

# Tadcaster Grammar School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	121693
<b>Local Authority</b>	North Yorkshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	327549
<b>Inspection dates</b>	1–2 December 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ian Richardson 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)	1629
Sixth form	322
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Charlotte Bromet
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Geoff Mitchell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	24 May 2006
<b>School address</b>	Toulston Tadcaster North Yorkshire LS24 9NB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01937 833466
<b>Fax number</b>	01937 836082

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<b>Age group</b>	11–18
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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Tadcaster Grammar School is a larger than average comprehensive school that was awarded specialist status as a Business and Enterprise College in September 2003. It achieved redesignation in September 2007 and became a Leading Edge school in April 2008. The school sixth form has continued to grow since the last inspection but overall, the school is around the same size as it was at the last inspection.

The overall attainment of students entering the school is above the national average, with a greater proportion of students with above average attainment than is found in most schools. The proportion of students believed to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average as is the proportion of students from minority ethnic groups and those whose first language is not believed to be English. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average as is the proportion with statements of special educational need.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school where students' personal development and well-being and aspects of leadership and management are outstanding. Overall, the school has taken effective steps to bring about further improvement since the last inspection. Work on Key Stage 3 has brought about a more systematic approach to assessment and made improvements to the way students' performance is monitored and tracked. While the school is still not providing full access to religious education for all students in the sixth form, some progress has been made through a programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) days. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) in Key Stage 4 does not yet meet all the requirements of National Curriculum, but significant steps have been made to accredit ICT attainment for Year 9 students and this has been rolled on into Year 10 but is not yet seen in Year 11. Students do have access to ICT in a range of contexts and the development of the virtual learning environment and new ICT facilities are promoting the development of students' skills in ICT.

The leadership and management of the headteacher are outstanding and he is very well supported by a senior leadership team with clearly defined roles and responsibilities that they discharge with enthusiasm and skill. Within subject faculties, middle managers engage in thorough reviews of students' performance but the lack of consistency in how they use the information with colleagues limits its effectiveness in securing further improvements. The school takes considerable trouble to measure the views of its parents and students. The self-evaluation carried out by the senior leadership team is redolent with data the school has taken the trouble to collect and consider. This openness to the views of both parents and students has built high levels of esteem for management of the school. Parental questionnaires show that 93% of those parents responding agree that the school is well led and managed.

The high quality of senior leadership and management and the good overall standards of teaching lead to effective learning. Across the age range the students show good achievements and make good progress during their time in the school to reach significantly above average standards overall by the end of Year 11. It is clear that students enjoy their time at school. Overwhelmingly, they consider the quality of teaching to be good and they appreciate the efforts teachers make for them. They are very positive about the way in which the school promotes their personal development and well-being. Aligned with the outstanding personal development is the outstanding contribution to community cohesion. This involves wide ranging activities and high levels of involvement with the community. Throughout the school's activities, equal opportunities are well promoted and there is no evidence of students being treated differently on the basis of race, faith or gender. However, in some lessons teachers' expectations are not as high as they could be and the range of planned activities does not fully meet the needs of all students, thus hindering their progress. The quality of teachers' marking is inconsistent. Whilst some is good, pinpointing for students exactly what they must do to improve, some is insufficiently focused on telling them how they should do so.

The impact of the school's specialism in improving provision and the opportunities it provides for students is outstanding. The inclusion of a timetabled lesson for business and enterprise education and the teaching of financial understanding in mathematics are having a significant impact on students' understanding of global and national, personal and domestic finance. Enterprise education enriches students' learning opportunities across a wide range of subjects. It is particularly effective in technology, art, and mathematics. The increasing number and

quality of vocational courses and the links between those in the main school and in the sixth form are improving students' curriculum opportunities and providing effectively for their transition onto post-16 courses. The school has met or exceeded almost all of its specialist school targets and shows good capacity to make further improvements.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

The effectiveness of the sixth form is good, as are the leadership and management.

It has been successful in attracting a high percentage of students to continue in education at the school beyond Year 11. The curriculum offered contains a sufficient range of courses to meet the needs of the large majority of students and includes both academic and vocational courses. Students speak positively of their experiences in the sixth form and they value the good quality of teaching, care and guidance they receive. Students' enjoyment of school is clear and evidenced by their high levels of attendance at lessons.

The overall quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is good. In the best lessons the pace is good, students are appropriately challenged and are actively engaged in their learning. However, in some lessons insufficient planning results in a lack of variety of activities and work does not always meet the needs of some students. For example, in some lessons the extension activities for the more able students are undemanding. All students have targets set for each subject and systems for monitoring and tracking students' progress are in place.

Sixth form students' personal development is good and there are good opportunities for students to become fully involved in the life of the school. There are some innovative developments, such as the Student Leadership Team which, although at an early stage of development, is beginning to make an impact in some areas. For example, the team has been involved in the anti-bullying week assemblies and other activities aimed at improving provision. Sixth form students report that they received good advice and guidance about sixth form courses in Year 11.

