

Harrogate High School: A Specialist Sports College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121697
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	314085
Inspection dates	13–14 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Tanya Harber Stuart 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	994
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ian Curtis
Headteacher	Mr Michael Wilkins
Date of previous school inspection	December 2003
School address	Ainsty Road Harrogate North Yorkshire HG1 4AP
Telephone number	01423 548800
Fax number	01423 501664

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Harrogate High School is a larger than average secondary school serving the north east of Harrogate and into the Yorkshire Dales. Almost all the students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language, although small, has increased since the last inspection. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of students with statements of special educational needs is just above the national average. Since 2005 the number of students attending the school has fallen.

The school holds the Sportsmark, Healthy Schools Award, Intermediate International Schools Award, National Excellence in Mentoring Award and the Dyslexia Friendly Schools Kitemark. Harrogate High School is a specialist sports college.

Harrogate High School is working in partnership with Outwood Grange College, a National Leader in Education support school. The partnership was set up in conjunction with the local authority and has been in place since June 2007. This means the executive principal of Outwood Grange College is also the executive principal at Harrogate High School. The substantive headteacher of Harrogate High School was absent at the time of the inspection and an acting headteacher in place.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Harrogate High School provides its students with a satisfactory education. The school has experienced considerable change and turbulence over the last few years, resulting in low achievement and standards for students and their reported poor behaviour. The local authority worked with the governing body to enter into a partnership with a National Leader in Education support school to bring about significant change and improvement. The school now has a clear focus on improvement that is shared by students, staff and governors. Change is proceeding rapidly under the determined leadership of the executive principal and acting headteacher. They work as an effective team to bring a clear vision for improvement to fruition.

In 2007 the vast majority of students made satisfactory progress overall between Year 7 and Year 11. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities made the same progress as their peers. However, students made significantly less progress than expected at Key Stage 3 and especially in mathematics. The standards reached at the end of both key stages were significantly below the national average. The leadership and management, in conjunction with Outwood Grange College, implemented a number of initiatives which are impacting positively on the progress students are making and the standards they are reaching in the vast majority of subjects. In 2007 the sports college specialist targets were met.

The behaviour of students around the school is satisfactory. Students say they feel safe at school and that there is someone they can talk to if they need to. Punctuality to school improved following a concerted effort by the leadership and management. Although there has been a small increase in attendance, this is still inadequate. Students support local primary schools through the sports college, by developing sporting activities. Many students participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. The curriculum provided is satisfactory. Recent changes to the curriculum are in the process of being implemented. It is too early to review the impact of these changes and whether the new curriculum meets the needs and interests of all the students.

The progress students are making against their targets is carefully monitored on a regular basis. This is used to identify students who are underachieving and to implement strategies to enable them to reach their targets. However, the information gained is not always used to plan and teach lessons. As a consequence, students of differing abilities are not always provided for effectively. Staff undertake professional development and this is impacting on teaching and learning, which are now satisfactory. Staff are encouraged to share good practice and develop their understanding of what makes a good lesson. However, the quality of teaching and learning is not good enough to ensure students regularly make good progress.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. A significant number of parents who completed a questionnaire stated that communication with the school was poor. Good self-evaluation, linked to a clear school development plan is driving improvements. The leadership and management has been strengthened at the highest level by support from Outwood Grange College. These factors, combined with secure financial management, mean that the capacity to improve is good.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Students enter the sixth form with qualifications that are often below average. Standards achieved in 2007 were below national averages in advanced level examinations but above average in the vocational courses provided. Students' achievement in examinations taken in Year 12 is improving. Progress in the sixth form is satisfactory overall, although students make good progress in the applied GCE single awards. The good tracking procedures identify underachievement and allow staff to intervene quickly. As a result there is special provision to ensure that coursework is up-to-date, attendance has improved and students are less frequently late to lessons. However, attendance in lessons is still too low. Students have good opportunities to participate in activities outside the classroom. They are fully involved in the development of the wider school through the 'student voice' programme. The sports college positively impacts on the curriculum and personal development of students, with many students undertaking sports leader programmes. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Lessons follow the school's recommended five-part structure and teachers show a good knowledge of their subjects and examination requirements. The leadership know where teaching needs to be improved and departments are linked effectively to implement professional training programmes. The curriculum is satisfactory. The range of vocational/applied options has improved, but the choice is still narrow because of the small size of the sixth form. There are emerging strengths in the leadership of the sixth form, but there are many issues to improve, including ensuring that students complete their courses. Self-evaluation is clear and given the improvements made and the rise in standards and achievement, there is good capacity to improve. The newly refurbished sixth form centre is providing a good learning environment that is conducive to effective personal study.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to increase the proportion of good or better lessons.
- Review the curriculum to ensure it fully meets the needs and interests of all students and develops their independent learning skills.
- Improve students' attainment, especially at Key Stage 3 and in mathematics.
- Improve attendance.
- Improve communication with parents.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

In 2007 at the end of Key Stage 4 the standards students reached were below average. However, the proportion gaining five good grades at GCSE increased by 6% to reach 43%. When contextual factors and students' below average ability when they entered the school are taken into account, the vast majority, including those

with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, made satisfactory progress. However, the progress made by students in mathematics at Key Stage 3 was significantly below that expected.

The standards students reached at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2007 were significantly below those expected. The gap between the standards reached by students in the school and the national results widened between 2005 to 2007. Given the students' ability when they entered the school, which was broadly average, they made significantly less progress than they should have done.

