

Eskdale School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121668
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	339994
Inspection dates	29–30 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Wendy Ripley HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–14
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	317
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mike Ward
Headteacher	Mr Mark Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	27 September 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors, one of whom reviewed the safeguarding procedures in the school. The inspectors spent around two thirds of their time looking at learning. This included observing 60% of the school's teachers at work in the classroom through 17 visits to lessons and looking at the work in students' books. Inspectors held discussions with governors, senior and middle leaders, teachers and support staff who work in the school and staff from partner organisations. They spoke with students in lessons and around the school, in addition to holding two more formal meetings with students representing different age groups. A range of school documentation was read, including the school's planning and monitoring activities, assessment information and analysis, minutes of meetings and questionnaires from 131 parents and carers, 90 from students and 30 from staff.

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

- current standards and progress of students across the school
- the impact of teaching and the curriculum on students' learning and progress
- the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels in driving the school's improvement
- the extent to which the school promotes community cohesion and equality of opportunity.

Information about the school

Eskdale is an extremely popular middle deemed secondary school serving the Esk Valley and areas to the east of Whitby. It has 15 feeder schools. While the number of school-age children in the local area is falling, Eskdale has seen a slight increase in the number of students on roll this year and expects to maintain its numbers. The vast majority of students are of White British heritage. Most students enter the school having attained standards that are broadly average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is average. That of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average, although the proportion who have very specific learning and support needs is increasing.

Eskdale has recently been awarded the North Yorkshire Inclusion Award and has achieved the Sportsmark Gold and Healthy Schools status. It forms a local confederation of schools with another local 11 to 14 school and the community college. The confederation was awarded Specialist School Status for Technology in 2008. The headteacher has been in post since September 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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Eskdale is an outstanding school because as parents and carers, and students, rightly identify, 'More caring, dedicated and committed staff would be hard to find.' These knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff, led by an outstanding headteacher, provide a high-quality, well-rounded educational experience and an exemplary standard of support, care and guidance for all students. As one parent speaking for many explained, 'Every child is treated as if they are the only one in the school and their needs are met in all areas.' Students flourish in this warm, welcoming and vibrant environment, feeling safe and secure in the knowledge that there is always someone they can go to should a problem arise.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Assessment is rigorous and used very effectively to plan lessons and identify those students who require either more support or more challenge. Students make excellent progress and they consistently attain high standards by the time they leave school. Attendance has improved over the past three years so that in the current year it is above that normally found in secondary schools. This improvement is partly because the range of subjects and qualifications on offer has expanded so that it gives students more choices, especially in Year 9, and closely matches their needs. This has been achieved through strong links with other education providers, carefully planned additions to the provision and effective development of staff.

Students represent shining examples of young people in their age group. Their behaviour is exemplary and they have very positive attitudes to lessons. Almost all students participate in the very good range of extra-curricular activities the school provides. They are energetic and inquisitive, respect each other's feelings and belongings and take good care of one another. This is particularly noticeable when students are engaged in the group work and teamwork which they so evidently enjoy and where they work hard to ensure that everyone is included and involved.

Students have an excellent understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle through diet and exercise. Their moral and social development is outstanding and they make an excellent contribution to school life. The outstanding personal, social, health and citizenship education programme plays a major role in developing these very positive attributes. Students are also learning to tolerate and respect the views and beliefs of others in school and beyond. They are developing a good understanding of how their community differs from others in the wider world, although there is more to do to raise students' awareness of the diversity of cultures in our country beyond the isolated geographical area they live in.

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Leaders and managers are strong and effective at all levels. Self-evaluation, while modest in grading some aspects of the school's provision, accurately identifies the many strengths and prioritises the right areas for improvement. Governors make a good and improving contribution to determining the future direction of the school. Several improvements have been secured in relation to the school's resources, including the refurbishment of the entrance foyer and the cafeteria. The School Improvement Partner provides good support for the school and is working closely and impartially with all three confederated schools to facilitate early stage discussions about federation proposals. Taking all of these factors into account the school has outstanding capacity for sustained improvement and provides excellent value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Use the increased number of themed days or weeks being planned for the next academic year to create opportunities for students to experience how other communities in our country live and work together.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Students respond very well to the high standard of teaching and care they receive and pick up on all the positive qualities that the staff exude and the high expectations and aspirations that the staff have for them. As a result, they are keen and happy learners who look forward to coming to school and enjoy all it has to offer, especially the residential trips and visits and the extensive range of extra-curricular activities.

Students apply themselves to tasks diligently and show real interest and enthusiasm. Their progress in lessons and all subjects is at least good and instances of underachievement are extremely rare. A very large majority of students met or exceeded their targets at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2009. The results that students attained in early entry GCSE mathematics, statistics and general studies were impressive, particularly as all students are given the choice to enter for one or more of these subjects early. For students who do not want to go down this route, the BTEC foundation level course in construction provided by the community college has proved to be a very popular alternative.

Students are very used to working independently and in groups. Coaching by peers is used to great effect throughout the school. Students complete a Learning 2 Learn course in Year 7 and this helps them understand different learning styles. As a result, they can take responsibility for their own learning and they let teachers know what works best for them through regular discussions. Similarly, students are actively involved in assessing their own work and that of their peers and setting their own targets. This ensures that they are clear about their targets and what they need to do to achieve them.

Students are very aware of how to keep themselves safe in a wide range of situations. Bringing together different year groups for time with tutors has proved an effective strategy to develop leadership skills and caring qualities. Consequently, students take

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great care of one another and enjoy being part of the 'buddy scheme' where older students look after younger ones.

