

Ryedale School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121665
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	380297
Inspection dates	7–8 March 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	544
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Balf
Headteacher	Richard Crane
Date of previous school inspection	31 January 2007
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Introduction

Inspection team

James Kilner
Robert Jones
Steven Goldsmith

Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two day's notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 30 lessons, taught by 27 teachers, of which five were joint observations with members of the senior team. In addition, the inspection team made short visits to a number of lessons, sometimes accompanied by a senior leader. They held meetings with three groups of students, observed the work of the school council and spoke with the head boys and head girls. Meetings were also held with the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body and school staff, including senior and middle leaders. Parents and carers did not respond to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in sufficient numbers in order to aid the planning of the inspection. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents, including the school improvement plan, minutes of the governing body meetings and school policies. They also analysed responses to inspection questionnaires completed by 346 parents and carers, and others completed by students and staff.

Information about the school

Ryedale School is much smaller than most secondary schools. It holds specialist status in the Performing Arts, High Performing Specialist Status and Leading Edge status. The very large majority of students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is slightly lower than average, with the proportion of those in receipt of a statement of special educational needs is average. Education for students after the age of 16 is provided on the school campus through partnership with another secondary school located some distance from the school. This phase of education did not feature in this inspection. The school meets the current floor standard, the minimum standard set for attainment and progress.

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

Key Findings

- Ryedale is an outstanding school. ‘I cannot speak more highly of our experiences with the school’ is typical of the praise given by parents and carers. Very effective leadership including skilled management of teaching, highly accurate self-evaluation and a forensic analysis of the achievement and well-being of every student ensures that attainment across the school is high. School leaders ensure effective partnership working with other schools in the area to offer an outstanding curriculum that includes a wide range of optional subjects at GCSE.
- All in school are committed to the pursuit of academic excellence and the well-being of every student. GCSE results have been consistently well above the national average for the past three years. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs frequently make outstanding progress because of the astute identification of their needs, targeted intervention and skilled teaching.
- Students’ high achievement in the school’s specialism of Performing Arts is outstanding and has a positive impact on achievement in other subjects as students gain confidence in speaking and listening and in working collaboratively. The skills which students acquire equip them exceptionally well in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepares them well for the next stage in their education. While students have a good awareness and understanding of cultures and faiths present in Britain today, opportunities to interact directly with fellow students from more diverse communities are too limited.
- Students’ behaviour and safety are outstanding. Attendance is high and students thoroughly enjoy being at school, feel safe and, as one student said, ‘we all look out for each other, it’s like being a big family’.
- The quality of teaching is never less than good and frequently outstanding. This is because there is a culture among the teaching staff of accepting guidance eagerly and emulating the very best practice already present in the school in order to benefit the students.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all students have the opportunity to explore and appreciate more fully the range of different faiths and cultures represented beyond their rural environment.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Students enter the school with attainment that is in line with the national average. The vibrant and exciting curriculum, coupled with effectively targeted teaching, ensures that a significant number of students gain passes at the higher grades in their GCSE examinations. The proportion of students attaining five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics is significantly above the national average. The school's accurate predictions together with work seen during the inspection indicate that attainment will rise further this academic year. Minor weaknesses identified last year in respect of results in English have been eradicated. Parents and carers are rightly extremely pleased with the progress their children make, one commenting, 'The school has an environment where it is cool to be clever.'

The school's specialism has a direct impact on all students' learning. For example, in a science lesson younger students conducted a spontaneous debate on the ethics surrounding the use of ultrasound during pregnancy. Their clear articulation of ideas, voice expression and sensitive appreciation of the views of others added greatly to the depth of discussion. Half-termly analysis of students' achievement ensures that there is never a danger of students falling too far behind. Should any underperformance in either achievement or attitudes to learning become apparent the school are swift to act and minor gaps in the performance of students in receipt of free school meals have been closed. The overwhelming majority of parents, carers and students comment positively on how well they feel the school develops students' basic skills in communication, reading, writing and mathematics. Inspectors endorse this view. Students' literacy skills are assessed on entry to the school and any detected gaps are soon remedied so that by the time they leave school, students' skills in numeracy and literacy are outstanding. The school rightly places great emphasis on ensuring students speak, read and write confidently and accurately across all areas of the curriculum. The same rigour applies to their skills in numeracy. In a citizenship lesson, students took time to discuss their use of literacy skills when planning their reports on vandalism, speaking confidently of their use of onomatopoeia, ellipsis and hyperbole. In the plenary part of lessons, students are encouraged to enter in to debate with their classmates over aspects of their learning, challenging and supporting each other's views. Highly effective additional support for disabled students and those with special educational needs ensures that their progress is comparable to that made by all students and this was confirmed in lesson observations during the inspection.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is outstanding, endorsing the view of parents and carers with one writing typically, 'Ryedale is a wonderful learning environment where fantastic teaching entuses children and keeps them on track'. Teachers consistently have the highest

expectations of students, are skilled in making the most of students' thirst for knowledge and ensure that they cater for the needs of all students so that activities promote effective learning. Marking of students' work is informative and guides them successfully to reach the higher levels. Teachers pose deeply probing questions to students, building in thinking-time so that students can formulate their fulsome answers before responding. Astute monitoring of students as they learn in lessons ensures that any potential dips in the pace are avoided. Teachers in all subject areas are fully committed to developing students' numeracy, reading and writing skills alongside their subject knowledge. For example, in a design technology lesson students' high degree of accuracy in measuring and calculation, together with well-developed literacy skills ensured that their practical and theory work was of the highest standard possible. Almost all parents and carers feel that their child is well taught and helped to develop their basic skills.

