

Withernsea High School Specialising in Humanities and Technology

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118075
Local Authority	East Riding of Yorkshire
Inspection number	326759
Inspection dates	18–19 June 2008
Reporting inspector	John Young HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	970
6th form	131
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs C Eldred
Headteacher	Dr Fiona Ireland
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2005
School address	Hull Road Withernsea HU19 2EQ
Telephone number	01964 613133
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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 and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Withernsea High School is of average size, and is located in a relatively isolated rural area of East Yorkshire. Virtually all students are White British and live locally. There are higher levels of deprivation in this community than exist nationally, and the proportion of students known to be eligible for a free school meal is above the national average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also above average. Students' prior attainment is broadly average on entry to the school.

The school has held specialist Technology college status since 2000, and gained a Humanities specialism in 2005. The school has healthy school accreditation and the Sportmark. The school also became a full service extended school in 2005 in partnership with the local junior and infant schools. Together they offer services such as adult learning classes and family support programmes, alongside a range of enrichment activities. The school sixth form is part of a consortium with two other schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Withernsea High School provides a satisfactory quality of education for students.

The school performs a vital role in its local community, and is committed to providing a positive educational experience for all students. This is evident in the 'open door' inclusive policy of the sixth form, numerous enrichment opportunities and the caring attitude of staff. This approach is valued by parents and students. The school is led by a committed headteacher, who acknowledges there is room for further improvement. During the past year she has introduced a raft of measures to achieve this aim, some of which are already showing evidence of impact.

Wide-ranging courses and activities that are well matched to students needs and interests underpin the good curriculum. Students' personal development and well-being are also good. Most enjoy school and involve themselves fully in the wider life of school, such as drama productions, the student council and charitable activities. Attendance and behaviour are satisfactory. Care, guidance and support, although satisfactory have some good features, including provision for vulnerable students and pastoral guidance. The same is true of teaching and learning, where examples of outstanding and good teaching were observed, but there was also a significant minority that was not good enough. This inconsistency is also evident in students' achievement and standards, which are satisfactory overall. Students enter the school with broadly average standards but underachieve during Key Stage 3, so that standards drop below average by the end of Year 9. The progress that boys make is particularly poor. To arrest this decline some decisive actions have been taken, which are bearing fruit. As a consequence, the progress data for the current year is much more positive and show that students in all year groups are making at least satisfactory gains and are on course to reach their agreed targets. These improved standards are verified by inspection evidence. By Year 11 overall standards have risen and 67% of students gained five A* to C GCSEs in 2007, which is higher than the national average. However, only 34% achieved five A* to C (including the key subjects of English and mathematics, which is below average). Current data and inspection evidence demonstrate that students' progress in English and mathematics is improving and that Key Stage 4 students are also set to hit their targets.

The impact of the specialist subjects, in terms of their provision, performance and influence across the school is improving. In spite of this, there is scope for further development. Leadership and management are also satisfactory. While there are strengths in senior and middle leadership, there are also elements of less effective leadership and this contributes to the inconsistency which is a recurrent theme in aspects of the school's work. Not all staff habitually follow procedures nor do all managers personify best practice or effectively monitor its implementation. Governors fulfill their role adequately. Some effective steps have been taken to tackle identified shortcomings from the last inspection, including establishing a coherent behaviour for learning policy, rationalising the use of assessment data and offering more vocational opportunities to students in the sixth form and making better use of assessment data to monitor and evaluate how well students are progressing. Moreover, the school has a sound grasp of what is required to get better. There is satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The school works hard to raise students' aspirations by strongly encouraging them to stay on into the sixth form. Because of this, many students begin GCE A-level courses with relatively low GCSE grades. The policy leads to some mismatch of course to student, so that although students make satisfactory progress overall and standards across the range of subjects are broadly average, standards attained by individual pupils varied widely. The isolated location of the school challenges the feasibility of links with other providers and limits the range of courses available. However, some school facilities are underused and few Level 2 courses are scheduled, narrowing progression routes. The popular additional curriculum includes international school activities, broadening students' experience. Most complete their courses. Leadership is sound. Good monitoring and tracking arrangements, with effective strategies to deal with underachievement, support students well. They especially benefit from the opportunities to take responsibility, for instance as school council members.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve the achievement of students at Key Stage 3.
- Raise standards and improve the achievement of students in English and mathematics throughout the school, particularly for boys.
- Develop high quality teaching and learning throughout the school.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management to enable greater consistency in the implementation of policies introduced.
- Ensure the courses students take in the sixth form match their capabilities as well as their interests.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students make satisfactory progress from broadly average starting points, and attain standards that are broadly average by the end of Key Stage 4. Results have risen over the last three years at Key Stage 4, but there has been under performance at Key Stage 3 in the core subjects. In 2007, standards in English, mathematics at Key Stage 4 and in the specialist subjects were also disappointing and the school recognised that these were key areas for improvement. The improvement initiatives introduced are showing evidence of impact, but not at the rate the school had hoped. However, despite the school's efforts, boys lag behind girls in terms of the standards they attain and the relative progress they make.