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

- Ensure consistency in the way middle managers work with colleagues on quality assurance to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their faculties in order to bring about improvements.
- Ensure that the quality of satisfactory teaching in the school is raised to become at least good and that all teachers provide students with the information they need to improve.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement and standards are good. When students join the school in Year 7, their attainment, as shown by their Key Stage 2 results, is well above average. At the end of Key Stage 3 in 2007, national test results showed standards dipped mainly due to the lower standards attained in English. In 2008, standards in English improved with a significant rise in the proportion of students attaining the higher grades and overall standards were well above average.

At Key Stage 4 in 2008, standards in most subjects including mathematics and science were significantly above average. This was not the case in English Language, where standards, which had been significantly below expectation in 2006 and 2007, remained low in 2008. Because of this, despite the very high standards achieved in the majority of subjects, progress at Key Stage

4 was good rather than outstanding. There are clear signs that the measures put in place are beginning to remedy the relative underachievement in English.

In the sixth form, standards overall are similar to those nationally and so are broadly average. Progress, as shown by examination results in 2008 and in lessons, is very good in design and technology, geography, further mathematics, chemistry, accounting, sociology, travel and tourism, business and art. However, there are variations in achievements in other subjects and so progress overall is good.

Vulnerable students, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the very small number of minority ethnic students achieve equally well.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Students' personal development is outstanding. The students in this school develop exceptionally well to become confident, well-informed, open-minded and considerate individuals. Through a wide range of experiences within and beyond the curriculum the school successfully broadens students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural horizons. These include the many stimulating educational visits and cultural events they participate in. Students develop a very good understanding of the diversity of British society and of different communities elsewhere in the world. They learn to appreciate the different values and lifestyles of people of different origins to themselves. Consequently, incidents of a racist nature are rare. Relationships are very good and contribute strongly to the quality of learning and the strong sense of pride students have in their school.

Attendance is consistently good and better than that for schools in similar circumstances. Students invariably say that they find the school a welcoming, safe and largely enjoyable place to be. They report that incidents of bullying are rare and they speak highly of the efforts of the school through initiatives such as 'anti-bullying week' to help them deal with any such occurrence. Their behaviour is civilized and cooperative with the exception of that of a small minority whose actions sometimes affect the smooth running of lessons and disturb the generally very orderly nature of the school.

The school listens to and values the views of students and recent initiatives to reorganise the school council and to establish 'student leaders' are giving students a stronger voice in helping improve their experience of school. Most students willingly make a strong social contribution to the school and to the wider community; for example, by taking on responsibilities such as acting as mentors or as sports leaders, or involving themselves in the Mozambique Support and Wider Horizons groups.

Students have a good understanding of how to live healthy lifestyles. Many take advantage of the nutritious and healthy meals available in the school canteen. They are using, in growing numbers, the newly developed student support services to seek advice and help about their emotional health and physical well-being.

Students are prepared outstandingly well for their future economic well-being. They make very good progress in basic skills, especially in ICT and numeracy, and in their workplace related skills. They feel very confident about making decisions about future work or education choices and have an exceptionally strong commitment to continuing education or training after 16.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Most lessons are well planned and structured with interesting tasks to engage students, enabling good progress in learning. In the many successful lessons seen during the inspection, high quality teaching ensured that pace was maintained, interaction well managed and good questioning used to check students' learning. The use of praise by teachers and the reward stamps are effective in motivating students. In the few less effective lessons there is too much talking by teachers, pace is less demanding, there are too few opportunities for students to reflect upon what they have learnt and, as a consequence, only satisfactory progress is made.

In general, students show good attitudes to their work and are motivated when they are fully engaged in active learning. However, in some lessons expectations of teachers were not as high and the range of planned activities was more limited and did not fully meet the needs of all students. For example, at times, there is insufficient challenge for the more able students and this hinders their progress.

There is good use of information and communication technology as a teaching aid to add variety and interest to lessons. In the best lessons, teachers use ICT effectively; for example, in art, where industry standard applications are used, and in humanities, where it is used to show appropriate video clips to aid students' learning. These add visual impact to the lesson.

Assessment data are used effectively to identify those students in need of further help. Systematic assessment processes inform students of how well they are doing in relation to their targets. Some good marking and assessment show students exactly how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. However, the quality of marking is inconsistent, with a number of teachers offering written comments that are insufficiently focused on how students can improve. In some of the lessons observed there were limited opportunities for students to be actively involved in assessing their own and their peers' work.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The quality of the curriculum is good and provides a suitable range of courses to meet the needs of students. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is broad and has a good mixture of traditional subjects and vocational programmes. This range of choice meets the needs of students well and is contributing to raising attainment across the ability range. The school is continuing to develop courses to enable all students to demonstrate success, such as through its new vocational life skills programme. Last academic year this resulted in all students leaving the school with a place in further education or employment.

