

Abbey Grange Church of England High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108101
Local Authority	Leeds
Inspection number	324708
Inspection date	7 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Jan Bennett HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1247
Sixth form	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Anne Wilson
Headteacher	Mr Alan Key
Date of previous school inspection	5 April 2006
School address	Butcher Hill Leeds West Yorkshire LS16 5EA
Telephone number	0113 2757877
Fax number	0113 2754794

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: fluctuations in achievement; aspects of teaching and learning; and leadership and management. Inspectors collected evidence from lesson observations; assessment data; responses of parents to the Ofsted questionnaire; documentation; and discussions with key staff, the chair of governors and students. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors clarified a number of points in discussions with staff and students. No evidence was found to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Abbey Grange is the only Church of England secondary school in Leeds. It attracts students from across the city and receives more applications for places than it can provide. Students are from a wide variety of social and economic backgrounds but the proportion entitled to free school meals is lower than average as is the proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is average and there are few students who speak English as an additional language. Abbey Grange was awarded specialist humanities status in September 2006. A Section 48 inspection, on behalf of the Diocese of Ripon and Leeds, took place at the same time as this inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Abbey Grange provides its students with a good education and includes a number of outstanding features. The school more than lives up to its mission to educate, nurture and empower. Standards are consistently high, the students' personal development and well-being are outstanding and the school provides an extremely caring and supportive environment in which students thrive. A typical parental comment is, 'The high standard of education in a safe, caring environment has enabled my daughters to realise their full potential in many ways.' The vast majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire were highly supportive of the school.

Standards in the main school are high. The proportion of students gaining five or more high grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, has been well above the national average for a number of years. Students enter the school with prior attainment that is above average and, in Key Stage 3, they reach high standards and achievement is consistently good. In Key Stage 4, achievement varies from year-to-year but is good overall. For example, it was outstanding in 2006 but in 2008, although achievement was better than average, it was not significantly so. The system for monitoring students' progress has been considerably strengthened this year so that staff are alerted quickly if a student is falling behind. Any necessary interventions are targeted carefully and tailored closely to each individual's needs. Students are responding well, especially those in Year 11. School data suggest that achievement will improve in 2009. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress well as a result of the very high quality support that they receive and no specific group of students underachieves. The school has met and exceeded many of its specialist school targets, particularly in history.

The personal development and well-being of students are outstanding, reflecting the excellent care, guidance and support provided. Students are developing into confident, mature young people and their behaviour both in and out of lessons is excellent. Students are very polite and welcoming to visitors and show consideration and respect for each other. They are very articulate and confident in meetings and listen attentively to each other. Students feel very safe in school and say that rare instances of bullying and racism are dealt with very sensitively and effectively by the school. Students are very well informed about healthy lifestyles and participate well in sports and fitness activities. Many take advantage of the attractively priced healthy options in the dining hall and the student council has been influential in ensuring that there is a wide choice on offer. The strong Christian nature of the school underpins students' very strong sense of spirituality, social and moral awareness, and respect for each other. Students are active fund-raisers and they contribute very well to the school and to the local and wider communities. They make their views heard through the school council and Leeds Youth Council. Specialist status has helped students to strengthen links with third world countries and they have won a Diana Award for their work to promote international rights. Students enjoy their learning and attendance is very high. An award winning work experience scheme in Year 10, very good careers guidance and high pass rates in examinations equip students very well for the next stage in their education or for employment.

Teaching and learning are good with some outstanding features. The school has introduced a robust system for observing lessons and records show that the quality of teaching has improved over the last three years. Inspectors' own observations and the views of the students confirm this. Specialist status has enabled the school to appoint a facilitator to promote the sharing of best practice, which is widespread and effective. Teachers work in small cross-curricular groups

observing each other's lessons and learning from each other. Areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have been largely addressed. Teachers have introduced more exciting approaches to learning that have increased students' enjoyment of lessons. Students say that they play a much more active part in lessons which helps them to learn. Lessons are well planned and include a variety of interesting tasks. Teachers' questioning skills are much improved. They ask open-ended questions that encourage students to think and they use probing questions very effectively to clarify points and to check students' understanding. Students participate well in lessons and are keen to learn. Some teachers give excellent written feedback on students' work but the overall quality of marking is still too variable. In a small number of cases, work is not marked often enough and few, if any, written comments are given. In some instances, poorly presented work goes unchallenged.