The latest available assessment data kept by the school show that students at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are on track to meet their targets, including in the specialist subjects. Evidence from the inspection confirms these findings. The school has begun to identify and tackle prior gaps in students' learning through remedial intervention. This has included additional literacy and basic skills assistance. The school is also making use of local authority consultants in English,

science and mathematics to lead learning and coach its school staff. In addition, the school has stepped up its efforts to reinforce the importance of good attendance, strengthened behaviour management systems and worked hard to better engage students through more student centred learning approaches. Indications suggest this has had a positive impact on students' ability to access the curriculum and improved attitudes to learning. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to other students because staff support them well. Students in the sixth form make broadly satisfactory progress in their studies, while the standards they reach are also broadly average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: Insufficient Evidence

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Students enjoy school and throw themselves into the many opportunities they have to participate in the life of the school, such as fundraising for nominated charities. Since the link was established students have raised over £4000 to support a feeding and equipment buying programme at their partner school in South Africa. The well-established school council gives students a formal voice and the school takes their views seriously. Student ambassadors represent the school at public functions. School productions are extremely popular and reinforce the sense of community. Students know the importance of being healthy and take advantage of the sporting activities and healthier eating options available. Students follow a wide-ranging course in personal, social, and citizenship education (PSHCE), which develops their understanding of the dangers of substance abuse and promotes emotional maturity. Attendance is broadly average and the school vigorously pursues measures to improve it. A small number of students, who attend less than half time, adversely affect the overall figure. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is sound. Students' behaviour is satisfactory and improving because of new behaviour management procedures and improved attitudes to learning. Exclusions have fallen dramatically, as has the low-level disruption in lessons. Conversely, a small proportion of students can disrupt the learning of others. Students say they feel safe and that staff deal with any incidences of bullying rapidly and effectively. The school has useful links with outside agencies. The Connexions service, for example, supports the good take-up of students entering further education, employment or training. Improved basic skills provision, effective careers education, along with good opportunities to develop their business and enterprise skills and useful work experience combine to enable students to acquire skills vital for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: Insufficient Evidence

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. The school's own view of the quality of its teaching is too generous. Throughout the school, classroom relationships are cordial and the majority of students are well disposed to learning, especially when good quality teaching engages them fully. In the most successful lessons, teacher expectations are high, the pace is brisk and a variety of activities that allow for a range of learning styles capture and sustain students' interest. Teachers regularly check progress towards explicit objectives and involve

students in the assessment of their work and progress. Students make real gains in these lessons. Exemplary practice was observed in history.

Many of the less effective lessons are characterised by work that students find uninteresting, mundane or too easy. Students are not involved enough in their own learning, and lesson planning does not draw sufficiently on available information about students' current progress and standards. Too many lessons reflect a 'one size fits all' approach, and work is not tailored precisely enough to fully extend the more able or support lower ability pupils effectively. The use of marking as means of providing guidance on how to improve work and setting of homework varies too widely. As yet, the impact of school initiatives to improve teaching, learning, and assessment has been inconsistent.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Curriculum provision is good. In Years 7 to 9, students receive a broad and balanced experience that exceeds statutory requirements. Distinctive features at this stage include drama in each year, and a 'Stepping Stones' project that supports students with significant literacy problems. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also receive specialist support. Students in Year 10 and 11 choose from a broad range of GCSE and vocational subjects. The growing provision for BTEC qualifications is a good feature. These, together with award scheme development and accreditation network and other work-related courses provide a meaningful experience for students, including some who are not well suited to a full GCSE programme. Some low attaining students who are in danger of losing interest in school follow a tailored course based around a Youth Bike engineering project. Initiatives of this nature are helping to match students' learning programmes more closely to their individual needs and aspirations. The school's specialist status has expanded the range of technology and humanities courses available for students. Students enjoy a good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. Plans are well advanced for further developments in Years 7 to 9 to build on the positive impact of the bridging units that enable students to settle into their new school.

