



Rawthorpe High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 107756
Local Authority Kirklees
Inspection number 294528
Inspection dates 29–30 November 2006
Reporting inspector Linden Phillips HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Nether Hall Avenue
School category	Community		Huddersfield
Age range of pupils	11–16		West Yorkshire HD5 9PG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01484 221892
Number on roll (school)	349	Fax number	01484 221894
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr P Rock
		Headteacher	Mrs J Young
Date of previous school inspection	3 November 2005		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	29–30 November 2006	294528

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Rawthorpe is small secondary school situated in Huddersfield. Within its catchment are two large housing estates. There are more pupils than is the average who are entitled to free school meals. Pupils' families reflect the town's diversity, with around a third from minority ethnic communities. The majority of pupils are fluent in English when they arrive at the school. Pupils' attainment at primary school is, in the main, below average. Pupils and parents are able to use the school's extended service provision, including a crèche and day care.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school no longer requires significant improvement.

Rawthorpe High School has improved substantially since the last inspection and now provides a good standard of education. Attainment in 2006 improved considerably for the majority of students in Years 9 and 11. Students made good progress: they arrived at the school with attainment generally below average and improved their standards to be broadly average.

This progress is as a result of very detailed self-reviews by all subject departments, which have looked honestly at strengths and areas which could be better. Overall school review has lifted staff confidence and led to improved teaching which is firmly focused on how well students learn. Although some lessons are not wholly effective, teaching overall is now good and some is outstanding. Teachers know their students well and have increased expectations of them. At the same time, students enjoy lessons and appreciate the way that teachers help and encourage them to improve. The headteacher has led the way with a clear vision of rounded support and care for all pupils: middle managers are also enthused and skilled to now carry on independently. They are supported well by a good management team who are aware of the need to continue the school's improvements. There is a strong capacity to improve.

Students' personal development and well-being are supported very well in school and through work with external partners. The school is working with its primary partner schools to raise attainment by Year 6 so that students come to Rawthorpe better prepared to enjoy learning and achieve their potential. The curriculum is innovative and helps students move forward but there are gaps in statutory provision at both key stages. The school is an extended school. Students and their families benefit from, for example, a breakfast club, after-school clubs, good collaboration from outside agencies, a school nurse, a crèche and child care provision. Students are supported well by good guidance to make choices and almost all students move on to further education at one of the three local colleges, or to training apprenticeships and employment.

The school deploys its resources carefully, linking expenditure with the priorities in the school improvement plan and provides good value for money.

Staff and students express the view that Rawthorpe High School has become a different place and one that they are pleased and proud to be associated with.

What the school should do to improve further

- Maintain the momentum of improvement so that all succeeding years of students achieve well.
- Improve the curriculum and ensure that all students can study what they are entitled to.
- Ensure that all teaching is as good as the best.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards in the school are now broadly average but achievement is good. The data available to the school indicates that the majority of students make significantly more progress than would be expected relative to their attainment on entry.

In 2005, standards in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were very low. Results in GCSE examinations were also very low. Targets were missed by a considerable margin and students significantly underachieved. Provisional results for 2006 paint a very different picture and show a significant rise in the number of students gaining five or more GCSE grades and much higher Year 9 test results. Targets for 2006 were surpassed by a significant margin. This marked improvement is as a result of a sharper focus on how students learn and an improved understanding by all teachers of how well each pupil is doing and what they need to do to get better. As one Year 11 student stated, 'All the teachers want us to do our best.' In a very short space of time, earlier groundwork, together with improved teaching and management, have resulted in standards that are now broadly average. Students are now achieving well when compared to their standards on entry to the school. There are some differences between groups: in most subjects girls did better than boys and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieved satisfactorily rather than well. The school is aware that, although the progress of these students is supported, the planned appointment of an SEN coordinator is necessary to ensure that they make even better progress.

The school's own data shows that the 2006 results are not a 'one off'. Progress in lessons is generally good which lends support to teachers' assessments that indicate that results in 2007 will again be higher than the school's declared targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students say how much they enjoy coming to school. 'Rawthorpe's on the up', they say. As they arrive they can be seen chatting with their friends or at breakfast club until it is time for school to begin. This sets the tone for the day and the good behaviour that is the norm. Students think behaviour has improved because rules are clear and they know where they stand. A learning support unit, for those who find it difficult to conform all the time with the school's high expectations, is effective in reducing the number of fixed term exclusions, though these are still too high for the school's liking. Most students have a good attendance record and staff work hard with external agencies to improve the poor attendance of a minority.

A strong sense of their own worth and concern for others are major components in students' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school council, active in everything from anti-litter campaigns to appointing the headteacher, leads the way in charitable fundraising. Closer to home, older students have a great willingness to help younger ones by being on hand to guide new ones around the school. Music leads the way in high profile cultural development with a third of the

students taking part in major musical productions. The choir and steel band are very excited about their forthcoming radio recording for broadcast at Christmas. These, together with a dynamic programme of sporting and other activities, foster self-confidence and students talk with enthusiasm about how all this helps them prepare for the next stage of life.

The school recently consulted parents and students and found that the vast majority of students feel safe in school and know where to turn for help. Bullying, they say, is not an issue though where it does occur it is swiftly dealt with and friendships restored. Students are encouraged to choose healthy options in the dining room and together with plenty of physical activity this is helping them learn the importance of a healthy lifestyle.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Expertly guided by the school's leaders, teachers have built up their expertise in planning thoroughly for students' learning needs. The school underestimated the pace of improvement in teaching and learning in judging this satisfactory. A consistency of approach is the cornerstone in the significant improvement in teaching and learning and when asked what was best about their school students answered, 'teachers'. The high quality of planning includes the role that teaching assistants play in learning and because they are linked to departments are themselves part of the planning process. Teaching assistants are effective in giving general support for learning. However, the lack of a designated coordinator for special educational needs means a more focused direction for students with a statement is lacking.

