

# The Wensleydale School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	121679
<b>Local Authority</b>	North Yorkshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	335377
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30 November –1 December 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Christopher Keeler HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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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
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	500
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	74
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Ken Readshaw
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Phil Benaiges
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 January 2008
<b>School address</b>	Richmond Road Leyburn North Yorkshire DL8 5HY
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out at no notice by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 28 lessons and held meetings with the headteacher, chair of governors, staff and a representative of the local authority. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan. Inspectors also took into account the most recent analysis of parental feedback organised by the school.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the unvalidated examination results for all groups of students at the end of Key Stage 4 and the sixth form
- the quality of teaching across all year groups with specific reference to student's progress in lessons and the use of assessment to enhance learning
- the effectiveness of the senior and middle leadership to drive improvements to teaching and learning
- the capacity of the school's leadership to sustain the improvements made since the previous inspection in January 2008.

## Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average secondary school. Students travel from a wide and mostly rural area of the Yorkshire Dales, and approximately 20% are from service families stationed at nearby military bases. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well below average. Students are mostly White British and less than 1% are from Black and minority ethnic groups. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The school was awarded science college status and gained a Healthy Schools award in 2006. When The Wensleydale School was inspected in January 2008, it was judged to require special measures. The senior leadership team and heads of core subjects are all new to post since 2008.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

### Main findings

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

The Wensleydale School provides a satisfactory standard of education for its students. Good leadership by the headteacher and the senior leadership team, effective governance, focused support by the local authority and a commitment by all staff to the improvement process have resulted in significant improvement. Staff and students recognise the school is better placed today than it has been for some years and they are rightly proud of this. All have set their sights on becoming a good school. The rate of improvement secured following the designation of special measures together with accurate self-evaluation indicates that the capacity for improvement is good and therefore this aim is perfectly justified.

Students in Key Stage 3 and 4 are making satisfactory progress. Achievement is satisfactory. Examination results in 2009 demonstrate that at GCSE, students are performing slightly above the national average in relation to the proportion attaining five A\* to C grades and in line in respect of five A\* to C grades, including English and mathematics. This represents a notable achievement and has been brought about by improvements to teaching and learning. Lessons are well planned, teachers display good subject knowledge, relationships between staff and students are good and a purposeful working atmosphere exists in classrooms. There is evidence of good and sometimes outstanding teaching. However, this is not as consistent as it should be if levels of attainment are to rise further. Some of the more able students are not progressing as quickly as they could because work is not sufficiently challenging. While the quality of marking is sometimes good, this practice is not consistent throughout the school. As a result, some students are unclear as to how they can improve and this, in turn, inhibits progress. Faculty leaders are being held to account for the quality of teaching and learning within their departments. However, monitoring the implementation of agreed practice on a regular basis is not as stringent as it should be.

The curriculum meets the learning needs of all students. The school leadership is currently reviewing curriculum provision with the intention of providing students with increased opportunities to practice and apply core skills of literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology in other subjects. The contribution made by the school's specialist status is still underdeveloped. More needs to be done to strengthen the contribution of this faculty in raising levels of attainment throughout the school.

The good care, support and guidance provided by the school ensure that students are

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developing into confident and self-assured individuals. Standards of behaviour are now good and this has impacted positively on learning. Attendance is good and students report that they enjoy their learning. The school has sound plans in place to promote community cohesion. Links with local communities make a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion but the awareness and understanding of global issues requires further development. Procedures for child protection are in place, they are reviewed regularly and meet all requirements. Arrangements for safeguarding are in order and carefully managed. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Continue to raise levels of attainment and further accelerate progress throughout the school by:
  - ensuring that the quality of teaching is consistently good through effective monitoring by faculty leaders
  - ensure that activities are well matched to student's abilities, particularly the most able
  - improve the quality of marking so that it acknowledges strengths as well as areas for improvement in students' work
  - strengthen the impact of science as a specialist subject.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****3**

The outcomes for all groups of learners have improved significantly since the school was placed in special measures. Pupils make satisfactory progress, which was evident in lesson observations undertaken during the inspection. Unvalidated data for 2009 reveal that by the end of Year 11, students' standards are slightly above the national average. The number of students achieving five A\* to C GCSE grades is the highest in the school's history. The proportion of students achieving five A\* to C grades including English and mathematics is now in line with the national average. More students are attaining higher grades especially in mathematics and science. While students are now making satisfactory progress, there remains room for further improvement, particularly in English.

The overall improvement in student outcomes reflects the concerted and effective action taken by senior leaders to tackle the legacy of underachievement and underperformance over the past 18 months. This includes improved quality of teaching, better use of assessment, rigorous tracking of progress and targeted intervention so that students may realise their potential. The school's current assessment information and evidence from the observation of teaching and learning during this inspection indicate that the pattern of improvement is on course to be reflected by the current Year 11 in 2010. In

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Key Stage 3, a uniform pattern of good achievement is emerging in all core subjects with current Year 9 students on track to reach at least above average attainment with much larger than average proportions consistently reaching higher levels. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those potentially vulnerable make the same satisfactory progress as their peers because the good support they receive is effectively coordinated and their progress carefully checked.

Students enjoy school which is reflected in their good attendance. Behaviour of students is good during lessons and as they move around the school. This aspect has improved appreciably over the past 18 months and has impacted positively on learning. Students confirm they feel safe in school and well cared for. They do not regard bullying, either physical or verbal, as a major problem. When issues arise they are confident they are dealt with seriously and effectively. They are also confident that adults in school, both teaching and non-teaching, do listen to student concerns and deal with them in an appropriate manner.

