

Tadcaster Grammar School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121693
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	380304
Inspection dates	16–17 May 2012
Lead inspector	James Kilner 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
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,585
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	305
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Philip Turnpenny
Headteacher	Geoff Mitchell
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2008
School address	Toulston Tadcaster LS24 9NB
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Additional Inspector

Additional Inspector

Additional Inspector

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 38 lessons taught by 37 teachers and made a series of short visits to lessons, some taught by higher level teaching assistants, tutorial sessions and the school's off-site alternative provision. Inspectors held meetings with groups of students, school staff and the Chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at school self-evaluation, school planning, student tracking and assessment information, behaviour records, minutes of the meetings of the governing body and other documentation. Inspectors spoke to five parents who requested a telephone interview and scrutinised 437 questionnaires completed by parents and carers and those completed by staff and students.

Information about the school

Tadcaster Grammar School is a much larger than average, non-selective secondary school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is much smaller than average. The vast majority of students are from White British heritage backgrounds and only a small proportion of students speak English as an additional language. The proportions of students on the school action and school action plus programmes or with a statement of special educational needs are below national averages.

The school is a specialist business and enterprise college. It is an Investor in People and holds Healthy School status. The school meets the current floor standards, which are the minimum standards expected by the government.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- Tadcaster Grammar is a good school. Students develop well, both academically and as confident, personable young people well prepared for their future lives. The school is not yet outstanding as there is variation in the quality of teaching. There are some notable strengths in the leadership of some subjects and faculties; however, the role of middle leaders in monitoring and evaluation is not consistent across the school.
- Students make good progress and achieve well both academically and personally. As a result of a total commitment to being a truly inclusive school, disabled students, those with special educational needs and those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable make exceptional progress because of the individually tailored programmes and high quality support and guidance they receive.
- Overall the quality of teaching is good, with some lessons being outstanding, although a minority remains satisfactory. There are inconsistencies in the quality and rigour with which students' work is marked and the effectiveness of written feedback given, together with variations in the level of challenge in some lessons, particularly for the most able.
- Students' behaviour is outstanding, attendance is above average and they feel very safe in school. In a harmonious climate of mutual respect, showing good manners and courtesy students are swift to praise the achievements of their peers.
- The leadership of the school is good with the headteacher and Chair of the Governing Body setting a clear vision and purpose which is shared by all staff. Most notably, the management of performance is rigorous with an effective programme of professional development delivered through the 'Teaching and Learning Community' initiative. The curriculum is rich, broad, balanced and provides a good range of meaningful opportunities to enable students to enjoy learning and to progress successfully to the next stage.

- The sixth form is good and effectively led and managed with students achieving well to attain in excess of national averages at A and AS level.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Share the existing exemplary practice already evident in school so that all teaching is consistently good and increasingly outstanding by ensuring that:
 - all teachers use assessment information to identify the different needs of individuals within their lessons and plan activities that match students' abilities and provide appropriate challenge, particularly for the most-able students
 - classwork and homework are marked regularly and that written feedback to students on how to improve their work is of a high quality.
- Further develop the role of middle leaders in monitoring within their subjects and faculties so that evaluations on the quality of teaching, marking and use of assessment, more accurately match those of senior leaders' current practice.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Students all make good progress in their learning from mainly above average starting points. The school successfully halted the underachievement in 2010 in English so that the proportion of students achieving five high grade GCSEs, including English and mathematics, has increased and was significantly above the national average in 2011. Progress continues to improve in English and reflects the rigour with which data and performance are analysed to ensure any emerging gaps in students' performance are swiftly tackled. Early identification of students' reading abilities has led to the implementation of a systematic programme designed to improve any students starting in Year 7 with low levels of literacy. The recent appointment of two coordinators to oversee the development of literacy across the curriculum is designed to ensure students are confident in their use of key literacy skills in all subjects. Many students are able to read aloud new texts confidently in front of their peers. In an English lesson studying imagery in poetry, a student gave a moving rendition of 'The Man he killed' by Thomas Hardy, his voice intonation enabling his peers to gain a deeper understanding of the irony used. Progress in mathematics is good and accelerating rapidly and in science progress is consistently outstanding. Concerted action by senior and faculty leaders has ensured that the progress students now make in modern foreign languages has improved from previous underperformance. Consultation with students and a review of the curriculum has ensured that the subject maintains its academic rigour but equally has relevance to the students' needs. Attainment at A and AS level is above average for all groups of students and retention of students in the sixth form is higher than the national figure. There is no discernible difference in the performance of groups of male and female students or those who speak English as an additional language. However, disabled students, those who have special educational needs and those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable make exceptional progress as a result of high quality, individual support and guidance. One parent of a child with a disability and special educational needs was typical of many who wrote to inspectors or spoke with inspectors over the

