

Thornton Grammar School

Leaventhorpe Lane, Thornton, Bradford, BD13 3BH

Inspection dates

11-12 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Students' achievement requires improvement, particularly in mathematics where their progress lags behind other subjects.
- Teaching requires improvement. There are examples of good and outstanding teaching, but the overall quality of teaching is not consistent enough to ensure students make good progress across all subjects.
- Leadership and management require improvement. The school has identified what needs improving and school leaders are generally aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, this varies between subjects. In some subjects subject leaders are well aware of what needs to be done to improve, but in other subjects this is patchy and lacks precision.
- The governing body do not challenge school leaders well enough on teachers' performance, and the progress of different groups of students.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Students' progress from their starting points is not yet good. At present, too many students do not reach good enough grades at the end of Year 12 to enable them to continue their studies in Year 13.

The school has the following strengths

- Students behave well in lessons and around the school. They feel safe from any threats of bullying and are confident that the school keeps them safe.
- The school has particular strengths in the arts and sport. Many students take part in high quality artistic events such as 'Rock Challenge' and extra curricular sports and music activities. Impressive art work is very much in evidence around the school.
- High quality leadership of teaching and learning has led to recent improvements in the quality of teaching.
- High quality support is provided for students within the specially resourced provision base for those with moderate and severe learning difficulties. As a result, their progress is good and often outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in 48 lessons taught by 47 teachers.
- Inspectors spoke to a member of the governing body, two representatives 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, monitoring and evaluation records and the tracking of students' progress.
- Inspectors analysed the 54 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View completed by parents . Additionally, inspectors spoke to parents by telephone.

Inspection team

Robert Jones, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Joan Beale	Additional inspector
Pankaj Gulab	Additional inspector
Pamela Hemphill	Additional inspector
Gary Kelly	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is average as is the proportion of students who have a statement of special educational needs.
- Fewer students than average speak English as an additional language. More students than average are from minority ethnic groups.
- More students than average are known to be eligible for the pupil premium.
- A specially resourced provision for students with moderate and severe learning difficulties is on the site. This is one of two such resource bases for students in the Bradford area.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for progress and attainment.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency and quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring students are asked questions that challenge and provoke deep thought
 - using success criteria so that students can clearly understand what they need to do to ensure their work is of the highest quality
 - giving every opportunity for students to work independently, through group work, discussions and independent research
 - matching the work students are set to their abilities with more precision
 - making effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) to advance students' skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Raise achievement in mathematics by:
 - improving the quality of monitoring and evaluation within the mathematics department
 - continuing to improve the accuracy with which students' work is assessed
 - giving students the opportunity to use and apply their mathematics skills more widely across the curriculum.
- Improve leadership and management at all levels by ensuring:
 - all development plans have clear, measurable success criteria so that school leaders and the governing body can clearly measure progress across all departments
 - there is sufficient rigour in how the governing body monitors the quality of teaching, performance management and the allocation of the pupil premium.
- Raise achievement in the sixth form, particularly for those taking AS levels in Year 12, by:
 - ensuring students make at least good progress across all subjects
 - reducing the number of students who do not continue their studies into Year 13 so that it is at least equal to the national average by July 2013.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- As a result of rapid improvements in the quality of teaching over the past two years, students are now making progress that is close or equal to expectations.
- The school's tracking of students' progress and evidence gathered by inspectors indicates that improved teaching is having a positive impact on pupils currently in the school. Many more students are now reaching their challenging targets than was the case in the recent past. However, there is still inconsistency between subjects which means that overall, achievement requires improvement.
- The progress students make in mathematics is improving, although at a slower rate than in other subjects. This is due to a lack of sharpness in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching in mathematics, some inaccuracy in assessing students' work and missed opportunities for students to use and apply their mathematics skills within other subjects.
- Students known to be eligible for the pupil premium make as much progress as their peers as do those from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- Those students who receive support within the specially resourced provision make good and often outstanding progress. This is because the work is highly customised to students' individual needs. Moreover, the carefully tailored support ensures their literacy needs are met with precision which enables them to succeed once they are integrated within the mainstream of the school.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs other than those who use the specially resourced provision, make as much progress as their peers.
- Students from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language make as much progress as their peers.
- Achievement in the sixth form is variable. Overall, students make progress that is commensurate with their starting points but it varies between subjects. Students make good progress in vocational subjects but perform less well in the Year 12 AS level examinations. This has led to too many students failing to continue their studies beyond Year 12.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- While the quality of teaching has improved, there is still much to be done to ensure that its quality is consistently good between and within subjects.
- In the best lessons, there are ample opportunities for students to work in groups, appraise each others' work and take part in discussions. In one highly effective history lesson, students considered the effects of the slave trade through discussion and debate. The teacher constantly probed for greater depth of thought which deepened students' knowledge and understanding.
- In these good and outstanding lessons, teachers question students skilfully so they answer in full sentences. Furthermore, they sensitively ensure quieter students answer questions rather than relying on motivated students to raise their hands to answer. These techniques develop students' speaking and listening skills and raise the level of challenge for all.
- Where lessons are less effective, teachers rely on over-long explanations that do not fully engage students or they ask students simple questions that do not challenge or provoke deep thought.
- Lessons are sometimes heavily directed by teachers, which does not enable students to gain valuable independent learning skills, such as taking part in group work, discussions and independent research.
- Where success criteria are used, students are very clear what steps they must take to achieve high quality outcomes. Where they are not used effectively, students are unclear of what constitutes high quality work.

