

Ermysted's Grammar School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121716
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	327557
Inspection date	22 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Ruth James 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	Boys
Number on roll	
School (total)	752
Sixth form	184
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Andrew Barrett
Headteacher	Mr Graham Hamilton
Date of previous school inspection	17 October 2005
School address	Gargrave Road Skipton North Yorkshire BD23 1PL
Telephone number	01756 792186
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following

issues: achievement and standards; students' personal development and well-being; teaching and learning; and leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from: the school's self-evaluation form; national published assessment data; the school's own assessment records; a range of school documentation; observation of the school at work; discussions with staff and students; and parental questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified.

Description of the school

Ermysted's Grammar School is a selective boys' school. It has specialist status in science. Students are drawn from a wide area and over 50 primary schools have children who apply for places. The ability profile of students when they enter school is well above average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average, as is the proportion receiving free school meals. A small proportion is of minority ethnic heritage. Up to 15% of students in the sixth form come from other secondary schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Ermysted's Grammar is an outstanding school that provides excellent education and care for its students. As one parent commented, typically reflecting the views of many, Ermysted's is a 'superb school in every respect'. Another very positive comment was, Ermysted's Grammar School is a caring, supportive school. We have been delighted with the progress our sons have made both academically and socially.'

The standards attained are extremely high. For example, the provisional results for 2008 indicate that 98% of Year 11 students achieved five GCSE grades A* to C, including both English and mathematics. All achieved at least seven grades A* to C. The overall A* to C pass rate was 95.7%, with 70% of grades at A* and A. The vast majority of students continue into the sixth form and go on to attain exceptionally high standards at GCE A level. All students make excellent progress as they move through the school, including the small number with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. The curriculum and extensive extra-curricular activities enable students to develop into mature and confident young adults who show an excellent sense of responsibility. There is a strong sense of striving for excellence throughout the school which the boys respond to. They are rightly proud of their school. Their thorough enjoyment of school is seen in very high levels of attendance and almost non-existent instances of unauthorised absence. Opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are extensive. Behaviour is excellent, both in lessons and around the school. Students act responsibly and maturely. They are polite, show consideration for others and respect each other's rights. The curriculum ensures students are aware of diversity, and recent links with a school in Sri Lanka provide a broader perspective outside the United Kingdom. Healthy lifestyles are promoted, especially through the extensive sporting opportunities but there is less attention to healthy diets. The school council has recently been involved in interviews for senior staff.

Visits to lessons during the inspection reinforced the accuracy of the school's evaluation about the quality of teaching, which is good overall. It includes outstanding practice especially, but not exclusively, in the sixth form. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good and they set high expectations for students. Lessons are generally well planned and focused, with clear objectives. Very good attention is paid to attainment levels and grades so that students clearly understand how to achieve their individual targets. Lessons proceed at a good pace so that no time is wasted. Students are exceptionally well motivated and attentive. They enjoy their lessons and participate effectively, developing confidence and a range of skills as well as subject knowledge and understanding. The overall quality of lessons is consistently good or better, although there is a predominance of whole-class teaching. While this meets the needs of most students, there is scope for further developing differentiation to stretch and challenge the most able, and for extending the range of teaching and learning styles.

The curriculum is focused on academic subjects which is appropriate to the needs of the school's very able students. There are numerous extra-curricular activities, for example, 'The England National Fell Running champions', as well as sports and a range of clubs. These include foreign exchange trips, theatre trips, cultural trips to Greece, Cuba and Rome, and field trips to Iceland. Effective links with the local education business partnership contribute well to enterprise education. Students make the most of everything the school has to offer and uptake of these

opportunities is excellent. For example, 80, Year 9 students recently signed up for a lunchtime GCSE astronomy course.

The care, guidance and support offered to students are excellent. There is a strong emphasis on treating students as individuals. Students are keenly aware of the school's values and most share them. Students feel safe, say there is very little bullying and any that occurs is dealt with quickly and effectively. Transition arrangements for students joining the school in Year 7 are very well managed and commented upon favourably by many parents. The pastoral system has developed to include a sharper focus on academic guidance. Individual progress monitoring has been enhanced and mentoring introduced for underachievers.

