

Millthorpe School

Nunthorpe Avenue, York, North Yorkshire, YO23 1WF

Inspection dates

5–6 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good		2
Quality of teaching	Good		2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good		2
Leadership and management	Good		2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school is improving at a very swift pace. Achievement is rising rapidly in most subjects, but particularly so in English.
- The gap in achievement between students supported by the pupil premium and others is reducing year-on-year.
- There has been a very successful drive to improve teaching. Most of the teaching observed by inspectors was of good quality.
- Students are polite, well mannered and relate well to each other and to adult visitors to the school. They feel safe and secure.
- The headteacher has a clarity of vision, which has served to motivate the senior team and all staff. Improving teaching and raising achievement is central to this vision.
- The school's tracking of students' progress is simple for all to understand, yet highly effective to make sure students do not slip behind with their achievement.
- The governing body provides plentiful high-quality support and challenge to school leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- While teachers mark students' work, students do not always make the necessary improvements to it, which affects their progress.
- Students' work is sometimes carelessly presented.
- Middle leaders do not all check on the quality of marking and teaching with equal rigour.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 45 part lessons taught by 44 teachers. Two of these lessons were jointly observed with senior leaders.
- Inspectors spoke to members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority, staff and students from the school.
- A range of documents was scrutinised, including information relating to teachers' performance, minutes of governing body meetings, and records and the tracking of students' progress.
- Inspectors analysed the 205 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in addition to the school's own surveys of parents' views.
- At the same time as the main inspection, an additional and separate subject inspection of history was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI).

Inspection team

Robert Jones, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Christine Kennedy	Additional Inspector
Andrew Henderson	Additional Inspector
Tudor Griffiths	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized secondary school.
- A below average proportion of students is eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students in local authority care, for those known to be eligible for free school meals and children from service families.
- The proportion of students with special educational needs and supported at school action is average.
- The proportion of students with special educational needs and supported either through school action plus or a statement of special educational needs is average.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds
- The school works closely with Askham Bryan College, York, for provision of some off-site courses for Key Stage 4.
- In 2013, the school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching further so that it becomes outstanding by:
 - making sure students make improvements to their work shortly after teachers mark it
 - ensuring students take a pride in their work by presenting it neatly in all subjects.
- Improve leadership and management further so they become outstanding by ensuring all middle leaders rigorously check on the quality of teaching, particularly marking, so it improves quickly in all departments.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students begin in Year 7 with above average attainment. They make good progress during their time at the school and leave in Year 11 with above average standards in all subjects, well prepared for any further education or employment.
- Achievement is rising rapidly. In 2013, the proportion of students achieving five good GCSEs, including English and mathematics, had risen to its highest ever point. The school's accurate predictions for the future and other inspection evidence indicate that this trend of improvement is likely to continue.
- In English, there were dramatic improvements in 2013 after some disappointments in the 2012 results. These improvements were the result of very careful tracking of students' performance, some high quality teaching and tailored support when any students fell behind.
- In mathematics, a focus on developing students' basic calculating skills and better teaching for all abilities meant that achievement also rose in 2013.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs did not make as much progress as they should in 2013 because these students' needs were not met well enough when they were younger. Inspectors looked carefully at the progress of students currently in the school and found that they are now making good and often outstanding progress as a result of the much improved systems that are now in place to support these students and track their progress.
- There are still gaps in attainment between those students eligible for pupil premium funding, including those known to be eligible for free school meals and others, but over a three year period, these gaps have narrowed due to the funding being specifically earmarked to close this gap. In English, the gap is equivalent to one GCSE grade and in mathematics, one and a quarter grades. Similarly, gaps in progress between these two groups of students are narrowing.
- The Year 7 catch-up premium is proving effective, particularly in helping students to improve their reading skills through one-to-one support. An inspector listened to some students reading confidently. The teaching assistant helped students to sound out unfamiliar words so they could use their skills in matching letters to sounds then made sure they fully understood what they were reading.
- The most able make good progress in both English and mathematics.
- Achievement in science has been weaker in previous years, but inspection evidence indicates that it is improving rapidly. Science results in 2013 were higher than in previous years with the current Year 11 doing well.
- Students are entered early for GCSE mathematics but this does not disadvantage students. Progress in mathematics is rising year on year.
- Those few students who receive training through Askham Bryan College make good progress.
- While students' work is often of a high quality, they do not always present it neatly and it is a little slapdash. Titles are not underlined, writing is sometimes in pencil and handwriting is occasionally difficult to read.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is improving rapidly because school leaders have spent much time helping teachers to learn from each other and learn from the high quality training provided both by outside agencies and in-house.
- Most teaching is of good quality, with some being outstanding and a small proportion requiring improvement. Teaching in English and mathematics has improved over a three-year period.
- Teachers go out of their way to make learning interesting. Students enjoy a challenge and extending their learning, particularly the most able.
- Teaching in history is highly effective. This is because teachers use their extensive subject

expertise to develop students' knowledge and understanding by adroit questioning and encouraging students to review and reflect upon what they are learning. This was demonstrated particularly well where students made outstanding progress because of skilful teaching which probed students' understanding as they were exposed to new evidence on the role and impact of the media on public opinion in the USA.

