

The Joseph Rowntree School

Haxby Road, New Earswick, York, YO32 4BZ

Inspection dates 14–15 November 2012

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Satisfactory | 3 |
| | 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.

- Students make good progress across the school and reach above-average attainment by the end of Year 11. This represents good achievement from their broadly average starting points when they enter Year 7. GCSE results in mathematics and science are particularly impressive and progress in English is accelerating rapidly.
- Teaching has improved rapidly since the previous inspection and is now good overall, with examples of outstanding practice in all key stages. The leadership and management of teaching and learning are strong and emphasise the vital link between teaching and achievement. Students have a high regard for teachers and teaching assistants.
- Students are very proud of their school and feel safe within its walls because, in their words, 'we are treated as individuals and the staff go the extra mile to help us'. Students behave well and have good attitudes to learning. The Autistic Centre promotes students' self-esteem well and teaching assistants here and across the school support students sensitively and effectively.
- Exceptional leadership by the headteacher, who is ably supported by the deputy headteacher, has led to marked improvements in all areas of school life since the previous inspection. The sixth form is good. It is well led and progress and attainment are much better than two years ago.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is a minority of teaching that requires improvement and not enough is outstanding. Good and exemplary practice is not fully shared across subject departments.
- On occasions, students are not required to find things out for themselves and, therefore, do not always take enough responsibility for their own learning. There are also not enough opportunities for students to practise and develop their literacy skills in all the subjects they study.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 45 lessons or part-lessons. They also listened to students read in the main school and in the Autistic Centre.
- They held meetings with five groups of students, including students in the sixth form. They had discussions with members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority, consultants working with the school, heads of subject departments, pastoral leaders, members of the Raising Achievement Team and the senior leadership group. They also had phone discussions with parents.
- Inspectors took account of 35 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as 39 returns from the staff questionnaire.
- They observed the school at work and scrutinised students' work in class, internal and external student progress data, school improvement planning and documentation on the school's analysis of how well it is doing. They also considered documentation on performance management, on staff training opportunities and on behaviour, safeguarding and attendance.

Inspection team

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| James Kidd, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Catherine Laing | Additional Inspector |
| Sally Lane | Additional Inspector |
| Lesley Powell | Additional Inspector |
| Peter Harrison | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average-sized school and student numbers have increased since the previous inspection.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority, is below average.
- The percentage of students from minority ethnic heritages is much lower than usually seen and there are few students at early stages of learning English.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also lower than the national figure.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The Joseph Rowntree School is a specialist technology college, holds nationally accredited Healthy School status and has the Artsmark (silver) award. When it moved into its new building, over two years ago, it established the Autistic Centre, which has places for 10 students who attend from within the local authority area and beyond. These students also attend classes in the main school.
- The school does not use off-site provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue the rapid improvements in teaching so that it is consistently at least good and a greater proportion is outstanding by:
 - placing increased emphasis on the sharing of good and exemplary practice across subject departments
 - ensuring that work and activities meet the learning needs of all students in all classes
 - ensuring all teachers apply the new literacy policy so that students can practise and reinforce their literacy skills in all the subjects they study
 - ensuring that students have enough opportunities to find things out for themselves, thus taking greater responsibility for their own learning and progress
 - ensuring that feedback in marking consistently gives students advice on how they can improve their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most students start school with broadly average standards in English and mathematics. They make good progress and achieve well across Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 to reach above-average attainment by the time they leave in Year 11 or enter the sixth form. Since the previous inspection the trend of improvement in English and mathematics has been above the national trend and results in science and in the school's specialism of design and technology have been above and, in some cases, well above average. GCSE results in 2012 demonstrated that the acceleration in students' progress is being maintained. The percentage of students reaching five or more GCSE grades A* to C was the highest in the school's history and students' progress in mathematics, in particular, was well above that seen nationally. The large majority of parents who responded to Parent View are entirely satisfied with the progress their children are making at the school.
- Students enter the sixth form with broadly average attainment. Achievement in this key stage has also improved since the previous inspection and is now good. By the end of Year 13 the proportion of students reaching the higher grades A*, A and B is above average and increasing numbers of students are gaining places at prestigious universities.
- Improved systems to check on how students are doing have led to more accurate tracking of the progress of students of all groups and of all abilities. The school now has a clearer understanding of students' achievement and knows where extra support for individuals and groups needs to be introduced. As a result, students who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium make good, and in some cases better, progress and do as well as other students in the school. Indeed, the gaps between their attainment and the attainment of all students nationally have closed markedly since the previous inspection.
- There is a similar picture for disabled students and those with special educational needs. Strong yet sensitive support from well-qualified teaching assistants, often on a one-to-one basis, means that these students make the same good progress as their classmates. Students read widely. In the well-run Autistic Centre, for example, students read aloud the stories they have written, such as *Spaceship Raptor*, and do so with confidence. In addition, some students in the centre have a keen interest in history and talk accurately about the sterling work of the Royal Observer Corps during the Second World War.

