

# Thornton Grammar School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	107442
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bradford
<b>Inspection number</b>	336886
<b>Inspection dates</b>	20–21 May 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Marianne Young 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>	Foundation
<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>	1487
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	240
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Patrick Wilkings
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr John Weir
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 June 2007
<b>School address</b>	Leaventhorpe Lane Thornton Bradford BD13 3BH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01274 881082
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<b>Email address</b>	office@thorntongs.ngfl.ac.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. Forty seven lessons and teachers were observed. Meetings were held with groups of students, the headteacher, senior staff, middle leaders, staff and members of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at the school's website and a range of documents including safeguarding and other policy documents, students' targets and tracking data, whole-school and departmental improvement plans, the minutes of recent governing body meetings and the outcomes of student and staff questionnaires. They scrutinised 485 parent and carer questionnaires (the responses are shown in the annex to this report) as well as 86 staff and 140 student questionnaires.

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

- the attainment, learning and progress of students, particularly in GCSE English, mathematics and science
- whether the quality of teaching and learning has improved enough since the last inspection in June 2007, including teachers' use of assessment data and the accuracy of the school's evaluation of these aspects
- the effectiveness of the school's leadership in monitoring and evaluating provision and the performance of different subject areas, together with their capacity to further improve the school
- the impact of the school's specialisms
- the effectiveness of the sixth form.

## Information about the school

The school has a comprehensive intake with the majority of students from a White British background with those from Pakistani and Indian heritage making up other main groups. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. However, 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 is designated as a specialist sports college with additional specialisms in science and applied learning. The school has achieved many external awards including Investors in Pupils, Investors in People, Healthy Schools and Sportsmark.

**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

Thornton Grammar School has many strengths but also areas that continue to need further development. Its sports specialism places it firmly as a hub in the local community. Students enjoy being at the school as shown by their above average attendance and the way relationships between different groups are strong, including good race relations. Despite a fall in standards in some areas in 2009, inspectors' observations of students' learning in lessons and scrutiny of the school's tracking of their progress, confirmed the school's view that results are likely to improve this year. An appropriate system for tracking the progress made by individuals and different groups of students is in place and senior leaders provide appropriate interventions and support as a result of this information. However, not all teachers are making use of this data to ensure all students are challenged appropriately, when planning lessons. The school realises that raising standards in the core subjects, especially in science, is an ongoing issue. For these reasons, Thornton Grammar's value for money and its overall effectiveness are currently judged to be satisfactory.

The quality of teaching is too variable, ranging from outstanding to inadequate. One of the reasons for this variation is that, although senior and middle leaders monitor lessons and collect a range of data about teaching and learning regularly, they have not acted specifically enough on this evidence. The good curriculum is linked particularly to the strong partnership work with professional organisations and businesses outside the school. These, together with the school's three specialist areas, ensure a good choice of study and career choices for all students at different times in their education. Although there are positive links between the school and primaries, particularly to develop sporting and science work, the latter is the weakest performing specialist subject.

The school is conscientiously led by a determined and committed headteacher who is ably supported by senior colleagues. They know the school well putting students' welfare and care high on their list of priorities. Despite leaders knowing the strengths and weaknesses of the school, these are, at times, translated into a more positive view of the performance of the school than that found by inspectors. However they do not adequately involve the head of sixth form in evaluating the provision in that area. The school development plan addresses appropriate priorities and provides a way forward. However, in both the school development plan and in those written by middle leaders, a few actions are not linked explicitly enough to measure precisely their benefits on students' achievement. Conversely, in some other areas, for example changes to the curriculum, partnerships with many external agencies and the improvements made to the school's method of data collection, indications are evident that appropriate strategies and interventions to improve students' attainment and progress, are having a clear

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impact. As a result, the school demonstrates a good capacity to improve.

