



# Ryburn Valley High School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 107565  
**LEA** Calderdale  
**Inspection number** 277777  
**Inspection dates** 22 February 2006 to 23 February 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr Douglas Thorburn HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	St Peter's Avenue
<b>School category</b>	Foundation		Sowerby
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18		Sowerby Bridge, West Yorkshire HX6 1DF
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01422 832070
<b>Number on roll</b>	1345	<b>Fax number</b>	01422 833386
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr R Barrow
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	16 October 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr I Adam

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

Ryburn Valley High School is a large, comprehensive, school in Sowerby Bridge serving pupils mainly from the town and the surrounding area. It is a specialist Media Arts College. The large majority of pupils are of white British heritage. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly similar to the national figure. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is generally slightly below the national average. The sixth form makes special provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; some students therefore transfer in at age 16. The school works in collaboration with other schools and a Construction Academy nearby to provide vocational courses. It is a long-standing participant in the national Millennium Volunteers Scheme.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

Ryburn Valley High School is a good school. It is a strong educational community with a clear sense of purpose and direction. It has recently moved into new premises, which has given it a strong boost for further development. It has improved its provision since the last inspection and now has a strong capacity to improve further. It provides good value for money.

Pupils are highly committed to the school, behave well, attend well, and work hard. Their standards of attainment are generally in line with the national average. They make good progress, especially in Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth form. Their personal development and well-being are good, and they grow up as mature, considerate citizens.

The school is well led and managed. It is committed to continual, critical self-evaluation and as a result knows itself very well. It takes good account of the views of pupils and parents, from whom it receives strong support.

The school has broadened its curriculum since the last inspection, and now provides a good range of courses for pupils with vocational interests, as well as a full range of academic options. It has benefited from collaboration with other schools and colleges. The school has also improved aspects of the quality of its teaching, which is good overall. In general, lesson time is used purposefully - except for the daily tutorial period.

The school is an inclusive community: pupils generally feel valued and respected, and those that are particularly vulnerable are mostly supported well. However, the support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is inconsistent in its effectiveness.

The school has recently become a specialist college. This has given it a reinforced sense of purpose and it has already made a good start in giving pupils new opportunities in media arts.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

The sixth form is a successful, well managed and continually improving aspect of the school. Standards of attainment are in line with the national average, having improved greatly in recent years, and sixth formers make good progress. The curriculum is good: it includes a good number of academic subjects but a more restricted range of vocational courses. Specialist provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is excellent.

Careers education and guidance for sixth formers is good and they receive good personal support, though, as in the main school, the daily tutorial period is not used effectively. The quality of teaching is good, and sixth formers are strongly committed to learning. Sixth formers benefit from an outstanding enrichment programme, and many are strongly involved in the excellent Millennium Volunteers programme.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is more consistent.
- Ensure that tutorial time is used more effectively.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Overall standards of attainment in 2005 were broadly in line with the national average. In Year 9, standards in mathematics and science were average and in English above average. In Year 11, although the average score in GCSE was below average the proportion of pupils gaining five or more higher grades was in line. Some pupils also gained qualifications in craft skills or in life skills courses. Standards of attainment of sixth formers were in line with the national average.

Standards are generally improving steadily. Standards in Years 7 to 9 have been rising since 2001. Overall trends in Years 10 and 11 have been inconsistent in recent years but the proportion of pupils gaining five or more higher grades at GCSE has risen steadily. Sixth form standards have risen sharply in recent years.

In 2005, the school exceeded its Year 9 English target but missed science and mathematics targets marginally. The target for the proportion of pupils achieving at least one GCSE pass was met but the target for numbers of pupils gaining high grade passes was not. The school has already met future A-level targets.

Pupils make good progress. The overall starting point in Year 7 is slightly below average but good teaching enables pupils to make faster progress than is seen nationally up to Year 9, especially in English. Pupils make average progress in Years 10 and 11 and the school forecasts further improvements in GCSE results. Sixth formers make good progress, especially in vocational A-levels.

Pupils from the various ethnic groups progress at a similar rate. However, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make inconsistent progress across the school.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good and this helps them to make good academic progress. The attendance rate is high, reflecting their enjoyment of and enthusiasm for the school. The school is a calm and orderly environment: pupils are generally well behaved.

Overall, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and they develop into caring and mature young citizens by the time they leave. They develop a strong sense of right and wrong through considering topical and controversial issues in lessons and discussing matters such as behaviour and bullying.

Pupils make an excellent contribution to the community, particularly in the sixth form where the outstandingly good Millennium Volunteers scheme involves many of them

heavily in community projects. Similarly, some sixth formers have strengthened the school community by training Year 10 and 11 pupils to be mentors for any younger pupils who have fears about bullying. Across the age range, pupils involved in the school council show a responsible attitude towards representing others and further improving the school.

Pupils feel that they are well prepared for the future and have good chances to develop key skills such as job hunting and budgeting. They develop teamwork skills from a range of activities. They respond well to the school's encouragement to adopt healthy lifestyles and have positive attitudes towards smoking, healthy eating and exercise. They adopt safe practices in school and understand the dangers that generally exist in life.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching across the age range is good. Some outstanding teaching was seen during the inspection and much that was good. Senior managers have an accurate knowledge of relative strengths and weaknesses in the teaching and recent initiatives to raise the quality of teaching have had some beneficial impact.