The curriculum is good. The Key Stage 3 curriculum meets all national requirements and new approaches have been introduced in Year 7 with interesting themes taught across different subjects. The specialist subjects are taking the lead in this development. There is a wide and appropriate range of options in Key Stage 4 including vocational courses and individually tailored work related programmes. There is a very good programme of enrichment and educational visits plus a wide range of activities for gifted and talented students. The study support programme has national recognition.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Excellent induction arrangements ensure that Year 7 students, arriving from over 50 different primary schools, settle very quickly. Students say they have a choice of adults to whom they can turn for personal support at any time. Very effective collaboration with other organisations ensures that specialist support is available when necessary. Support for students who speak English as an additional language is very effective. All statutory obligations in relation to safeguarding are met. Parents rate the care and support that their children receive very highly. A representative comment that reflects the views of others is, 'The school has a very caring and nurturing atmosphere where everybody matters.' Others gave examples of the school supporting students extremely well through difficult periods. Academic guidance is strong.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and senior leadership team have a good understanding of issues and set a clear direction for the school that is well understood by managers and staff. Systems for quality assuring the work of departments have been strengthened. Senior leaders work closely with individual departmental heads, challenging and supporting them in the drive for further improvement. Middle management is strong and improving as good practice, often developed through the specialism, is shared well. There are very good systems for tracking students' progress and they are coordinated well. Staff, including senior managers, are actively involved in mentoring and/or providing additional support. The school's approach to community cohesion is good and contributes well to students' personal development. The performance management of staff is robust and effectively links to the school's development plan and to training and professional development. Governors give good support to the school and are aware of its overall strengths and weaknesses but they do not have a sharp enough grasp of some issues to be able to challenge and question managers sufficiently. Staff and resources are deployed well providing good value for money. The high quality of leadership and management together with improvements since the last inspection demonstrate the school's good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Standards in the sixth form are high, students make good progress and retention rates are high. The personal development of sixth formers is outstanding and they contribute well to the school by supporting younger students. The post-16 curriculum is good and includes GCE AS and A-level courses, vocational programmes and intermediate one year courses. Specialist status has enabled the school to offer two additional A level subjects in politics and media studies. Academic guidance is very strong and students applying to university or looking for employment receive excellent careers advice and support. Leadership and management of the sixth form are both efficient and effective.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all marking is of a high quality and pays particular attention to improving the presentation of students' work.

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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	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?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	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/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

How good are 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	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
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 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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
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 eliminated	2	
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	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 contributing to the recent inspection of the school. We enjoyed meeting you and hearing your views. We read the questionnaires completed by your parents and found them very helpful. Abbey Grange is a good school with a number of outstanding features. Here is a summary of our findings which we hope will be of interest to you.

- GCSE, A level and other examination results are high and you make better progress than students in similar schools.
- You are prepared very well for life when you leave school. Your behaviour is outstanding and you contribute very well to the life of the school and the wider community. Your personal development and well-being are outstanding.
- Teaching and learning are good with some outstanding features. Teachers plan lessons very well and include a good range of activities, and you participate well and show a lively interest in your learning. Teachers ask probing questions to check your understanding and you respond well. We saw examples of excellent marking in your books but the overall quality is not good enough. We also saw too many examples of untidy and poorly presented written work. We are asking the school to improve the quality of marking and to pay close attention to the presentation of your work.
- The curriculum is good and you have a wide range of options from which to choose in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.
- The school is an extremely caring environment. The personal support and academic guidance that you receive are outstanding.
- The leadership and management of the school are good. The senior leadership team is strong and is supported by very capable middle managers and a committed governing body. The headteacher knows exactly what to do to make the school even better and we hope that you will give him your full support.

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We wish you well in the future.