phone to praise the work of the learning support faculty, 'The school goes beyond what we ever expected for our child to achieve, the support and teaching he receives are excellent, he is kept safe and loves school.'

The vast majority of parents and carers who completed questionnaires indicated they feel that their children are achieving well. Equally the large majority of students look forward to coming to school and are confident that the school helps them to develop their literacy, numeracy and communication skills.

Quality of teaching

The large majority of teaching is good with an increasing proportion which is outstanding. All teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge which they put to effective use in challenging misconceptions and stimulating students' thinking. For example, in a successful mathematics lesson, students studying probability were given the opportunity to hypothesise as to why a series of chances would produce certain results. When implausible reasons were given the teacher ensured that the students knew which were incorrect and allowed peers to help their classmates in arriving at the correct rationale. In the most successful lessons, teachers enthuse students successfully, using stimulating images and texts to engage them in learning. They enjoy working collaboratively and will frequently and spontaneously applaud the efforts of their peers; staff and students are true partners in learning. Teachers plan their lessons carefully and, for the most part, meet the needs of all students. In an outstanding music lesson a more-able student, when asked if he felt challenged, replied, 'Of course I do, how else would I learn?' However, in some cases, planning does not always cater sufficiently for the varying needs and abilities of students in the lesson, particularly for some higher ability students. Consequently, progress can slow as students are not challenged sufficiently in their thinking to achieve the higher levels.

Students' course work and planned assessments are marked methodically and levels awarded are accurate. This is not always the case with students' homework and class work, which does not guide them consistently to the next levels in their learning. Where feedback is given it is not always followed up in subsequent lessons, so there are occasions when students continue to make similar mistakes in their work. This view was shared by a small minority of students who felt that adults in school did not always explain to them how to improve their work.

Literacy is promoted well in English and science and this has contributed to students' good and outstanding progress in the subjects. Already the school has begun work to ensure students develop their speaking and listening skills across a range of other subjects. Highly effective teaching and support for disabled students, those with special educational needs and those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable ensures that they make outstanding progress both academically and personally.

The very large majority of parents and carers who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire agree that their children are taught well at the school. A similar positive response was received from students with almost all agreeing that teaching is good at the school.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

All parents and carers responding to the questionnaire believe that behaviour is good although inspectors found it to be outstanding. Nothing but positive behaviour by students was recorded during the inspection and scrutiny of behaviour and incidence logs reveal that this is typical over time. Students feel safe, enjoy school and show exemplary attitudes to their learning. In response to the questionnaire, they indicate that they are happy to come to school and that they feel safe. They demonstrate great resilience when challenged to work independently, supporting one another effectively in their group work. Attendance is high and students are punctual to lessons and ready to learn from the outset. Incidences of exclusion have reduced significantly and students report that there are few incidents of misbehaviour. This is demonstrated in the calm, good humoured and orderly manner in which over 90% of the students embark on their transport home at the end of the day.

Through an effective personal, social and health education curriculum, students develop a good understanding of the different forms that bullying might take including prejudice-based, homophobic and technology-based bullying. They are adamant that were such incidences to occur they would be dealt with thoroughly. They demonstrate great humanity when considering the plight of others with charitable donations to worthy causes over the last year in excess of £45,000. Students demonstrate respect for the school's historic buildings and grounds, ensuring that they remain well presented and litter free.