A vibrant and exciting curriculum provides excellent opportunities not only for academic study but also for the enjoyment and exploration of the arts, music and dance. The curriculum encourages students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very effectively. For example, in an English lesson students were given the opportunity to consider the racist language used in *'Of mice and men'* in the context of when the story was written. They showed immense understanding of this context but were at pains to stress their abhorrence of the use of such language in today's society. Equally, in a history lesson considering the complex philosophical ideas surrounding violence in Northern Ireland, students independently gathered information from both Catholic and Protestant websites to present their views to the group. The school abounds with colourful displays of design, technology and creative art work. Equally it resounds to young voices singing, making music and preparing dramatic performances.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students are exceptionally well behaved, polite and respectful. They move around the older building's narrow corridors calmly and safely, looking out for the safety of one another as well as themselves. Their behaviour in lessons is never less than good and frequently exemplary. All students work diligently, collaborate with their peers willingly and their exceptional maturity makes a valuable contribution to their own learning. The vast majority of students say they feel very safe in the school and their parents and carers overwhelmingly agree that they are safe. Students demonstrate a high level of respect for one another and their teachers, demonstrating an extraordinary resilience and tenacity in their academic studies and contribution to the life of the school. Prefects and 'buddies' ensure that no one feels lonely and any minor disputes are soon defused. Students have trust in the skills of the 'buddies' and prefects and know there is always someone to turn to. A truly democratic school council use their well-honed speaking and listening skills to debate current issues, such as house name changes and proposed alterations to school uniform. All agree that their voice is genuinely heard. Lunch and break times are pleasant, unhurried and there are a wealth of opportunities to undertake other interests through the popular extra-curricular activities. All feel safe on the buses which transport some students considerable distances. Attendance is above the national average and students are consistently punctual, both to school and to lessons.

Students are effective in not only managing their own behaviour but that of others. In a lesson where one of the younger students was becoming over-excited his peers encouraged him to re-focus on the lesson, praising him when he was back on task. Incidents of bullying, including homophobic and sexist comments, are exceptionally rare. Scrutiny of

behavioural records shows that this is the case over time. High levels of pastoral care, support and guidance ensure that students know that should any incident occur it would be dealt with thoroughly. Students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are unanimous in their praise for the work of staff in the alternative learning centre, 'The Cottage'. This provides not only a safe haven but also works intensely with any students identified with specific needs, soon enabling them to return to the main part of school. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers feel that there is a good standard of behaviour in the school, a view shared by staff and students. Instances of exclusions have fallen dramatically, a sanction which is now rarely used.

Leadership and management

All in school share the ambition to excel in all they do for the benefit of the students and work unstintingly to ensure that is achieved. Most notably, senior leaders are highly successful in improving the quality of teaching and in enhancing students' attainment so that these are now outstanding. The learning team, led by a lead practitioner, identify accurately and share appropriately the skills of the most successful teachers. In this climate of professionalism all teachers are eager to emulate the skills of the very best in their pursuit of excellent teaching. Lesson observations and student progress information form the basis for staff's continuing professional development as well as managing their performance. Any potential gaps in students' progress are swiftly dealt with so that for all students it is rapid and sustained. The professional and personal skills of the governing body are deployed effectively and they are adept in handling data on students' progress enabling them to give a good level of challenge and support to senior leaders. Strong partnerships with other schools in the region enable sixth form provision to be offered on the school campus. Staff at the additional learning centre, The Cottage, are a driving force behind the rapid and sustained progress made by disabled students and those with special educational needs.

The headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body are highly effective in promoting equality and tackling discrimination. There is zero tolerance of any form of discrimination and the tracking of the performance of all students is analysed forensically so that no student is in danger of being left behind. Despite a very wide catchment area, communication with parents and carers is highly effective. The school are developing the use of modern technology to improve communication further through the development of the virtual learning environment. Arrangements for safeguarding are robust and senior leaders set the safety of students as a key priority. Robust and accurate evaluation of the schools strengths and weaknesses ensure that action planning is sharply focused on improving the academic and personal outcomes of all the students. This, together with the outstanding overall effectiveness of the school gives an excellent capacity to improve further.

The curriculum is outstanding and is appropriately adapted to the needs, abilities and interests of all students. The Performing Arts specialism takes a strong lead in providing students with excellent opportunities to explore and enhance their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. All are given opportunities to shine through a rich mix of art, creativity and music regardless of their ability. Much of their inspiration comes from the celebration of cultures both at home and outside Britain. For example, the recent visit of the 'Pearl of Africa' choir who conducted workshops with the students. However, there are currently limited opportunities for students to interact and share ideas among their peers in more culturally diverse areas of the country.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	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 2010 to 31 August 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.
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.
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.



9 March 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Ryedale School, York, YO62 7SL

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. We were impressed with the way in which your school council operates in making sure your voice is heard in decision making which affects you. You go to an outstanding school and your behaviour and safety are exemplary, almost all your parents and carers agree with this. These are some of the best things about your school:

- Your school is exceptionally well led and managed and all the adults strive hard to ensure it continually improves.
- The excellent curriculum and specialism in Performing Arts makes a huge contribution to your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- You feel very safe and know who to go to if there is ever a problem, your attendance is high.
- You make excellent progress through the school and reach above average attainment by Year 11, thanks to outstanding teaching.
- The school takes outstanding care of you and in return you show a very positive attitude to learning.

To help your school to improve even more, we have asked your headteacher and governors to provide more opportunities for you to have meaningful links with students from different faiths and cultural backgrounds to the ones in your immediate area to prepare you more fully for life in modern society.

There are not many outstanding schools in the country, well done to all of you for the part which you have played in achieving this and keep up your very high standards of behaviour.

Yours sincerely

James Kilner
Her Majesty's Inspector

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