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

- Improve performance and students' progress in science throughout Key Stages 3 and 4.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning so that at least 75% is judged to be good and better by:
  - ensuring that all teachers use the available data about students' progress to provide lessons that have a consistently high and appropriate level of challenge
  - making sure that marking is used consistently to tell students how to improve their work
  - making sure that teachers check regularly if students have understood the work and not just completed the tasks set.
- Improve the quality of evaluation throughout the school by:
  - making sure that current systems of monitoring, together with any new interventions and procedures, are rigorously evaluated for the impact that they have on students' progress.
- Improve the quality of outcomes in the sixth form by:
  - ensuring that the leadership of the sixth form is able to monitor, evaluate and drive forward proposed changes so that all students achieve as well as they can.
- About 40% of 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**

Results from examinations taken in 2009 indicate that all Year 11 students made at least satisfactory progress relative to their starting points. The variety of subject choices, including the range of vocational courses, resulted in more students than previously gaining five A\* to G grades at GCSE level. However, despite improved results in mathematics, the school did not manage to reach its challenging target for five A\* to C grades including English and mathematics. This was due mainly to the weaker performance in English.

In lessons observed by inspectors, students' learning was at least satisfactory and in some cases good. This, together with other inspection evidence provided by senior leaders, indicates that the initiatives taken to raise standards, especially in English and mathematics are having a positive impact. Tracking procedures, together with the number of successful early entries in these subjects lead to inspectors' confidence that the targets set for the current cohort will be met. There are no significant differences in outcomes between groups of students, either of different genders or cultures, or students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, the school

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recognises that, although performance in science is likely to improve this year, there is still some way to go and standards in this subject remain significantly below that expected nationally.

The vast majority of students behave well, although a few parents expressed concern about the behaviour of some students. There was some low level disruption observed by inspectors in a small minority of lessons due mainly to a lack of challenge. Students say they feel safe in school and generally conduct themselves sensibly between lessons and at social times, despite the cramped corridors and lack of outdoor areas. Racial incidents are low, exclusions have fallen significantly recently and attendance remains above average. However, not all students arrive to lessons punctually.

Students enthusiastically take part in the wide range of physical activities on offer and this contributes well to their understanding of health issues and involvement in sporting links with the local community. The school's trust status is helping to increase the number of work placement links and this is having a good impact as it enables more students to experience employment at first hand. Opportunities are missed, especially during lessons and tutor times, to develop their spiritual awareness. Nevertheless, students from different ethnicities and cultures integrate well together and have a good understanding of right and wrong.

*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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</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.

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## How effective is the provision?

What happens in the classroom is regularly monitored and leaders know where strengths and weaknesses lie in teaching. The most effective teaching challenges students, captures and holds their interest and shows through in the quality of their classroom discussions and written work. However, inspectors saw too many lessons where the teacher did too much of the work, students were insufficiently involved which resulted in slow learning and progress. Too many lessons were not sufficiently well planned to meet the varying needs of all students. Despite a small amount of detailed and helpful marking, too often books remain unmarked for considerable periods of time. As a result, although students generally know their personal and current targets, these tend to be very general and lack specific information about different subjects. Therefore, they are not clear exactly how they can improve their work, including its presentation, and thus reach higher grades.

Partnerships, especially those developed through sporting links continue to be a strong aspect of the curriculum which meets students' needs well. Progress on improving students' basic skills, especially literacy, is uneven as shown by the variation and worth given to this in teachers' lesson planning. Good pastoral systems are provided for all students, including vulnerable students and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to ensure that they are effectively supported during their time in the school. There are particular strengths in both the transition arrangements with primary schools and the career advice provided. However, the school recognises that there is too much variability and time is not sufficiently well used during tutor periods.

*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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

There are some good features of leadership and management at all levels, but inconsistencies remain, which are acknowledged by senior leaders. They are aware of the issues the school faces and are confident to try new ideas to improve provision. Despite a wealth of monitoring activities, undertaken mainly by senior leaders, the evaluation of this work is not sufficiently rigorous so that the impact of activities can be clearly measured, especially on students' performance. Middle leaders are growing in confidence to make judgements about the effectiveness of their subject areas and all report to a member of the senior management team. There is, however, a clear

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momentum for change and growing evidence of a team more focused on embedding ambition and driving improvement in some subject areas, where improvement has been less rapid, for example in science. Nevertheless, all leaders are strongly committed to promoting equality and tackling discrimination of any kind.

