

# Boroughbridge High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	121699
<b>Local Authority</b>	North Yorkshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	331418
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 January 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Julie Price Grimshaw

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)	693
Sixth form	93
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs H Fairwood
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms E Dixon
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 December 2005
<b>School address</b>	Wetherby Road Boroughbridge York North Yorkshire YO51 9JX
<b>Telephone number</b>	01423 323 540
<b>Fax number</b>	01423 324 353

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

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school serving an area of relative social and economic advantage. Almost all students are of White British heritage. Very few students speak a home language other than English, although a small number of students from Eastern Europe have joined the school over the past year. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school was awarded specialist status for performing arts in September 2003.

## 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 and improving school. Some aspects of its work, notably the care and support provided for students and their personal development, are of high quality. Since the last inspection, staff have made a determined effort to improve the quality of provision and this has resulted in better achievement and raised standards. A large majority of parents are delighted with the school's work. Typical comments include, 'I feel privileged that my children attend Boroughbridge High School' and 'There is a very real feeling that each child is valued'.

Students enter the school with standards that are broadly average. They make good progress to reach standards that are generally above average by Year 11. This is largely due to the good quality teaching and learning found in the great majority of lessons. Variations in the quality of classroom practice, highlighted during the last inspection, have been tackled. It is now possible to see a whole school approach to fostering students' progress, through carefully planned lessons that include a good variety of activities. In most lessons, the focus is on accelerating students' learning, and there are numerous opportunities for them to work independently. As a result they make good progress. However, a small minority of lessons are too teacher-directed, with students expected to be passive listeners for much of the time; in such lessons, their progress is limited. Students' behaviour, even in the less effective lessons, is excellent. They thoroughly enjoy school, as reflected in their attendance, which is well above average. Almost all students have excellent attitudes to learning and are caring and supportive of each other. Their moral and social development is outstanding and they have good awareness of faiths and cultures other than their own. Many are involved in enterprise activities and this, combined with good quality careers advice and well developed key skills, means that they are extremely well prepared for life after school.

There have been substantial improvements to the curriculum since the last inspection. These include the introduction of new courses at Key Stage 4, which better meet the needs of all students. The school has developed the use of information and communication technology (ICT) across subjects. Successful initiatives include the introduction of a virtual learning environment. This allows computer access to a wide range of the school's resources from home and is beginning to be used effectively by staff and students. The school's specialist status supports students' personal development well, for example, by improving their confidence and self-esteem. However, some instability in staffing, which has now been addressed, led to disappointing examination results in the specialist subjects in 2008.

The excellent quality care provided for students supports their outstanding personal development and contributes significantly to their good academic achievement. Staff know their students extremely well and are clearly dedicated to ensuring that the pastoral needs of all, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are fully met. Improvements to procedures for tracking students' progress are helping to raise achievement. Excellent partnerships with external agencies help to ensure that each individual receives very high quality care and support.

The school has made good progress over the last three years and has addressed all issues raised during the last inspection. This improvement has been underpinned by good quality leadership and management, particularly on the part of the headteacher. She has ensured a sharp focus on the most important issues, such as improving the quality and consistency of teaching and learning. The success of many of the initiatives introduced recently is now becoming evident, although whole-school targets have not always been used effectively to raise standards. Systems

for setting such targets have recently been changed with the aim of ensuring that they are both challenging and achievable, but it is too early to see the full impact of this work. The school has good capacity for further improvement.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

The sixth form is inclusive. All students are welcome, regardless of academic ability, and there is sufficient flexibility to ensure that the improved curriculum meets the needs of all students. The schools' own data and inspection evidence indicate that currently students achieve well during their time in the sixth form, although this has not been the case in the past. However, the small number of students studying some subjects makes statistical comparison with previous national averages unreliable. The extremely wide range of students' abilities means that overall standards in the sixth form are broadly average.

Improvements made to teaching and learning in the main school are also evident in the sixth form. The good progress students made during lessons observed confirmed this. Students have excellent relationships with their teachers. A typical view was reflected by one student who said 'It's incredibly friendly – we all know each other well, and we get so much individual attention.' Students have now developed effective independent learning skills, and teachers now use assessment strategies well to ensure that they make good progress. The curriculum for sixth form students has improved since the last inspection with the introduction of a range of new courses. However, the small numbers studying some subjects puts a strain on the schools' finances. The influence of the school's specialist status is evident, with many students opting to study performing arts, both in the sixth form and beyond.

There is a strong emphasis given to students' personal development. Systems for tracking students' academic progress have recently been developed and are beginning to show a positive impact on students' progress. Sixth form students enjoy their education and feel that their opinions are valued. They enjoy mentoring younger students in the main school. Overall, they are satisfied that the school's resources meet their needs, although the occasional use of the sixth form common room for main school lessons is unpopular amongst students.

Leadership of the sixth form is effective as demonstrated by the good teaching and recent improvements to students' progress. The new sixth form leader has received good quality support in taking on the role, and has a clear vision of how provision can be improved further.