- Teaching assistants are well trained. They provide excellent support to those students who need it most. The help provided for disabled students and those who have special educational needs is now effective and the school's tracking system shows that this is particularly the case in developing students' skills in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The feedback students receive on their work through marking is good overall, but there is some variation in its quality between teachers and subjects. Sometimes, students do not improve their work as a result of teachers' advice, which sometimes means they make the same mistakes in later work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Inspectors were impressed with students' good manners and how they related so well to each other and to adults.
- Most students are well turned out and make their way promptly to lessons after break and lunchtime. Some chew gum but quickly put it into the bin without having to be prompted when they go to class. There are many rubbish bins around the school grounds and students make good use of these, which means that the site is generally free of litter. Only occasionally do students drop litter.
- In most lessons, behaviour is good or outstanding because teachers go out of their way to make sure students have no spare time to wander off-task. Only very occasionally did inspectors find this was not the case in lessons they observed.
- Students feel safe from any threats of bullying. They say the school is particularly good at helping them understand the potential threats of 'cyber-bullying' (bullying that takes place through text messaging, e-mail or through social networking sites). Inspectors checked their understanding of this and found that their knowledge and understanding of staying safe on the internet was excellent.
- The many parents who responded to Parent View were overwhelmingly positive about behaviour and safety in the school.
- Students develop a good awareness of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues through taking part in arts activities which have a high profile in the school and listening to inspirational talks by visiting past students of the school, such as Vince Cable.
- The school has worked particularly successfully to improve attendance and to reduce the incidence of persistent absence. This has now paid dividends, since attendance is above average and persistent absence is below the national average for all groups of students.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. On the first day of the inspection, inspectors noted that at breaktime, fast-moving vehicles on the school drive were a safety hazard. This was immediately addressed.

The leadership and management are good

- The inspirational leadership provided by the headteacher has been instrumental in building up the skills of his senior team, raising aspirations and creating a shared vision for the school, which leaves no stone left unturned in its quest to raise achievement and improve teaching.
- Particularly impressive is the school's tracking system of students' progress which is simple to understand for students, parents and teachers yet is sophisticated in analysing students' potential and identifying underachievement early. This means that the school can anticipate which students need additional support before it is too late.

- The management of students' achievement and provision in history provides a good example of effective middle leadership. This has much to do with the shared and agreed approaches which are applied consistently. For example, marking and feedback are effective because students are left in no doubt what they need to improve and how to do it. This helps to consolidate students' learning, secure the good and better progress they make and strengthen their historical knowledge and understanding.
- Middle leaders have come a long way in developing their skills of observing lessons, mentoring staff and tracking students' progress. However, there is still some way to go to ensure teaching and the quality of marking is consistently of high quality in all departments.
- Efficient performance management underpins the school's constant drive to improve teaching. Where performance falls short of the school's high expectations, it is addressed robustly, through opportunities for teachers to share expertise and high-quality training.
- The curriculum is structured well to meet students' needs and provides a good range of options at Key Stage 4. The curriculum for disabled students and those who have special educational needs is particularly good in addressing weak literacy or numeracy skills.
- Safeguarding meets all current requirements.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and say they would recommend the school to others.
- The local authority responded quickly to the disappointing results in English language in 2012, putting support into the school which helped to secure the remarkable improvements in 2013. Similarly, the science department benefitted from local authority support to assess students' work.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body know the school's strengths well. Moreover, its members have their sights firmly set on the school becoming outstanding and are well aware of how this can be a reality if improving the quality of teaching is afforded top priority. The governing body oversees the management of teachers' performance rigorously and sets the bar appropriately high for pay progression for teachers and the headteacher. Its members have a good understanding not only how the pupil premium funding is used, but of how it continues to narrow the gap in achievement between those who receive it and other students. They also have a clear understanding of the national comparative data that provides them with the tools with which to measure the school's performance.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.
		A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.

School details

Unique reference number	121706
Local authority	York
Inspection number	440867

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	907
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bob Sydes
Headteacher	Trevor Burton
Date of previous school inspection	26 January 2011
Telephone number	01904 686400
Fax number	01904 686410
Email address	admin@millthorpeschool.co.uk

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