

Spalding Grammar School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120665
Local Authority	LINCOLNSHIRE
Inspection number	291822
Inspection dates	22–23 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Elaine Taylor HMI

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School	620
6th form	316
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Keith Casswell
Headteacher	Mr Nigel Ryan
Date of previous school inspection	4 February 2002
School address	Priory Road Spalding Lincolnshire PE11 2XH
Telephone number	01775 724646
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Established in 1588 this selective school for boys is of average size. The sixth form is for both boys and girls and is becoming increasingly popular. The school takes students from over 50 primary schools in a large rural area where there is a significant and growing population of migrant workers. There are fewer than average students from minority ethnic groups and who have learning disabilities or difficulties. Although fewer than average students claim free school meals, one third of the students in the sixth form receive Education Maintenance Allowances. The school has acquired specialist status in languages and engineering.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with some outstanding features. The headteacher and his senior leadership team have developed good systems to monitor the work of the school. As a result, their self-evaluation is accurate and they have tackled areas for improvement with success. The majority of responses from parents to the inspection questionnaire were positive.

The standards which students have achieved when they enter the school are well above average. Subsequently they make good progress and by the time they reach Year 11 their results in GCSE are exceptionally high. In 2006, 95% of students achieved a grade C or better in five or more GCSEs and significantly more than the national average achieved the top two grades. There is an outstanding curriculum which offers the students a very wide range of subjects to choose from, supplemented by an extensive choice of additional activities. The school caters well for individual needs and preferences, with opportunities for students to acquire some qualifications earlier than usual. Staff know the students well and relationships and behaviour are excellent. Specialist status for languages and engineering has provided opportunities for activities which help the students to develop skills which will help them in their working lives. The school provides very good care and contributes significantly to the students' outstanding personal development. Academic guidance is developing through the use of individual learning plans. Students demonstrate very mature attitudes and high levels of enjoyment as shown by their excellent attendance. One parent commented that her son is very happy to go to school and always 'comes home bursting with news about his day'. Students are polite and considerate to others. They support each other and feel very safe. The concerns of a minority of parents about behaviour were not confirmed by inspectors, who found behaviour to be excellent around the school.

The overall quality of teaching is good. Teachers generally use assessment information effectively to plan their lessons so that all students have work which is well matched to their abilities. This is not the case in all lessons, however, and sometimes the students are not given enough opportunities to develop their skills as independent learners. Not enough attention is always given through marking to explain to students how to improve their work.

The school is well led by the headteacher and his senior team. Middle leaders are developing well and are being well supported with appropriate training opportunities. They are not yet monitoring and evaluating some subjects effectively. Resources are used efficiently. The governors provide good support and know the school well. Improvements since the last inspection show that the school is very well placed to continue its development and it provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Effectiveness is good overall and some features are outstanding. The school undertakes a thorough evaluation of sixth form performance and its findings are very close to those of the inspection team.

Sixth form students' personal development is outstanding. They are keen to learn and, consequently, achieve well. They act with a high sense of responsibility to the school and wider communities. They take considerable responsibility for their own learning and make the most

of consistently good teaching. As a result, they make good progress and gain above average standards on A-level, AS-level and advanced vocational courses.

The curriculum gives access to an impressive range of advanced academic courses, and there are also valuable vocational opportunities. Extra-curricular provision is exceptional and well supported.

Students receive good care, support and guidance to enable them to achieve well. Students of both sexes who join the sixth form from other schools are very well integrated and play a full part in the life of the school community.

Leadership and management are good and ensure good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Maximise opportunities to feed back to students what they must do to improve their work.
- Create more opportunities in lessons for students to develop their independent learning skills.
- Ensure consistency in the way subject leaders monitor and evaluate the work of their departments.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The overall achievement of students is good. When students start at the school the standard of their work is well above expectations for their age. Their results in national tests at the end of Year 9 are very high and their progress is good. The school's own detailed analysis of current progress shows that this is being maintained in Key Stage 4, a judgement confirmed by lesson observations conducted during the inspection.

Standards across the school have risen in Key Stage 3 since the last inspection and the school reached challenging targets in 2006. In the GCSE examinations in that year, 93% of students gained 5 or more passes at grade C or above including mathematics and English.

Progress has shown a steady improvement at Key Stage 3 and is now significantly above average overall. English has shown the greatest improvements and the progress made by students placed the school in the top 6% nationally. Progress has been slightly slower in Years 10 and 11, but as a result of the effective strategies which the school has put in place, it is rapidly improving.

There is a small number of students with learning difficulties or disabilities, or from minority ethnic groups and they make the same good progress as others.