Curriculum provision in the sixth form is satisfactory. Involvement in the consortium has expanded the range of courses available, but further growth is required to increase the number of Level 2 courses available and to ensure students make appropriate choices relative to their capabilities as well as interests.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: Insufficient Evidence

The school provides satisfactory care, guidance and support. The form tutor network places students' welfare as a priority for staff and underpins the effective pastoral care system. They get to know their students, and their families, very well, which enable them to give the best individual help, advice and support. Parents' views of the school are generally positive, although a few are rightly concerned about the lack of homework set and disruption to lessons through unacceptable behaviour. Parents' evenings and reports home help parents and students understand how well students are doing. However, the school recognises that it needs to ensure

all staff consistently implement academic guidance and support protocols. Arrangements for keeping students safe follow current guidelines. An effective Year 7 induction programme helps them to settle quickly. Guidance given to students as they move through the school is also good and effective careers education leads the vast majority of students to continue into further education or employment with training. There is considerable pastoral support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It focuses on their individual needs and enables them to achieve satisfactorily. Other vulnerable students, including looked after children, are known and carefully nurtured by staff. The learning mentor works with underachieving students to help them realise their potential.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Leadership and management, including in the specialist subjects, are satisfactory overall. The headteacher, together with some of her senior colleagues, provides clear educational direction. However, the impact of measures introduced to boost student achievement are diminished by inconsistency in middle management and a failure by senior leaders to make sure that agreed policy becomes common practice. For example, the headteacher has developed a cogent plan for the continued improvement of the school, which staff shaped and endorsed. They received clear guidance and training to support implementation; yet this has not resulted in all staff adhering to agreed protocols for behaviour management, teaching and learning and assessment for learning. Staff are held to account for the quality of their work through performance management reviews and regular appraisal through learning walks, work scrutiny and student evaluations. These monitoring and evaluation procedures represent much improved practice but require further refinement. Nevertheless, the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis and standards by the end of Key stage 4 continue to rise. The school has taken some effective steps to promote improvement since the last inspection, including expanding vocational opportunities in the sixth and making better use of data to identify how well students are progressing. The school's self-evaluation is broadly accurate and there is good awareness of strengths and weaknesses. Parents are largely supportive of the school, although a minority perceive students' behaviour to be poor. The school has developed some strong links with a number of external agencies to improve the quality of education it provides for its students. Governors know the school well and perform their duties diligently. The school deploy resources judiciously to achieve satisfactory value for money, and there is suitable capacity to make the necessary improvements.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. Common procedures and systems operate across all schools in the consortium to ensure consistency. The head of sixth form fulfils his duties adequately.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
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	IE ²
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
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	3	

The quality of provision

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

² IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
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

20 June 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Withernsea High School Specialising in Humanities and Technology, East Riding of Yorkshire, HU19 2EQ

Thank you for being so welcoming to my colleagues and me when we visited your school. We found it fascinating and enlightening to observe your lessons and to evaluate the quality of education you receive. A special thanks to those of you that we talked to at lunchtime and during lessons; you conducted yourselves well.

The school provides you with a satisfactory quality of education overall. There are some good aspects, for instance in the way the school promotes your personal development and in the quality of the curriculum. Your attendance and behaviour are both satisfactory overall and you tell us that you enjoy coming to school. However, a small minority of you can be unruly in lessons, while a small group of you do not attend as regularly as you should. These factors affect your achievement. Elements of the personal care, guidance and support you receive are very good, which you told us you appreciate. The academic guidance and support you receive is not yet at the same high level. Overall, you make satisfactory progress in your studies and reach standards that are broadly average by the end of Key Stage 4. However, during Key Stage 3 your progress in English, mathematics and science is not good enough. Boys do less well than girls overall. The quality of teaching and learning is also satisfactory, although there are big differences in the quality of teaching. The school is adequately led and managed; but, again, there is some inconsistency, which needs addressing so that you all experience the same high quality provision.

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory, and you make broadly satisfactory progress, and reach broadly satisfactory standards in your studies. The curriculum is satisfactory, but there is room for improvement in the range of suitable courses available to you. Leadership and management of the sixth form are also satisfactory.

Staff have already introduced improvement initiatives. In addition, we have asked them to raise standards and improve your achievement at Key Stage 3 and in English and mathematics throughout the school, particularly for boys. We have also asked that high quality teaching and learning is spread throughout the school; and that the effectiveness of leadership and management is improved. We have also asked the staff to ensure the courses you take in the sixth form match your capabilities as well as your interests. I urge you to do all you can to support the staff in their efforts to improve your school.

Yours sincerely

John Young

Her Majesty's Inspector