

Ryburn Valley High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107565
Local Authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	331424
Inspection dates	12–13 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Ian Richardson HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1441
Sixth form	249
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Melvyn Cross
Headteacher	Mrs Honor Byford
Date of previous school inspection	February 2006
School address	St Peter's Avenue Sowerby Sowerby Bridge HX6 1DF
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors. The inspectors visited 47 lessons and held meetings with: members of the senior leadership team, middle managers and staff, the chair of governors, and groups of pupils from across the age range. They observed the school's work and looked at the school's policies on a range of issues, the development plan, some curriculum audits, pupils' exercise books, minutes of governors' meetings, questionnaires completed by staff and pupils, and 284 questionnaires completed by parents.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- How well pupils achieve and enjoy learning.
- The quality of the school's work, particularly teaching and learning.
- The leadership and management of the school.
- The sixth form.

Information about the school

Ryburn Valley High School is a comprehensive Foundation School. It has grown in recent years and is heavily oversubscribed. The sixth form has grown significantly since the last inspection. The school moved into new premises on the same site in February 2005. The majority of pupils come from the Ryburn ward and in particular the surrounding council estates, with some travelling further from the rural parts of Ripponden and Rishworth. Many of the students live in or have attended primary schools in the Sowerby Bridge regeneration area. Nearly half the students qualify for Aim Higher support in deprived wards.

The school was awarded specialist status as a Media Arts College in 2004. It is part of a cluster of post-16 providers whose aim is to improve the quality of provision at that level. The school is the central hub for the cluster in delivering the Creative and Media Diploma from September 2008. The school holds the Healthy Schools Award, Artsmark Gold, Sportsmark, Investors in People, Safe Mark and will be assessed for Investors in Pupils this year. The school is working towards meeting the expectations of the Sustainable Schools Framework.

Further information about the school

	School's figures	School's figures compared with other schools
School size	1441	Above average
Free school meals	10.4%	Below average
Proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	27%	Above average
Proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups	7.3%	Below average
Proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language	7%	Below average
Proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	3.3%	Above average

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school that provides for students well and has some outstanding features. The sixth form provision is good. Students across the full age range show high levels of commitment to the school. They enjoy their learning greatly, feel very safe and contribute to the school and community to an outstanding extent. The support and guidance that students receive is also outstanding. Parents, staff and students all express very positive views about the way the school is led and managed. The specialist Media Arts College status has played a significant part in developing the school's provision. The school has successfully collaborated with a wide range of organisations. The senior leadership team shows good capacity to bring about improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Create more opportunities for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students, for example, in tutor time.
- Improve academic guidance and assessment practice in the classroom by ensuring that the assessment of pupils' work is used to help planning and teaching on a daily basis.
- Improve the performance of the lower performing subjects in the sixth form.

How well does the school meet the needs of individuals and different groups of pupils?

2

Students' enjoyment of learning is outstanding and this is evidenced in their high attendance rates. It also contributes to the high levels of engagement that were seen in many lessons. Students learn well, make good progress and attain standards that are broadly average. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. There is some variation in learning seen between subjects and teachers, but it was especially good in the school's specialist subjects. Students' performance in specialist subjects made a significant contribution to overall standards.

Students feel very safe and this view is also held by parents and staff. Similarly, students, staff and parents believe strongly that behaviour is good. The inspection team agree this is so, both in classrooms and around the school. However, behaviour

was not as good in those few lessons where teaching was less engaging and less responsive to pupils' needs.

Students are well aware of ways they can maintain a healthy life style. The school's contribution to this through the curriculum and other provision such as the breakfast club, is rated highly by parents and is indicative of the outstanding care students receive. In response, pupils show care and respect for others and make outstanding contributions to the school and wider community: a clear strength of the school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
Pupils' attendance and punctuality	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	3

The quality of the school's work

A significant proportion of lessons seen were good or better with some examples of outstanding teaching. A very small proportion of inadequate teaching was seen. Good use of information and communication technology is a major factor in the success of teaching and learning, particularly where students are fully involved in using the resources themselves. There are robust systems to assess students' performance and senior leaders track this performance effectively. However in the classroom, assessment of pupils' learning is not used consistently on a day-to day basis to improve planning and teaching.