- While work is matched very precisely to students' needs within the specially resourced provision, within the main school it lacks precision overall. This means that students are sometimes insufficiently challenged in lessons.
- While teachers make widespread use of ICT in lessons, it is not always used to its best effect in advancing students' skills, knowledge and understanding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students relate well to each other and to adults. They are courteous to non-teaching staff and visitors to the school.
- In lessons, students have good attitudes to learning. They are keen to work hard and cooperate even when teaching fails to engage them as fully as it should.
- On the corridors and at lunchtime, there is occasionally boisterous behaviour, although students respond well and cooperate with staff who remind them of how to behave appropriately.
- Students say there are occasional instances of bullying or name calling but are confident that it is dealt with effectively by staff. They are well aware of how to stay safe from any dangers associated with the internet and mobile devices.
- Attendance is slightly above the national average and students attend punctually.
- The majority of parents are of the opinion that behaviour in the school is good.
- Sixth form students act as good role models by acting as guides for younger students and as bus escorts.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Improvements made to the monitoring of teaching quality and training of staff introduced two years ago are now having a positive impact. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving and any inadequate teaching is being eliminated. However, much work is still to be done to ensure the quality of teaching becomes at least good.
- School development plans and monitoring and evaluation vary in quality between departments. Sometimes they are sharply written, brief and accurately outline what is to be done to raise achievement. Where they are less effective, they focus on provision rather than students' outcomes or do not identify precise, quantifiable success criteria.
- The curriculum offers a broad and balanced diet in all key stages. A range of courses is on offer to sixth form students through the consortium arrangements with nearby schools. A wide menu of sports and arts activities and residential visits abroad develop students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.
- The school works effectively with a range of outside agencies and colleges to provide an alternative curriculum for a small group of students.
- The school works well to engage parents through regular updates on students' progress and the school magazine.
- The local authority provides effective support for leadership in mathematics. There are early signs of this support having a positive impact on the quality of teaching.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - requires improvement, since the governing body relies heavily on information passed to them from senior leaders rather than investigating issues at first hand. This means that the governing body are not challenging the school sufficiently on matters relating to performance management, the quality of teaching and the allocation of the pupil premium.

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	<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

Unique reference number	107442
Local authority	Bradford
Inspection number	400913

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11-18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1510
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	193
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Patrick Wilkings
Headteacher	Christopher Sampson
Date of previous school inspection	20-21 May 2010
Telephone number	01274 881082
Fax number	01274 814871
Email address	office@thorntongs.ngfl.ac.uk

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