The quality of teaching is good

- There has been a rapid improvement in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection and, although some inconsistencies remain, it is now good overall with examples of outstanding practice. Leaders recognise that more can be done to share good and exemplary practice across all departments.
- Teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and plan their lessons well, taking account of the progress students are making and providing activities which are closely matched to their learning needs. In a minority of lessons, however, these activities are too easy for some students and too difficult for others.
- In the best lessons, for example in a Year 8 food technology session where teaching was outstanding, relationships between students and between teachers and students are very positive. Students are fully aware of what they need to do to be successful and are challenged to do their best. As a result, they take responsibility for their own progress and the pace of learning is rapid. Similarly, in a Year 13 mathematics lesson students quite naturally supported each other and were able to give information on the value of their complex calculations to medical research. In lessons where teaching requires improvement teachers often talk too much and activities do not always require students to find things out for themselves.
- The school has introduced a well-founded policy which is designed to develop students' literacy

skills across the curriculum. It is already improving students' confidence in English, in understanding the particular language they have to use in different subjects, for example in science and history. However, the policy is not fully used by all teachers and students do not always have enough opportunities to practise their literacy skills in all the subjects they study.

- The quality of marking is generally good and students are also often involved in gauging how well they and their classmates are doing. The best marking congratulates students on their efforts and gives them accurate advice on how they can improve. On occasions, marking does not contain sufficient comment on what students need to do to reach higher standards.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students are proud of their school and comment, 'It is like a second home: teachers listen to us and make us feel important.' They feel safe and make particular mention of how the school treats them as individuals and of how the adults are always concerned to make sure they are happy and enjoy everything the school has to offer. As a result, behaviour is good and often outstanding; students get on well with each other and with the adults who work with them, and attendance is above average. Mutual respect abounds.
- Parents echo the impressive care and support their children receive. They say that teachers and teaching assistants are approachable and that nothing is too much trouble for them. Students speak highly of the Autistic Centre and are grateful for the opportunities it provides for them to gain in confidence and self-esteem.
- Students have a good awareness of the dangers of bullying in all its forms, including physical, verbal and cyber-bullying. They object also to bullying based on prejudice and to, in their words, 'the offensive use of the word "gay" '. They believe that bullying is rare in school and that, if it does occur, it is dealt with rapidly and effectively.
- Students benefit from the school's outstanding promotion of their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They have a keen understanding of cultures and religions which are different from their own, and some students have visited Borneo and Kenya. They write and deliver their own thought-provoking assemblies, on equality for example. The student council is actively involved in so many areas of school life, expressing their views on the new building, for example. Year 11 drama students have recently been invited to perform their play on dementia, also delivered in the local community, at the Healthcare Expo in London. Students show their musical talents at lunchtime, entertaining youngsters and adults on the 'Showcase' stage, and they deliver two dramatic or musical productions each year.
- Students in the sixth form have a high profile in school. They lead by example, support younger students and feel valued by the head of sixth form and her staff.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, supported very effectively by talented and well-informed senior leaders, provides exceptional leadership and is described as 'inspirational' by the staff. Continuous emphasis on improving the quality of teaching, as the key to accelerating achievement, has been the hallmark of the leadership's work since the previous inspection. Impressive leadership by the head of sixth form has resulted in better assessment of how students are progressing and more challenge for students in the classroom. As a result, achievement in both sixth form years has improved over the past two years and is now good.
- The school has also focused on improving the effectiveness of leadership at all levels and members of the Raising Achievement Team, for example, have a good understanding of how data can be used to promote even better progress. Subject leaders work closely with pastoral heads so that all staff can gain an accurate view not only of the academic progress of individuals and groups but also of their attitudes to learning. The school uses early examination entry wisely and students themselves say that this helps them to reach even higher standards and increases 'stay-on' rates in the sixth form.

- Heads of subject departments are actively involved, through lesson observations and 'drop-in' sessions, in improving the quality of teaching. They say that staff morale is high. A typical staff comment is, 'Our school is a very supportive, caring and professional place in which to work.' Performance management arrangements are secure, linked closely to staff salary progression and lead to a range of training courses designed to improve teachers' skills in the classroom.
- Safeguarding and child protection arrangements meet requirements and the school promotes equality of opportunity well. Any form of discrimination is not tolerated. Parents make positive comments about how well their children are supported, saying that staff are approachable and do what they can to ensure that students receive exactly what they need in order to do well.
- The local authority continues to provide strong support for the school, for example in relation to improving teaching and learning and in developing the leadership skills of staff. The school also receives support from a range of consultants, one of whom is a serving headteacher and a National Leader of Education.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body supports the school well, knows its strengths and areas for development and holds the leadership to account with rigour. Members oversee how well pupil premium funding is spent and are informed regularly about the impact of these arrangements on the progress of students.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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 | <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> |

School details

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| Unique reference number | 121711 |
| Local authority | York |
| Inspection number | 406049 |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Voluntary controlled |
| Age range of pupils | 11–18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1212 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Lesley Lister |
| Headteacher | Maggi Wright |
| Date of previous school inspection | 15 September 2010 |
| Telephone number | 01904 552100 |
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