Good support programmes are established for younger students in English, mathematics and science, some using sixth form students as coaches. Students of all ages describe in interview that teachers are very willing to offer support outside lessons. Nationally accredited ICT programmes are now provided for all Year 9 students, but some students in Years 10 and 11 presently follow a restricted programme in this key skill area. Students can opt for a physical education GCSE, but the time allowed for most students in Years 10 and 11 is slightly lower than the present government guidelines. However, many students take advantage of sports

activity after school. Students have access to many clubs and activities at lunchtime, after school and in the holidays.

The curriculum is also enhanced through an extensive range of visits and there is a good enrichment programme in the sixth form. Students are very appreciative of these and they add to their enjoyment of school. The registration time is not always used effectively and does not have a sufficiently structured programme to help the development of students. The school is rightly proud of its excellent enterprise education, which forms a part of the specialist business and enterprise college programme. This is effectively organised and permeates through many different subjects, such as a personal finance course in mathematics, as well as being the focus of special events. This is leading to students developing the skills that will fit them well for their future economic well-being.

In the sixth form there is a good choice of traditional A-level courses with an increasing availability of vocational and applied courses. Pathways are being established to allow students to continue vocational programmes to higher levels and achieve well.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The provision of care, guidance and support for students is good. It is effectively organised and the school makes good use of its surveys of students and parents to inform its decisions over provision. It has evaluated how it supports students to develop good learning skills and achieve well and as a result, reorganised its approaches. There is now extensive provision through the recently implemented student support services and establishment of student support managers. As a result, students have good opportunities to seek advice, guidance and counselling for themselves.

There is good targeting of specialist support programmes through the improved knowledge of how well students are progressing. Some of the recently established support systems are too new to evaluate in terms of effectiveness but the school's monitoring demonstrates that targeted students are showing improved engagement in school and better attitudes to their work. Vulnerable students are well cared for with tailored courses for some students experiencing difficulties and excellent links are made with services outside the school. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are also well identified and appropriate provision made, enabling them to achieve well. Learning support in the classroom is good, and new ways of working have been developed, and are being implemented currently. Academic guidance is rigorous and effective across the full age range in the school. Since the last inspection the school has improved its use of data to track students' achievements and target intervention programmes where necessary. It evaluates the success of its interventions and makes appropriate changes based on the evidence gathered.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management of the school are good with some outstanding features. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and management and has established a very clear direction for the school. Staff are very clear about the direction set for the school. Interviews with middle managers and other staff members confirm that they understand the school's priorities and feel well supported in their endeavours to bring about improvements for students.



The areas for further improvement are clearly described in the school's self-evaluation and include assessment for learning, gathering students' views and development of a skills based curriculum in Key Stage 3.

Targets are well used to promote improvements. The well managed cycle of review, the thorough analysis of performance data and the residential events for the senior leadership team and conferences for faculty leaders are very effective tools for promoting reflective practice and identifying the next steps in development. The school improvement plan is clear and of high quality; it is well focused on well identified key areas. The plan is specific, timed, costed and has clear responsibilities associated with each item.

Systems for self-evaluation are well developed and the senior leadership has a systematic approach to the analysis of performance data to identify areas of success and for development. There is a system of faculty review that reports on performance in subjects. These reviews involve thorough classroom observations and scrutiny of the faculty's work. Heads of faculty have to account for the performance of students in their subject. They carry out quality assurance in a variety of ways and this leads to an inconsistent approach.

Governors make a good contribution to the life of the school. There is clear evidence of them providing both support and challenge on a number of issues not least the consideration of changes to the school day to support significant curriculum innovation and staff training to develop this provision. Records of meetings show a clear concern for standards by the way developments are tracked and how staff are held to be accountable.

The effective use of resources, sound financial management, effective management systems, good outcomes for students all contribute to the judgement that the school provides good value for money.

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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?	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	3
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	

<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	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
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	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

<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?	2	2

## 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	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?	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**

On behalf of the inspection team I want to thank you for the way you helped us during the inspection of your school. Throughout our visit you were well behaved, courteous and demonstrated good attitudes to your work. It was very clear from the interviews we had with you and the questionnaire responses we received from your parents and guardians that you enjoy school and think that you are safe and well cared for. We believe, as you do, that the teaching is good; one student described teachers as, 'always willing to help'.

We found that your school is providing you with a good education. The standards in the school are high in most subjects and this is because of the hard work done by the school leadership, teachers and you. No groups of students are missing out on the opportunity to learn. A few students are not taking full advantage of what the school offers and they need to make sure they take part fully in class and out-of-class activities. Overall, the way the school contributes to and works with the community and other organisations is outstanding. The school is also outstanding in the way it provides for your personal development and well-being. As you try to do your best we are sure the school will do its best to support you to be successful.

While there were no aspects of your school found to be less than good, we believe with your headteacher that even the good can be better. We have asked your school to:

- bring about consistency in the way in which the work in faculties is evaluated in order to bring about improvements
- ensure that all teaching is at least good and all teachers provide you with the information you need to improve. The quality of your learning should come first.