Students display good knowledge of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle and provide evidence of how this knowledge impacts on their own lives. Encouragingly, students speak with knowledge and understanding about how different food types benefit them and older students speak of this information informing their choices outside school. The extent of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. They are developing a good awareness of the consequences of their own actions and the feelings of others. However, further interaction is required with those from different ethnic and religious backgrounds if students are to fully appreciate the wider cultural and faith issues in society.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>3</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

<b>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</b> Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>

## How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching continues to improve and has reached a securely satisfactory level. While there is evidence of good and on occasions, outstanding lessons, their positive features are not sufficiently widespread and embedded throughout the school. The pace of learning is fast in the most effective lessons. Teachers make good use of open-ended questions to challenge the students' thinking and trigger good, well-reasoned responses. All lessons are now well structured and planned around clearly identified learning outcomes. Relationships between teachers and students are positive. Students respond well to the increased opportunities for paired, group and discussion work. Some very skilled explanations reflect good subject knowledge. Despite improvements, there are still occasions when teachers' expectations about a minority of students' attitude to learning are not high enough.

The use of assessment to support learning is satisfactory. It has improved since the previous monitoring visit in June 2009. However, practice is not sufficiently embedded across the school. As a result, students of different abilities are not always suitably challenged, especially the more able, because lessons depend too much on a common approach. The quality of marking is variable. It does not consistently provide sufficient guidance on what students have done well and on what they need to do to improve. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. Plans for improving it are well advanced and arrangements for making full use of the flexibility offered by the new curriculum to meet students' needs further are on schedule for introduction in 2010. At Key Stage 4, the curriculum arrangements are more diverse thanks to partnerships with the local college. This link provides opportunities for students to access a combination of vocational and diploma courses to which some students are suited.

There are well organised arrangements to help students settle into the school. The newly introduced inclusion passport represents an innovative approach to ensuring all adults in the school provide effective support for students in need of additional help. Where appropriate, this help includes the use of outside specialist agencies. The effectiveness of the school's systems is evident in the impact on students' outcomes. Better support and monitoring have seen a notable drop in exclusions and sustained improvement in attendance. There is a clear sense of partnership between students and teachers in lessons. The impact is evident in improved behaviour, more positive attitudes to learning and better achievement. The school has rightly identified the need to extend and develop some areas of guidance such as that given to Year 11 students about their future study and career options.

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*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher has provided a clear sense of direction and purpose since his appointment in September 2008. He has successfully communicated high expectations to staff in the drive to promote improvement and secure a satisfactory school. Together with a supportive and able deputy headteacher and a dynamic senior leadership team, they have tackled weaknesses in teaching and learning and middle management effectively. As a result, standards are rising. Above all, a cohesive professional learning community is emerging in which staff reflect on practice and where necessary take steps to improve it themselves. The governing body provides challenge and support in equal measure and has not hesitated in taking difficult decisions over the past two years. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths of the school as well as what still needs to be done.

School leadership has understandably focused on raising standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science as a priority over the past two years. Leadership in these subjects is now strong and this is reflected in students' improved levels of attainment. The time is right for the school to build on the developments in science in order to strengthen the impact of specialist status not only within the school but also in the community. Other faculty leaders are being held to account and they, too, have improved in the way in which they manage their departments. However, increased monitoring is required to ensure that good practice is embedded, particularly in respect of assessment, marking and the quality of display. The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination is good. The action taken by the school over the past two years has resulted in sustained and significant improvement in the performance of groups of students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those potentially vulnerable. The school has sound plans in place to promote community cohesion but acknowledge that students' awareness and understanding of global issues require further development. Arrangements for safeguarding are in order and carefully managed.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*



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<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Sixth form

Students enter the sixth form with GCSE scores that are broadly in line with those nationally. While examination results in the sixth form have improved year-on-year, students make broadly satisfactory progress allowing many of them to access university. The proportion of students in Year 12 who moved onto Year 13 is low as a result of individuals embarking on inappropriate study programmes. This is being rectified by the college leadership. One-to-one tutorials take place regularly and are appreciated by students as it gives them an indication of how well they are doing in their studies. The curriculum is largely academic and meets the needs of students who chose to continue their studies at the school. Partnerships with other providers have been explored and, although vocational pathways have been offered to students, their take-up has not been in sufficient numbers.

Opportunities for students to get involved in enrichment and extra-curricular activities contribute to their satisfactory personal development and well-being. Students speak positively about their experiences in lessons and appreciate the development of their independent learning skills. Teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory overall with some that is good. While the use of data is resulting in some effective intervention, it has yet to be fully and systematically analysed and used to have a more positive impact on standards. Evidence of some successful intervention in the recent past confirms satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

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*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

## **Views of parents and carers**

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for monitoring inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

## **Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire**

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



2 December 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of The Wensleydale School, Leyburn, North Yorkshire

I am pleased to inform you that your school no longer requires special measures. The Wensleydale is a satisfactory school.

Under the leadership of the headteacher and an effective senior leadership team the school has made good progress over the last two years. During this time there have been considerable improvements to teaching and learning, the effectiveness of faculty leaders and your standard of behaviour. As a result, standards are rising, particularly in relation to your performance at GCSE level.

The school leadership does not see this as the end of the journey from special measures, rather the beginning of a new phase, to become regarded as a good school. They are right to take this view. You can and must play your part by maintaining current levels of good behaviour and developing good working habits.

In order to help the school continue on its journey I have asked the headteacher to: continue to raise levels of attainment and further accelerate progress throughout the school by:

- ensuring that the quality of teaching is consistently good through effective monitoring by faculty leaders
- ensure that activities are well matched to student's abilities, particularly the most able
- improve the quality of marking so that it acknowledges strengths as well as areas for improvement in students' work
- strengthen the impact of science as a specialist subject.

Inspectors may visit your school in the future to see how things are progressing.

I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Keeler

Her Majesty's Inspector

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