greater range of courses in the sixth form. We have also suggested that the school aims to raise achievement in the sixth form to the good level found in the main school.

The governors, Mr Jex, the senior leaders and all staff are constantly looking for ways to improve the school further. They have a strong vision for the school and have been very successful in creating an environment where you want to learn. You told us that school was a safe place and that bullying and intolerance rarely occur. Your parents told us that they value the school very highly.

We wish you well in the future.