Since specialist science college status was awarded, standards in science, already high, have risen further. In 2008, provisional results show that all Year 11 students gained at least two GCSE grades A* to C in science. The proportion of A and A* grades was exceptionally high at 76%. Standards in the sixth form are similarly very high. For example, in 2008 in GCE AS level physics, 95% of students achieved grades A or B, and 94% did so in GCE A level chemistry. Specialist status has led to greater collaboration with other local schools, such as a successful transition project with selected primary schools focusing on 'The Science of Sport'. The majority of students study three science subjects at GCSE and there is very good progression to science GCE AS and A levels with numbers increasing. The range of enrichment activities in science is extremely wide.

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The headteacher's approachability, firm determination and drive are recognised by students, parents and staff alike. He is ably supported by his senior leadership team. The process of self-evaluation is thorough and results in an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Leaders and managers at all levels are clear about where further work needs to be done and appropriate action is being taken to address issues. The school's development plan gives a clear direction with appropriate priorities. Middle leaders and managers are highly capable, and individual skills are used well to support others, for example, in developing more sharply focused self-evaluation at department level. Areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have been addressed. Governors are highly supportive of the school and governance is good. The school offers excellent value for money, and its capacity to improve is outstanding.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The provision in the sixth form is outstanding. Standards are exceptionally high. At GCE A level, pass rates are consistently very high with over 70% of passes at the highest grades of A and B. Similarly, there is outstanding performance at GCE AS level where the pass rate has consistently been over 95%, far higher than the national average, with more than 60% of grades at A and B. Retention is excellent. Value added data shows that students do exceptionally well and achieve even higher standards than would be expected from their very good GCSE results. Very high levels of student motivation, strong leadership and management, and outstanding teaching are keys to this success. The rigorous target-setting, assessment and tracking of students' progress contribute to their excellent achievement and students speak of their determination to reach the challenging targets set by their teachers. They recognise that their teachers go beyond the call of duty to support them and they value this highly. Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Sixth formers contribute particularly well to the school and local community, for example, through their roles as prefects and mentors, and their work in local primary schools. They develop into mature, articulate, confident young

adults who are a credit to the school. The range of academic subjects offered in school is broad, and partnership arrangements with a local girls' school provide additional subjects. Together, these meet the ambitions and aspirations of the sixth form's very able students. The outstanding care, guidance and support enjoyed by students in the main school continue in the sixth form. As one parent commented, 'The pastoral and academic guidance that my son received in the sixth form was outstanding. I was overwhelmed with the support that he received and by the extra lengths that staff went to in order to help him achieve.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Further develop the already good teaching to ensure that it provides appropriate challenge for the highest ability students.

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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?	1	1
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	1	1

Achievement and standards

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

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	2	
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	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
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?	1	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	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	1	
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 very much for welcoming us to your school recently. I am particularly grateful to those of you who gave your time to meet formally with us. We found that Ermysted's Grammar is an outstanding school. Your parents are extremely positive about the school.

You make excellent progress during your time in the school and achieve very high standards. The sixth form is outstanding in every respect and the examination results at both GCE AS and A level are exceptionally high. GCSE results are also extremely impressive with almost all students achieving five or more GCSE grades A* to C, including English and mathematics.

You are highly motivated and this contributes well to your success. Your behaviour in lessons and around school is excellent and your attendance is outstanding. Many of you make good contributions' to the school and local community, especially sixth formers. The curriculum is focused on academic subjects which is appropriate for you. The range of extra-curricular opportunities is extensive and you take full advantage of these. This contributes to your outstanding personal development.

Your headteacher and other senior staff lead and manage the school extremely well and are clear about priorities for the future.

Your teachers work very hard. Teaching in school is consistently good and outstanding in the sixth form. We have identified one area where we feel the school could do even better. In lessons, some of you could make more rapid progress than you already do. We have asked the headteacher and staff to further develop the teaching to ensure that it provides appropriate challenge for the highest ability students.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all of you every success in the future.