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

- Ensure that all lessons include sufficient opportunities for students' full engagement with their learning.
- Establish systems for setting challenging yet achievable whole-school targets.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Improvements to teaching, learning and the curriculum have led to a rising trend in achievement and standards over the last three years. From their broadly average starting points in Year 7, students make good progress to reach standards that are generally above average at the end of Key Stage 4. Weaknesses in achievement in English, noted at the time of the last inspection, have now been addressed. A small decline in the proportion of students achieving the highest grades in GCSE examinations, including those of the specialist subjects, has led to the school

taking very swift action in ensuring that the most able are sufficiently challenged. The impact of this can be seen in lessons, where students of all abilities make at least good progress. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good and sometimes outstanding progress due to the high quality support they receive.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Students speak enthusiastically of their school, described by several as being 'a friendly place where everyone looks after each other.' Students are polite, courteous and welcoming to visitors. Their excellent moral development is reflected in the quality of some of the discussions on ethical issues in the virtual learning environment. Students have an excellent awareness of safety, including the safe use of the Internet. Their extensive knowledge of healthy eating influences their choice of meals, both in and out of school. Students make an excellent contribution to both the school and the local community. This is evident in, for example, their fundraising for charity, school performances and high quality collaborative work with other schools and organisations. They have a keen interest in the beliefs and cultures of others, as shown in their attitudes to visits to religious centres. Students develop leadership skills through programmes such as the Young Arts Leader Award scheme. Their enjoyment of their education is clear; several parents commented that their children are 'very happy to go to school every day.'

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The vast majority of lessons are briskly paced and ensure students' full attention through a variety of interesting and relevant activities. This helps to ensure that students are fully engaged in their own learning and are effective in working independently. Work set is well matched to students' ability levels. Questioning is sharp and encourages students to think carefully and extend their answers. Teachers have good subject knowledge and assess students' work accurately. Written feedback is consistently good, particularly in mathematics. Students have regular opportunities to assess their own and each other's work. Teachers use a wide range of resources, including ICT, to enhance teaching and learning. In the main, students make good or even outstanding progress during lessons. A small minority of lessons, including some of the specialist subjects, are too dominated by teachers' input and students do not have sufficient opportunity to work independently. In such lessons, students make, at best, satisfactory progress.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

Improvements to the curriculum have been welcomed by staff and students alike. Throughout the school, the recent focus on 'learning to learn', particularly in terms of personal and thinking skills, has been successful and this has contributed to improvements in achievement. The wide range of courses includes vocational programmes run in collaboration with local colleges. A major strength of the Key Stage 4 curriculum is the programme leading to the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness, recently introduced. As part of this, students carry out valuable work in the community, for example, volunteering in a charity shop and helping out in a local

playgroup. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, including tuition in sign language to enable students to communicate more effectively with their peers who have impaired hearing.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Staff do their utmost to ensure that students receive outstanding care and support, carefully tailored to the needs of the individual. Students know that they always have someone to talk to, be it a member of staff or sixth form student, who is totally committed to their well-being. The school deals very effectively with any rare incidents of bullying or harassment. Vulnerable students, and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are supported extremely well by sensitive staff with specialist knowledge. A particular strength of the school is the support provided to new students, whether joining in Year 7 or later on. Many parents singled this aspect out for praise, through comments such as, 'We have to say that the transition from primary to high school was absolutely fantastic', and 'Our child was made to feel cared for and welcome from day one.' All safeguarding requirements are met. Academic guidance has improved over recent years. Students have a clear idea of how well they are doing and exactly what they need to do next. The school provides targeted support to help meet each pupil's needs in achieving their academic goals.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Since the last inspection leaders and managers have successfully addressed the issues identified at that time. The focus on developing the roles of middle managers, including the recently appointed head of sixth form, has been particularly successful. They have welcomed the increase in accountability and have taken on a more active role in monitoring the work of subject departments. This work is closely scrutinised by senior leaders. A corporate approach to school improvement is evident amongst the great majority of staff. There is an established and effective cycle of monitoring, evaluation and action planning. The school's self-evaluation reflects a largely accurate view of strengths and weaknesses. The use of whole-school targets to raise standards is satisfactory. Although systems for target setting have recently been modified, targets have not always been challenging and achievable. Community cohesion is promoted well, particularly through teaching, learning and the curriculum. For example, an outstanding lesson on Bollywood dance included reference to both the national and international dimensions of this art form. The school has gained the International School Award, which has helped its work in promoting community cohesion. Governance is good. Governors are keen and committed and have up-to-date awareness of issues affecting the school. They assist school leaders through detailed discussion of such issues.

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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	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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**Overall effectiveness**

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

**Achievement and standards**

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	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	

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<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.

<sup>2</sup>IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	IE <sup>2</sup>
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

<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	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	3	
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**

Inspection of Boroughbridge High School, York, YO51 9JX

On behalf of my colleagues and myself, I would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome and for sharing your views with us when we came to inspect your school recently. I would like to share our main findings with you.

Your school has improved since its last inspection three years ago and is now good. You told us that it is a friendly and welcoming place, and as visitors we certainly felt that this was the case. We were particularly impressed with your outstanding behaviour. You were so polite, courteous and helpful towards us. Your personal development is outstanding, as is the quality of care, guidance and support provided by the staff. We were also pleased to hear that you are keen to support each other.

We judge the quality of teaching and learning to be good overall. We saw some good and outstanding lessons where everyone was fully involved in their learning and the lesson moved along at a brisk pace. The curriculum has improved over the last few years and there is now a programme of study to suit everyone, particularly in Years 10 and 11. All of these improvements have led to raised standards. By the end of Year 11, standards are generally above average, which means that you make good progress overall. The sixth form at Boroughbridge is effective, and the staff are committed to making sure that everyone has the chance to follow appropriate courses.

We have identified two areas to help your school to improve further. Although most of the teaching and learning is good or better, there are a few lessons where you make slower progress because there is insufficient opportunity for you to be actively involved in your own learning. We have asked that the school addresses this. Also, we have recommended that the school ensures that the targets it sets for your performance in examinations and tests are sufficiently challenging and achievable.

Your school is well led and managed. Your headteacher and the staff are committed to providing you with a very high standard of education. We are delighted that you are proud to be students at Boroughbridge High School and wish you every success in the future.