Standards in the sixth form are above average and students make good progress. In A-level examinations over half the students achieved the top grades. Girls made better progress than boys in 2006, but the school's own analysis shows that this gender gap has been closed.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. They are very proud of their school and readily take up the opportunities available for study and recreation. They develop their appreciation of art and music and their cultural development is supported by opportunities to travel abroad. They greatly enjoy school. As a result, attendance levels are high and attitudes to learning are very positive. Students behave exceptionally well in lessons, and also when they are not directly supervised. They feel very safe in school and are confident that any instances of bullying will be quickly and effectively dealt with. Relationships across the school are excellent. The active school council expresses strong, but considered, views on school priorities. Students generally appreciate the importance of healthy eating and the large majority takes up the excellent range of extra-curricular opportunities available for sport and physical recreation. All students confidently gain the essential personal and academic skills with which to make the most of continuing educational and career opportunities.

Sixth formers have exceptionally mature attitudes and contribute greatly to the well-being of the school and wider communities. Those who join at age 16 say how well they are integrated into the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are good across the school and enable students to make good progress. Teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to plan lessons well and they use assessment information on students' standards increasingly effectively to guide lesson planning. They make sure that students understand what is to be learned and refer to the objectives, as necessary, throughout the lesson. However, teachers do not always use challenging questions to encourage the more able students to think more deeply. Good use is made of information and communication technology in some subjects. Marking is variable in quality. Some is helpful in showing students how to improve; some is of little help or not completed. A good pace of learning is usually maintained. Relationships are excellent and teachers manage behaviour well. The small number of students with learning difficulties or disabilities learn well and make good progress. They are well supported by teaching assistants.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The school enables students to enjoy an outstandingly rich and varied range of learning opportunities. Provision goes beyond national requirements at both Key Stages 3 and 4. At the end of Year 9, each student's course is adapted very well to meet personal needs and preferences. There is a wide range of academic courses supplemented by vocational options both at Key

Stage 4 and in the sixth form. The school's specialist status for languages and engineering is enriching students' experience very well.

The exciting 'Escape Skills' and citizenship programmes are exceptionally effective in enabling students to enjoy learning and to develop their understanding of personal health and safety and community responsibility.

Excellent extra-curricular opportunities greatly enrich students' experience, and make the education they receive of high quality.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The school takes great care of students, recognising and meeting their individual needs. Relationships are warmly supportive. All statutory systems to secure their safety and well-being are in place. The house system is increasingly helping to develop a strong sense of responsibility and community across the age groups.

A process whereby students' progress is tracked and monitored through individual education plans has been effective in helping students to achieve their potential. The system promotes students' personal development well but has not yet had the same impact on academic progress. Targets are set and regularly reviewed but not enough is done to involve parents in the process. Students are well supported when making educational and vocational choices for the future.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good. The senior leaders analyse the school's performance thoroughly, have a clear picture of its strengths and weaknesses and have set appropriate priorities for its future development.

The leadership team monitors the performance of subject areas rigorously, providing effective support to areas identified as underachieving. This is clearly shown in the improvement in achievement in science. The process of self-evaluation is shared by managers at all levels. Middle leaders are developing their skills in monitoring and evaluating the work of their departments, but there is considerable variation in their effectiveness. The school makes good use of outside agencies to assure the quality of its processes. As a result all issues raised in the previous inspection have been successfully addressed and standards and achievement are improving.

Governance is good. Governors bring a range of experience and skills to their role and the committee structure has been redesigned to enable them to challenge and support the school more effectively. They take every opportunity to gain first hand evidence of the work of the school. Inspectors agree with the school that there is good capacity to improve further and the school provides good value for money.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	2
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	2	

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

24 May 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Spalding Grammar School, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 2XH

On behalf of myself and my colleague I want to say how much we enjoyed visiting your school and how good it was to meet such a mature, polite and happy group of young people. You helped us greatly in our work and I am writing to tell you about our findings, but I hope many of you will read the full report too.

We found that the school is good with some outstanding features. These include:

- the progress you are all now making in your work and the exceptionally high standards you achieve in examinations
- your excellent behaviour and the consideration you show for each other
- the way the school helps you to develop into well rounded, successful young adults
- the way the headteacher and his team lead the school
- the outstanding range of subjects you can study and the wealth of activities in which you can take part
- the good teaching which is improving even more because of the way the school monitors its work and your progress.

You make excellent contributions to charity events and you contribute well to the life of the school through the school council. You said you feel safe and you are confident that adults in the school will help if you have problems. You appreciate the improvements and opportunities which the school's status as a languages and engineering college has brought.

We think there are a few things the school could do to make your progress even better. We have asked that the following development points should be addressed.

- Teachers need to be sure to always let you know how to improve your work by writing helpful comments and suggestions when they mark it.
- There should be opportunities in lessons for you to develop the skills needed to become independent learners.
- The school should make sure that subject leaders consistently monitor the work in their areas.

You can help by asking your teachers to show you how to improve your work and by taking every opportunity in lessons to develop your study skills. We wish you all the best for your futures.

Elaine Taylor

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools (HMI)