

Ilkley Grammar School

Cowpasture Road, Ilkley, West Yorkshire LS29 8TR

Inspection dates

29–30 March 2017

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
16 to 19 study programmes	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher provides strong, clear and decisive leadership. She has successfully driven a robust and highly effective improvement strategy.
- Senior leaders have a firm grasp of how well the school is achieving. Their self-evaluation is accurate, precise and sharply focused on making what is already excellent even better.
- Leaders at all levels are successfully ensuring that pupils attain highly and make excellent progress.
- The curriculum is a real strength of the school and demonstrates leaders' strong moral compass. It combines academic excellence with a strong focus on pupils becoming effective and well-rounded individuals.
- Governors provide excellent strategic leadership. They remain focused on the big picture and avoid getting bogged down in the day-to-day running of the school.
- Leaders and managers have developed highly effective relationships with other professionals and agencies, including alternative providers, to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils are safe and cared for, attend regularly and achieve well.
- Teachers' high expectations are at the heart of teaching in the school. Pupils' progress has been extremely strong, including for the most able and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Teachers go the 'extra mile' to make sure that pupils achieve, feel cared for and thrive within a supportive and productive learning environment.
- Pupils' behaviour in and around the school is exemplary. They conduct themselves well, are smartly dressed and ready to learn.
- Sixth-form students make excellent progress. Through high-quality support and guidance, the overwhelming majority of students go on to further training or study, often at the most prestigious universities.
- The use of additional funding is making a real and significant difference to a range of different pupils, including pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged.
- On rare occasions, teachers' expectations are not high enough.
- The attendance of some sixth-form students is not high enough.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teaching, learning and assessment are as highly effective as the best practice in the school.
- Improve the attendance of some sixth-form students.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher provides exceptional leadership. She has been resolute in her determination to see the school improve. She has made sure that the spotlight is focused on ensuring that all pupils make excellent progress. Due to her steadfast and tenacious leadership, the school has gone from strength to strength.
- Senior leaders are uncompromising in their ambition. There is a tangible culture of high expectations for both pupils and staff. Leaders are passionate to improve what is already excellent. This leads to pupils not only making exceptional progress from their starting points but also providing them with a broad range of memorable experiences, developing them as rounded individuals. One parent spoke for many when stating that the school gave pupils 'room to grow, to improve and to enjoy themselves'.
- Leaders know their school inside out and banish any thought of complacency. They have developed, improved and refined ways of checking on the quality of teaching and learning. Leaders have excellent systems to check pupils' progress and plan for improvement, and all this is closely tied to teachers' appraisal targets. Leaders ensure that teachers are well supported with bespoke and well-targeted ongoing training and support.
- Leaders successfully ensure that whole-school priorities inform targets set for individual teachers. Teachers' targets are clear, sharp, precise and closely aligned to making sure that pupils make excellent progress. Home-grown 'leading practitioners' within school provide excellent support for other teachers, including newly and recently qualified teachers, helping them refine and further improve their teaching.
- Curriculum leaders enhance the school's capacity for further improvement. