

Thornton Grammar School

Leventhorpe Lane, Thornton, Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD13 3BH

Inspection dates 20–21 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Attainment and progress in science and the achievement of students eligible for support from the pupil premium funding are not good enough.
- There are too few opportunities for students to practise their numeracy and literacy skills in different subjects.
- There has not been enough good teaching over time to ensure that students achieve well in all subjects and there is still too much that requires improvement.
- Teachers and teaching assistants do not use data about students' achievements effectively to plan learning that enables students to move on to the highest levels of which they are capable.
- The quality of marking and feedback on student's written work does not always show students how they can improve their work. Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for students to respond to any advice they receive.
- A small number of subject leaders are not yet as effective as others in using information about student progress to bring about improvements in teaching and raising achievement.
- Leaders, including governors, are not yet fully evaluating the impact of their action on raising student achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- The sixth form is good. Teaching and students' achievement are both good in the sixth form.
- Some good and some outstanding teaching can be seen in a range of subjects.
- Students with severe learning difficulties make very good progress as a result of the high-quality specialised support they receive.
- Students say they feel safe in school and conduct themselves well.
- Parents are very supportive of the school.
- Leaders, including governors, are focused on improving teaching and achievement and this is resulting in improvements in these areas.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 48 lessons and parts of lessons during the inspection. They reviewed work in students’ books in a range of subjects and listened to students read. Two lessons were observed jointly, one with the headteacher and another with a deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with groups of staff and students as well as with two members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to 52 staff questionnaires and information from previous school surveys carried out with parents and students. There were not enough results of 24 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) for any results to be published.
- At different times in the day, inspectors observed students moving around inside and outside the school.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and considered a number of documents, including the school’s own evaluation of its performance, the school improvement plan, minutes from governing body meetings, and reviews of the school undertaken by external consultants and the local authority.

Inspection team

Helen Gaunt, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Andrew Henderson	Additional Inspector
Jane Holmes	Additional Inspector
Christine Kennedy	Additional Inspector
Janet Pruchniewicz	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Thornton Grammar School is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of girls is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium is well above the average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those students known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportions of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and those learning English as an additional language are both higher than average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is above average and the proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school works collaboratively within the Bradford Partnership of schools to provide leadership training opportunities for staff.
- Other partnerships, for example with The Lighthouse Group and Accent Training (both Bradford-based organisations) provide a range of optional and applied courses for small groups of students in Years 10 and 11.
- The school runs a specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs, which is referred to as a designated specialised provision (DSP). It was established to provide additional support for students with a statement of special educational needs with complex learning difficulties to enable them access the mainstream curriculum. Currently, there are 14 students from Year 7 to 11 in the unit.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure teaching is consistently good or better, especially in science, in order to raise students' achievement, particularly those eligible for the pupil premium by:
 - ensuring teachers and teaching assistants work together more effectively and make better use of information from assessments to plan learning activities at the right level for all students, including those with special educational needs
 - making sure teachers check students' understanding and progress during lessons
 - ensuring comments in teachers' marking give students guidance on how well they are doing, how to improve and that they have the opportunity to respond to these comments
 - increasing the opportunities for students to use their literacy and numeracy skills in different subjects.
- Further improve the quality of leadership at all levels, including governance, by:
 - ensuring that all subject leaders have the necessary skills to bring about improvements in teaching and achievement in their areas
 - sharpening all leaders' focus on assessing the impact of actions on improving teaching and achievement
 - ensuring that the science courses at Key Stage 4 chosen by students are better matched to their needs and abilities to enable them to be successful in this subject.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because some groups of students do not make enough progress and their attainment is not high enough by the end of Year 11. Students are not given enough opportunity to develop their literacy and numeracy skills across subjects.
- Achievement in science requires improvement. Over time teaching has not been sufficiently strong to enable all students to make good progress. The courses studied by some students at Key Stage 4 have not been well-matched to their skills and abilities, especially less able students.
- Leaders are using the Year 7 catch-up money to support students with low skills in literacy and numeracy. The school's information shows that these students are making similar progress to other students but they are not yet reaching similar standards.
- The attainment of students eligible for pupil premium funding at the end of Year 11 in 2012 was approximately one and a half GCSE grades behind others in the school in English and mathematics. In 2013 this gap reduced to one grade. The school's information about the current performance of these students indicates that this gap is not reducing in 2014. Actions taken are not yet speeding up the progress they make well enough.
- Leaders are determined to ensure that there are equal opportunities for all students and that discrimination is being tackled. They have put in place a wide range of additional support aimed at ensuring that identified students make quicker progress, including ensuring that students read often and that they develop an enjoyment of reading.
- Students' attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 is below average. The proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has risen steadily over the past four years and is now average.
- Due to strong action by school leaders many students are now making better progress as a result of improved teaching. Standards in mathematics in the current Year 11 are increasing.
- The school does not enter students early for GCSE in English and mathematics.
- Over time, the most able students have made progress in line with others nationally. Current cohorts are making even better progress. In 2013, in many subjects, the proportions of students attaining the higher GCSE grades A* and A were in line with national averages.
- The good support from experienced adults in the DSP special unit enables students whose circumstances render them vulnerable and who have very specific learning needs, to make outstanding progress within the unit. It also enables them to succeed well when they return to normal classes. The provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs is not as strong in lessons because teachers and teaching assistants do not work closely enough together to plan appropriate learning opportunities for them.
- There is no significant difference between the progress of students from different minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language and others.
- Students in Years 10 and 11 following a range of vocational courses in establishments away from the school site do well. The school takes all reasonable steps to ensure students maintain good attendance and that they behave well and are safe. As a result, these students succeed and are prepared well for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- The achievement of students in the sixth form is good. In the last two years, the standards and progress have improved as a result of better teaching and guidance about courses, so they are better suited to students' aptitudes.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although teaching is improving, teaching still requires improvement because over time it has not enabled all groups of students to make good progress or to reach high-enough standards.
- Teachers and teaching assistants do not always work closely enough together or use information about students' achievement to plan work at the right level that helps them to make good

progress. They do not make regular enough checks on rates of progress and students' understanding during lessons.

- In some subjects, for example in English, design and technology and information and communication technology, there is good quality marking. However, this good practice is not widespread. Students do not always receive good guidance on how well they are doing or how to improve their work. They are not always given opportunities to respond to the advice given. In science the planned learning activities do not provide enough challenge to enable all students to make good progress.
- Leaders are currently working to ensure that opportunities for students to develop their literacy and numeracy skills are being provided across subjects. For example, when a Year 10 class were being taught mathematics, the teacher wrote key words on the board and corrected spelling mistakes in books. However these good opportunities to practise skills are not always provided across all subjects, especially opportunities to practise numeracy skills.
- The additional support for students eligible for the pupil premium and those with poor literacy and numeracy skills on entry to Year 7 is not having enough impact on increasing their rates of progress. Learning activities for pupil premium students do not always help them to make enough progress.
- Due to concerted action by senior leaders, the proportion of good and outstanding teaching is growing securely. As a result, a higher proportion of students are now making good progress in many subjects. Teaching and learning is strongest in physical education and in most practical subjects. The teaching of English and mathematics is improving as a result of good subject leadership and is raising levels of attainment.
- When students learn well, they are clear about what they are expected to learn and work is pitched at the right level for different groups of students. For example, in an outstanding Year 7 design and technology lesson, students knew exactly what they were trying to achieve and had the chance to show that they could get on with their own work without direct adult support.
- Homework is set regularly and is used to extend learning in lessons. Most parents believe that their child receives the appropriate amount of homework.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good and students are very positive about the support they receive from their teachers. Students receive good advice in selecting appropriate courses, which they enjoy studying.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good.
- Students' behaviour in lessons and their attitudes to learning are mostly positive. When learning is most effective students enthusiastically pose questions, concentrate well and persevere with tasks. In a small number of lessons where teaching is not as strong students are occasionally distracted because work is either too easy or too difficult.
- Students' behaviour around the school is good. They are well mannered and show courtesy and respect towards one another. There is very little litter around the school because students care for the environment and make sure that they pick it up.
- There is a very welcoming and harmonious atmosphere in the school and students from a variety of backgrounds and cultures get on very well together.
- Students told inspectors that one of the best things about the school is the support they get from the adults. They say that there is always someone to go to if they need help or advice and that their teachers encourage them to do well.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students feel safe in school, know how to keep safe and parents agree. Students enjoy coming to school and attend well.
- Students have a good understanding of different types of bullying and the detrimental effects of name-calling of any sort, particularly that which is based on race, sexuality or disability. There are very few incidents of bullying recorded and students and their parents agree that bullying is rare.

The leadership and management

are good

- The quality of leadership and management has improved since the last inspection and is good. Senior leaders have worked closely with middle and subject leaders who are now held accountable for student outcomes and the quality of teaching in their subjects. Leadership at middle leader level is much stronger due to good support to improve checking systems. Senior leaders and governors work effectively together and set high expectations for staff and students. Their aspirations are shared by teachers and leaders at all levels.
- Good progress has been made in tackling the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. Achievement has improved in mathematics and in the sixth form and there is now more good teaching. Thorough checking systems ensure that leaders' views about how well the school is doing are largely accurate. Leaders and governors are focused on the right priorities and the range of improvements already achieved indicates that they have good capability to secure further improvements.
- Leadership of the DSP, special unit, is very strong. Staff know the students very well and ensure that their needs are met. They make exceptional progress in their learning as a result.
- There are effective methods to manage teachers' performance. Teachers are set challenging targets, linked to students' achievement and further training is provided.
- A few subject leaders are not making the best use of information about teaching and students' progress in their areas so are less effective in raising achievement, for example in science. Leaders of science know there are too many science courses and that less able students have not all pursued the most appropriate course to enable them to do well.
- Leadership of the sixth form is good. Leaders have reviewed the courses available and improved the guidance students receive when selecting courses and the quality of teaching. As a result, more students than nationally complete courses begun in Year 12 and student achievement is now good.
- Funding for students eligible for pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding provides a wide range of additional activities, resources and support. Although checks are made on their progress, leaders do not determine well enough the impact of spending and what is working well and less well. Leaders know the progress of many of these students is not as strong as it needs to be.
- The curriculum, with the exception of science, is mostly well-planned to meet students' needs. The off-site provision for some students in Key Stage 4 enables them to achieve success.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well. Students enjoy the extensive range of after-school clubs provided. They value the extensive range of sporting activities in which many are regularly involved.
- The local authority has provided good support for the school over the past two years.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have worked alongside senior leaders since the last inspection to address the areas for improvement, to secure better teaching and raise achievement. New governors with expertise in education have been recruited. They have improved their understanding of data on the school's performance, on the quality of teaching and on the impact of actions taken by the headteacher and other leaders. They are prepared to challenge leaders, as well as to support their actions to improve standards and progress. They support the headteacher in managing the appraisal of teachers and of any rise in salaries. The governing body has a firm grasp on the school's finances and know how the pupil premium funding is allocated. However, they have not checked on the effectiveness of actions taken to increase the rate of progress for eligible students. They are very clear that the standards reached and the progress made by these students needs to improve.

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	431637

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1512
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	195
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Patrick Wilkings
Headteacher	Chris Sampson
Date of previous school inspection	11 September 2012
Telephone number	01274 881082
Fax number	01274 814871
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