In September 2007 the leadership and management implemented a series of strategies for raising standards and improving achievement. These strategies have impacted positively on students' achievement and standards. The vast majority of students are now making satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The moral, social and cultural development of students is satisfactory; however, spiritual development is weaker. Students have good attitudes to learning when teaching is good and it engages their interest. Their behaviour in lessons and around school is satisfactory. Following a concerted effort by the school, punctuality has improved considerably. Students' attendance is inadequate. Students say that they feel safe and report that there are few instances of bullying; those that occur are swiftly dealt with. Students are very aware that they are responsible for the choices that they make in relation to their health and their future. They make very healthy choices with regard to eating and physical activity. The sports prefects work well with primary schools to develop sports provision. Many students are involved in charity work and there are good links with a school in Tanzania which develops the students' global understanding and awareness. Although effective links with the local and wider communities promote readiness for work and life after school, many students do not have the opportunity to undertake work experience. The school council and 'student voice' enables students to contribute to developing the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. While there is some good and outstanding teaching, it is not consistently good enough to ensure further improvements in achievement across all subjects and all year groups.

In the better lessons there is a brisk pace and a range of activities which engage students and involve them actively in their learning. Teachers ask questions to find out what students know and to check what they have learned in the lesson. Students are encouraged to assess their own and others' work, and sometimes to lead discussions.

However, in less successful lessons, students have too few opportunities to work independently or with one another so that they can develop their ideas or their group work skills. Teachers ask questions but are too quick to offer answers and do not encourage students to extend their thinking. While lessons are consistently planned, there is not always a clear focus on how students of differing abilities will be challenged by the work. Students' behaviour and attitudes are satisfactory although there is some disruptive behaviour when students are not sufficiently interested in their lessons. Students say that this is often the case when their lessons are taught by supply teachers. Parents also expressed concerns about the number of lessons taught by supply teachers. The school has a necessary focus on raising standards in literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology (ICT), although little use of ICT in lessons was seen during the inspection.

The setting of homework is inconsistent and often not used to extend students' learning. Some parents also expressed concerns about a lack of homework. Teaching assistants give adequate support to those students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory overall. The developing curriculum for Key Stage 4 and the provision for extra-curricular activities are good. The school's introduction of a two-year Key Stage 3 is innovative and will allow students to spend three years on their GCSE courses. However, its implementation is too recent for its impact on the achievement of all groups of learners to be fully evaluated. All students study religious education and are involved in two hours of physical education each week. Personal, social and health education are delivered in assemblies and in lessons across the curriculum. The curriculum in Key Stage 4 is well adapted to meet the needs and interests of all students and offers clear pathways. These include a wide range of academic and vocational courses and programmes for those students who are vulnerable or at risk of disaffection. There are clear and developing routes of progression into further education and the world of work. However, while the new curriculum has had a positive impact on raising standards, it is too early to evaluate its impact on attendance. The good management of curriculum developments in the sports specialism is influential in developing the range of courses and in showing other subjects how to be innovative in the courses they offer. The curriculum is well supported by a wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities which students enjoy and enthusiastically attend.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides satisfactory support and guidance. Pastoral care, especially for the most vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is strong. The learning managers know students and their families well and monitor the progress of students. Vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported by a good range of well planned programmes that provide them with a safe, supportive learning environment and work that enables them to make as much progress as their peers. Support for these students is securely underpinned by extensive links to outside support agencies. Child protection procedures are well established and safeguarding procedures are in place. Health

and safety arrangements, including risk assessments, are good. Students feel safe and secure in school. The school is aware of the need to reduce the high level of absence and a series of initiatives is in place but they have not improved students' attendance. However, strategies to reduce truancy and improve punctuality have been effective. The 'Consequences Programme' has improved the behaviour of students although it has not significantly reduced the level of exclusions.

Students' progress is monitored, and tracked, every six weeks. This data is shared with both students and parents and interventions put in place if students are under achieving. Whilst some day-to-day marking is good, it is not consistently so, and often it does not clearly tell the students what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The partnership with Outwood Grange College, a National Leader in Education support school, is appreciated by staff. The partnership has greatly strengthened the leadership and management at the highest level. There is a clear vision for the school, and staff and students are buying into the vision. The leadership skills of middle leaders are developing, helped by a systematic approach to staff development. Leaders feel empowered. Staff are now aware of issues, including the legacy of underachievement, and are dealing with them through a range of effective initiatives put in place by senior leaders. In many areas – such as behaviour, teaching and learning, and the use of data to track students' progress and to set challenging targets – progress is being made. This is leading to improved provision and outcomes for students. The good self-evaluation, the changes made and the improving standards and achievement mean capacity to improve is good.

The school works effectively with many agencies to ensure that the students' well-being is promoted. However, a high proportion of parents who completed the inspection questionnaire said that communication with the school was poor.

Governors are fully aware of, and supportive of, the changes being made in the school. This is helped by the chair and vice chair's involvement with the strategic leadership. The governing body is undertaking training to develop its role to enable it to both challenge and support the leadership.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.	School Overall	16–19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	3
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?	3	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	NA	
The effectiveness of boarding provision	NA	
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The attendance of learners	4	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	3

¹ 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.

The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
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 tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed, including the adequacy of staff, to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
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	