The curriculum is good with a rich range of content and numerous pathways for students to follow that match their needs and interests. The Media Arts College status has promoted a wide range of courses and encouraged subjects to collaborate in a range of creative ways. The tutorial times observed were not well used to contribute to students' learning and development. However, the care, guidance and support given to students is outstanding and this view is shared by students and their parents.

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	2
Effective assessment and academic guidance	3
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	2
Support, guidance and care	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The school analyses performance data and evaluates pupils' needs effectively. This has led to good planning and enables the senior team to make decisions based on sound evidence. Subject departments carry out self-evaluation and are held accountable for students' performance. However, the rigour of subject self-evaluation is inconsistent. Heads of departments feel very well supported and are confident that their points of view are heard by senior staff. They feel consulted and valued. Staff questionnaires and interviews show very high regard for the management and leadership of the school and they feel that their professional needs are accommodated well. Staff are successfully encouraged to contribute to a number of groups aimed at bringing about improvement. The good provision for continuing professional development is viewed positively by staff, and middle managers have access to courses to improve their leadership and management skills. Staff are clear about the priorities for development in the school.

These priorities are shared by the governing body which approaches its work systematically and holds school leaders to account. The governing body also provides good support. For example, the governors' welfare panel interviews pupils, who are at risk of permanent exclusion, with their parents. As a result of their activity there were no permanent exclusions last year.

There is a vigorous enterprise culture in the school which has promoted collaboration with other organisations. This has resulted in additional funding which contributes to the outstanding value for money the school provides. The contributions to community cohesion are strong. The Media Arts specialism has successfully promoted a very wide range of activities involving the community.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Monitoring, evaluating and planning for improvement to outcomes for pupils	2
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	2
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	2
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	2
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	1
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	1

Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	2
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

Students enjoy their time in the sixth form and achieve well. Students' standards of attainment at the start of courses are below average. They are well taught in most of their lessons and well supported by assessment and tracking arrangements that enable them to understand how well they are doing. Thus they make good progress and generally gain better examination results than might be expected at the end of Year 13.

The curriculum is good, providing appropriate courses for students of all abilities. The range of vocational courses for students of middle and higher abilities is less extensive, but is improving. Enrichment opportunities are very good and make a significant contribution to students' good personal development. A major strength of the sixth form is the outstanding involvement of students in contributing to the life of the main school and in their volunteer work in the wider community.

Despite the many positive features of this successful and popular sixth form, there are a few subjects in which students do not do as well as they should, and this pattern of under-achievement has persisted.

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents' show very high levels of satisfaction with the quality of education and care that the school provides. Very few parents made negative comments in their responses. 95% of parents agree or strongly agree that the school is well led and managed. They have the same level of confidence in the way the school keeps their children safe. A similar proportion of parents affirm they are happy with the progress their children are making. Around 90% believe that the school meets their child's particular needs effectively and helps parents to support their child's learning. A very large majority agree that their child is happy at school and this aligns closely with students' own views.

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. In 2006-7, 14% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2006-7, 46% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing for its pupils suitably. In 2006-7, 34% of schools were judged satisfactory.
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. In 2006-7, 6% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

- Attainment:** the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
- 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.
- Achievement:** an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
- Capacity to improve:** the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



14 November 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Ryburn Valley High School, Sowerby, HX6 1DF

On behalf of the inspection team I want to thank you for the way you welcomed us and worked well with us to let us know what you think of the school.

This is a good school that provides for you well and has some outstanding features. Through filling in the questionnaire and in talking with us you made it clear that the very large majority of you enjoy school and appreciate greatly the support and guidance that teachers give you. You show high levels of commitment to the school. You told us you feel very safe, and we believe you contribute to the school and community to an outstanding extent. The support and guidance that you receive in school is also outstanding. Your parents, your teachers and all of you express very positive views about the way the school is led and managed.

There are still some areas for improvement. We are asking the school to:

- provide you with greater opportunities for your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example, in tutor time
- improve ways you are assessed in the classroom and the academic guidance you receive on how to do even better.
- improve the performance of the lower performing subjects in the sixth form

On behalf of the inspectors I wish you all the best for your future.

Ian Richardson
Her Majesty's Inspector

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