Students are rightly proud of their school and of their own achievements. They are regularly consulted and influence decisions about how the school is organised. They make a strong contribution to the local community, for instance as junior sports leaders in local primary schools. Many students go to great lengths to support others less fortunate than themselves. For example, around one third of the students participate in the Junior Great North Run each year, raising considerable sums linked to local community interests.

By the time students leave the school they are exceptionally well equipped with a broad range of skills. Their preparation for the next stage of education is exemplary.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is consistently good and much is outstanding. Relationships between staff and students are extremely positive. Good humour sets a positive atmosphere that encourages students to become confident learners. Planning takes very good account of

¹ 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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students' prior learning and ensures that tasks are challenging and closely matched to different abilities. Learning objectives are set out clearly in most lessons so that students understand the purpose of the lesson and what is expected of them. Lower-attaining students and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well supported by class teachers and teaching assistants who work together very closely. Assigning teaching assistants to subject departments has proved to be a very effective strategy to ensure that the impact of learning support is maximised.

Teachers have secure knowledge of their subjects. They ask probing questions and carefully build on students' answers, although occasionally opportunities to involve more students are missed. Assessment of students' progress is accurate and frequent and used effectively to ensure that any gaps in learning are filled and to set very challenging targets for all students. Homework is set regularly, supporting students' progress. Marking is frequent and usually gives students very useful guidance on how to improve.

The school provides an outstanding curriculum which makes a significant contribution to students' personal, social and emotional development as well as their academic attainment. 'Off-timetable' days spent on special topics are effective in concentrating students' thoughts on important issues and enable the school to use the expertise of visitors who have specialist knowledge. The school's status for specialism in technology has a good impact on the work of the school in the local community and students' achievements. Specialist subject targets are consistently met or exceeded.

Students receive very effective careers education and guidance. They are supported very closely when making decisions about their options at age 14. The arrangements for transition from primary schools into Eskdale and for moving on to the community college are exceptional. Excellent communication between institutions, in addition to well-planned and carefully focused time spent preparing for the changes, ensures that everyone settles in very quickly.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Even though the school was judged to be outstanding at the last inspection, it has continued to improve. This is because of the headteacher's relentless drive and the members of the very able senior leadership team who have provided unwavering support. Excellent relationships exist with parents and carers and with the local community. The strong partnerships forged with other local schools ensure that

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students' best interests are being served.

The staff form a strong and cohesive team and benefit from a good range of professional development and training opportunities. Their willingness to train to teach additional subjects so that the range on offer can be extended, within the resource limitations that a small school brings, typifies their commitment to students.

Planning for further improvement is well considered and carefully implemented. Actions are regularly monitored and evaluated. Management information is used well. The school has a robust community cohesion plan and, as with all the school's other policies and procedures, this is reviewed and updated on a regular basis. Governors fulfil their statutory duties, provide good support and challenge and make a valuable contribution to the life of the school through a good range of scheduled meetings and other activities. Resources are deployed very effectively.

Effective work to promote equalities is illustrated by the way students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are fully included in the life of the school and the outstanding progress they make as a result. The safety and well-being of students are paramount and good safeguarding procedures are in place.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

There was a higher than usual response rate from parents and carers. The vast majority were extremely positive about the quality of education and care their children receive, and inspectors agree with this view. Several parents and carers took the opportunity to

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provide additional comments highlighting particular strengths and to explain how their children had been helped to enjoy their time at school.

Discussions with students and their questionnaire responses confirm that they feel very safe and the very large majority strongly agree their school is well led, cares about them and helps them to prepare for the future.

Parents and carers may wish to know that there were no particular trends in the very few constructive criticisms received from parents and carers, students and those staff who also completed questionnaires. However, while maintaining confidentiality, the lead inspector discussed these with the headteacher in order that he may address them and report back to parents and carers, students and staff.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Eskdale 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 137 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 317 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	78	58	53	40	1	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	93	69	39	29	0	0	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	81	60	53	40	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	80	60	52	39	2	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	80	60	54	40	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	59	44	67	50	4	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	54	40	77	57	1	1	1	1
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)	77	57	52	39	2	1	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	72	54	61	46	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	80	60	47	35	3	2	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	63	47	63	47	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	98	73	34	25	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	98	73	32	24	0	0	1	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). 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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



30 June 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Eskdale School, Whitby, YO22 4HS

Thank you for your warm welcome when we came to inspect your school. It was a pleasure to talk to you about your learning and life at school. We agree with you that Eskdale is an outstanding school that is getting even better. We were very impressed by your positive attitudes, outstanding behaviour and good attendance. You appreciate all the extra time and effort the staff put in to provide you with a wide range of activities. It was very clear from your words and actions that you have a lot of respect and affection for them and each other.

You are taught extremely well and enjoy your lessons. This ensures that most of you make outstanding progress so that you attain high standards. The curriculum meets your needs and interests very well. The 'choices' afternoon helps you prepare for your next steps in your learning journey really well. You have a strong voice in how the school develops and appreciate all the outstanding guidance and support you receive. You told us that the school leaders are outstanding and you think your headteacher is brilliant. The way that partnerships with other schools and colleges have been developed to create opportunities for you is first rate.

Even in the very best schools like yours, there is always something that can be done to make it better. While you learn a lot about the wider world through your studies, we think that because you live in quite an isolated area you should be finding out more about what it is like to live in other parts of the United Kingdom. To do this we have asked school leaders to:

- use the increased number of themed days or weeks they are planning for the next academic year to create opportunities for you to experience how other communities in our country live and work together.

We know that you will continue to do well and will find ways to help the staff make the school even better. We wish you all very happy and successful futures.

Yours sincerely

Wendy Ripley

Her Majesty's Inspector

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