In some lessons students are not fully developing their skills as independent learners and are too reliant on the teacher. At the same time, some teaching is outstanding and in these lessons teachers' expert subject knowledge and passion inspire students to ever-higher achievement. Students relish the freedom to organise their own way of working and for higher attaining students this is essential in promoting independent learning. All students are willing and eager to get on and make progress and this is central to the rapidly rising standards and explains why achievement is so much improved since the last inspection.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

An imaginative curriculum has been developed to meet the needs of all pupils. It is geared to improving standards and raising achievement whilst offering an increased range of creative options such as expressive and visual arts and new diploma courses. For example: students can opt to study three arts based courses in Key Stage 4. Courses are adapted to meet the needs of individual students and as a result they can focus on the subjects that they will do best in. Students of all ages really value the wide

range of sporting and artistic events offered to them outside the school day. One said, 'There is always something to do.' The 'arts week' and the newly introduced athletics club have proved particularly popular with students and the wider community. These events contribute well to the social and personal development of pupils. Links with partner schools and other organisations are strong. However, in the school's effort to personalise the curriculum, some subjects have not received the attention they deserve. For example, the curriculum does not fully cover the requirements for religious education, information and communication technology and modern languages. It is for these reasons that the curriculum is only satisfactory rather than good.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Students who arrive in Year 7 are already familiar with their new school because of the considerable contact made by Rawthorpe staff and the lessons and events at Rawthorpe which pupils attended whilst at primary school. Students say they feel welcomed and safe. Arrangements for safeguarding students are well organised and monitored.

The school continues to be committed to providing a coherent system of care. Vulnerable pupils are given much well informed support. The school's systems for managing behaviour concentrate on keeping students safe in school where possible. Students' individual circumstances are well known to staff and the school works with parents and outside agencies to help students gain coping skills so that they take charge of their learning.

The whole school environment is managed to remove barriers to learning and help students make good progress. Students are very well supported in lessons to understand their targets and what they need to do to improve. Students like this focus on what they can do and how to do it better.

Guidance to students in moving on after 16, supported by extensive library resources, is effective in ensuring that almost all students continue to study at college or in apprenticeships, while a small number take up employment. The school has changed the arrangements for reporting to parents about their children's progress and the majority of parents now attend review days. The school looks to raise the aspirations of its students in many ways. A University road-show which visited the school attracted most Year 11 students and motivated some to attend university summer schools. Industry days, mock interviews from local employers and residential courses help students gain a wider vision of what they are capable and where they might set their sights.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is ambitious for the school and carries the senior leadership team and governing body with her. 'Inspirational' is the word that is assigned to her by many

in the school community. She has a strong belief in the capabilities of staff and students alike and has uncovered the latent capacity for good in the school. Plans for school improvement are focused on the core activities of teaching and learning so that professional development has been, and still is, bent towards improving the quality of what happens in the classroom. Improvements have been rapid and though the school knows it still has a hard road ahead in sustaining improvement, there is a buoyancy and optimism among the staff to persevere.

Departmental heads have benefited from intensive training in self-review. This is variously described as 'Empowering', 'A dream' and 'Organised progress'. Review has been a catalyst for joint work by departmental teams where good practice is shared and managers report an increase in mutual respect. The resultant 'toolkit' is seen as a real strength. Planning has improved and teachers' clarity in what they want to achieve in lessons is shared with their students. Departmental heads are convinced that the improvements in attainment and achievement are no accident.

Finances are managed well. The local authority has only recently handed back responsibility to the governing body. It is a tribute to their faith in the school that there is almost a full complement of governors and they have ready a committee structure with linked meeting schedule so that governors are now ready to take up the reins of supporting and challenging the school.

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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
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
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
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	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

You will remember that we visited your school at the end of November. We would like to thank you for your welcome and your willingness to talk to us about your school.

You gave us a very strong impression of how pleased you are to attend Rawthorpe School. You thought that the school had changed and that the headteacher and all the staff were making the school a good place to be and a good place to learn. Many of you told us how much you appreciated what the staff did to give you support and help. Some of your parents wrote to us and are also very pleased with your progress. We agree with you: Rawthorpe is a good school.

We were impressed by the number of sports activities most of you take part in. We are sure that your parents and friends will be tuning in when the BBC recording of your school choir and steel band is broadcast at Christmas - and, having had a taste of the excellent sound of the band, we might do that too!

Your school is much improved from a year ago. In every lesson we visited, you were willing to work with your teachers and support staff and this has been one of the main reasons that you are improving the standards of your work. Another big reason is the hard work teachers have put in to make sure they know how each of you is making progress and how to help you improve. Your teachers and school staff have always cared about your welfare and the school continues to do that very well. Some things can still improve.

- In the tests and examinations in 2006, students at Rawthorpe achieved very well. Students taking exams in 2007 will want to do as well - and we have asked the school to make sure that the momentum of improvement is not lost. We hope you continue to enjoy your work and make those efforts teachers expect.
- The school has improved the curriculum so that you have a better choice of subjects. Even so, we have asked the school to improve what you are taught: you all need to have good information and communication technology skills when you leave, you need to know about each other's beliefs and you should have the opportunity to study another language.
- Most of your lessons are good and we would like all of them to be of the same standard - if not outstanding, as the best of them are.