Leadership and management

Self-evaluation is detailed with appropriate emphasis on gauging impact. The governing body and senior leaders have high expectations and ambition and there is a good capacity for further improvement. Under the resolute, passionate and determined leadership of the headteacher, senior leaders have worked successfully to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Accurate assessments, coupled with a tight scrutiny of data and effective monitoring in the classroom, ensure weaknesses are no longer allowed to gain a foothold. Following lesson observations by senior leaders any identified weaknesses are tackled and good practice shared openly and honestly through the effective professional development and the 'Teaching and Learning Community' initiative.

The role of middle leaders has been developed in line with recommendations from the previous inspection. They work harmoniously and increasingly effectively with members of the senior leadership team. However, some of the middle leaders' evaluations are over generous and the quality and depth of feedback given to colleagues is at variance with the high quality information provided when senior leaders undertake monitoring. Nonetheless, there are already elements of good practice in place, most notably in the humanities and English faculties, where accurate monitoring is already at a more advanced stage of development. An initiative to consolidate students' literacy and numeracy skills across all subjects has been introduced recently and is providing targeted support for students with lower levels of ability in reading. Through dedicated and expert leadership, well-matched support ensures that disabled students, those with special educational needs and those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable make exceptional progress.

An effective curriculum is well matched to students' needs and aspirations. It promotes high academic achievement and provides suitable yet challenging courses for the less academic students. The focus on enterprise activities ensures students thoroughly enjoy their learning in the school's specialist subjects, where they achieve well.

The quality of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Examples of students' high quality work in art, music and drama abound in the school, demonstrating an appreciation of a wide range of cultures. Planned opportunities for discussion of ethical issues ensure students foster empathy and develop the skills to articulate their opposition to injustice. For example, in a highly effective humanities lesson, students listened and watched attentively to a challenging presentation allowing them to reflect on the effects of globalisation on traditional world cultures. Despite having lengthy journeys at the end of the school day, large numbers of students readily avail themselves of the wide range of sporting and arts-based activities available.

There is no discrimination in the school and equality of opportunity is a central tenet of the school's ethos, enabling all students to be supported to meet their potential. School leaders and governors work effectively to ensure the safety of the school's extensive site. Students are fully conversant with the school's emergency procedures and safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements.

The school consults frequently with parents and carers and acts on the responses. For example, there has been consultation on the introduction of a vertical tutoring system recently and for a move to a paperless communication between home and school. The school has analysed the responses accurately and recognises that not all families have regular internet access and has plans to give further information and support prior to implementation.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



21 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Tadcaster Grammar School, Tadcaster LS24 9NB

Thank you for making us all so very welcome when we inspected your school recently. We particularly enjoyed visiting you in your lessons and joining you in discussions. You go to a good school and your behaviour and safety are outstanding. Those of you with a disability or with special educational needs, make exceptional personal and academic progress because of the superb way you are supported and guided. Teaching is good with an increasing amount which is outstanding. We also know that your parents and carers agree with us. These are some of the best things about your school:

- your school is well led and managed and all the adults strive hard to ensure it continually improves
- you feel safe and know who to go to if there is ever a problem, your attendance is above average
- you make good progress through the school and reach significantly above average attainment by Year 11, thanks to good and sometimes outstanding teaching
- you continue to make good progress in the sixth form
- the school takes good care of you and in return you show a very positive attitude to learning.

To help your school to improve even further, we have asked your headteacher and school leaders to make more of your teaching and learning experiences outstanding by:

- providing learning opportunities which are matched more closely to your individual needs, particularly for higher achievers
- marking your work in such a way that you can reflect on it and improve even further
- ensuring subject leaders strengthen the work they do to monitor what is happening in classrooms.

You can play your part by maintaining your good attendance, punctuality, hard work and excellent behaviour.

Yours sincerely

James Kilner
Her Majesty's Inspector

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