At best, teachers have an excellent knowledge of their subject, plan the work carefully and explain the purpose of a lesson clearly to pupils. In these cases, teachers use plenary sessions very well to ensure that pupils have understood the lesson. In some less effective lessons, the pace of the work is too slow or there is not enough new learning to stimulate pupils. In others, higher attainers are insufficiently challenged or pupils are not clear about what is expected of them.

The quality of pupils' learning is also generally good. In the vast majority of lessons they behave well and there is a relaxed but purposeful atmosphere in which pupils try hard. Pupils made most progress when they were active, for example, by having to respond to the teacher's questions or by working collaboratively to solve a problem. The new buildings and high quality resources also enable pupils to progress well.

Overall, support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is inconsistent. Individual education plans are not universally well used by subject teachers. However, in the more effective lessons, these pupils made very good progress because of efficient collaboration between teachers and support assistants.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good. The range of courses is constantly being improved, in collaboration with other institutions, to match the needs and interests of pupils.

Good features include valuable opportunities to study drama in Years 7 to 9 and media studies in Year 9. Arrangements for the study for ICT are not yet fully secure for all

pupils, but a suitable ICT course for Year 9 has now been introduced. In Years 10 and 11, pupils have a wide range of options, including many vocational subjects and appropriate work-related training at college.

A local construction skills academy provides a very good opportunity for some pupils to combine basic studies in school with skills and qualifications in construction. Overall, pupils are well prepared for adult and working life. However, tutorial time is often not used effectively to contribute to pupils' personal development. The school's status as a specialist college in media arts underpins a range of extra opportunities which are much valued by pupils.

The sixth form curriculum offers a wide range of A and AS level subjects, and some vocational courses. Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is excellent and the sixth form enrichment programme is outstanding.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school provides good care, advice and support. Almost all pupils say that they can turn to adults for help regarding academic or personal difficulties. They feel that the school is inclusive and that they are valued and respected. Procedures to ensure health, safety and child protection are effective. Behaviour and attendance are well promoted and behaviour problems are mostly monitored carefully.

The school gives good support to looked-after children and pupils with English as an additional language and this contributes well to their progress. Links with support agencies are good. The school works positively with Connexions to promote all pupils' personal development and entry to working life. Pupils speak highly of their careers advice and work experience. Academic guidance is strong and all pupils are assessed twice in the school year. Revision guidance is outstanding since it includes very good quality information about what pupils need to demonstrate in examinations to achieve certain grades.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The leadership and management of the school are good, leading to steady improvement in broadening the curriculum and improving the quality of teaching and learning. The school has been able to take in its stride the move to new premises and the acquisition of specialist school status. These developments have reinforced the school's emphasis on raising standards and promoting pupils' personal development.

Much of the credit for this steady improvement is due to the headteacher who provides strong direction. Together with the senior leadership team he manages a good system of monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the school's life and work. Improvement planning is clear and well focused and issues for action from the last inspection have been tackled. Curricular provision is better. The school still does not provide a daily collective act of worship but has enhanced the attention given to spiritual development.

The leadership's current priority is, rightly, to ensure that standards of attainment improve further.

The school has a strong culture of self-evaluation and knows itself very well. It makes good use of the views of parents, pupils and staff. Not surprisingly, it is highly regarded by parents and pupils.

The school rightly claims to be an inclusive organisation. There are rigorous systems in place for tracking each pupil's development, with particular attention to vulnerable groups, and groups of pupils generally progress equally. However, the monitoring and support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is inconsistent.

Governors are actively involved in the life of the school. They understand the school's strengths and weaknesses and provide useful support to the headteacher and staff. They ensure the school's resources are used effectively. The school gives good value for money.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	1

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

We would like to tell you the findings of our recent inspection of the school. But first we want to thank the large number of you who spoke to us during our visit. We realise that you enjoy school, and you appreciate the teaching and support you receive. We know that you are proud of the school.

We think Ryburn Valley High is a good school.

We think that you behave in a responsible and mature way, and that you are considerate to each other in lessons and around the school. We saw that you take your lessons seriously and we think you have a very good attitude to school work. Many of you are involved in extra activities, such as sports teams or media arts events. Some of you get involved in representing your class or year group, or help younger pupils; we think this is good. We are particularly impressed with sixth formers' involvement in Millennium Volunteers, which we think is excellent.

We think you make good progress in most lessons and that you are doing well, especially in Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth form. The credit for this should be shared between your teachers and yourselves. We saw much good teaching and some that was outstanding.

We think that some pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities get good support but that this does vary. However, we think sixth formers with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive excellent support. We think that individuals with particular problems generally get good help from staff.

We believe that the school plans your curriculum well, so that all of you can do courses that suit you. We are impressed with the way the school provides a number of joint courses with colleges and with its involvement in the new construction academy. We think you get good careers advice, especially in the sixth form. We do believe, though, that better use could be made of the daily tutorial period as we saw that this time was sometimes wasted.

We think the headteacher gives very good leadership to the school, and is well supported by a very committed staff. We know that the school has improved in recent years and we are sure it will continue to improve. You have settled into the new building very well, and we believe you deserve it!

Good luck to you all.