Safeguarding procedures are good. Policies and procedures are securely in place. Record keeping is robust; risk assessments and health and safety checks are regularly carried out. Governors are fully aware of their responsibilities and provide appropriate support and challenge. Community cohesion is good and a strength of the school. The school demonstrates clearly its contribution to community cohesion and there are effective plans to promote engagement with a range of community groups beyond the school and the local area. As a result, students contribute well to different community activities and those from different backgrounds get on noticeably well with each other. The school provides a number of different mechanisms and channels to inform and communicate with parents and carers. Parents are actively encouraged to use them. Nevertheless, some parents felt these could be improved and the school is actively investigating ways to develop them further.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
<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>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Sixth form

Standards in the sixth form have improved and are now broadly in line with national figures. Progress, given students' attainment on entry to the sixth form, is satisfactory. There is still considerable variation in students' performance in different subjects, but students do better in science subjects in the sixth form compared to their performance

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in these subjects in the main school. Teaching is satisfactory and some weaknesses identified in the main school are again evident. The good curriculum matches students' needs and the links with external organisations provides good opportunities for students to consider a number of choices to continue studying after Year 13. As a result, students' aspirations are higher. Students take on a range of leadership responsibilities in the school and are successful role models for younger students. Management of the sixth form is done well. Despite the head of sixth form ensuring that pastoral issues are addressed thoroughly, they are not empowered to lead. This, together with monitoring of students' progress, is done by senior and middle leaders through a rigorous and detailed tracking system. However, the impact of their ability to secure improvement across different subjects is variable. As a result, there is satisfactory capacity to improve in the sixth form.

*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**

Questionnaires were returned from 33% of parents and carers. This is a higher figure than that seen normally. Of these, most were supportive of the school, however, a few returns expressed concerns about behaviour and how the school helps parents and carers to support their child's learning. A slightly higher proportion of parents had concerns about helping their child to have a healthy lifestyle and how the school takes account of suggestions and concerns. The inspection team responded by speaking to students and staff. They found no evidence to support concerns regarding behaviour and that the school provides well balanced food, good physical education opportunities and teaches students the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. Inspectors did feel that marking is not regular or rigorous enough to ensure students understand how to improve their learning. The school provides a number of mechanisms to receive suggestions and concerns from parents and carers; however, they are considering how these may be developed further.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thornton Grammar School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 485 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1487 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	164	34	292	60	22	5	4	1
The school keeps my child safe	162	33	292	60	27	6	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	189	39	274	56	17	4	5	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	174	36	279	58	26	5	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	156	32	299	62	19	4	6	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	126	26	300	62	46	9	5	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	105	22	298	61	60	12	9	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	153	32	275	57	34	7	5	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	130	27	310	64	32	7	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	181	37	240	49	38	8	14	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	110	23	283	58	61	13	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	162	33	295	61	11	2	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	197	41	269	55	15	3	3	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## 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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.**



24 May 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Thornton Grammar School, Bradford, BD13 3BH

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave me and the inspection team when we inspected your school last week. We enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work and watching you learn. I thought you would like to know the outcome of the inspection and what the school could do to improve further.

You go to a satisfactory school that ensures your good care and personal development. The school has been working hard to improve your standards in English and mathematics and this is now beginning to gain momentum. However, standards in science are still lagging behind. More of you are getting English and mathematics at GCSE grade C or better in your examinations, this will help you to move to sixth form, to college or to get a better job when you leave school. The sports college is a strong feature of the life of the school and it is good that many of you get involved in the many activities that are available. Many of you are also involved with the community, such as work in primary schools and in business ventures with local and national organisations.

In order to make your school even better, I have asked the headteacher and senior staff to do the following things:

- improve the standards you reach and progress you make in science
- improve the quality of teaching and learning, especially marking your work and making sure that you understand what you have learnt in lessons
- make sure that all the current systems and methods, including those in the sixth form that the school uses to monitor your work are carefully evaluated to make sure that they help you all to get higher grades.

I would like to wish you all the best for your future.

Yours sincerely

Marianne Young

Her Majesty's Inspector

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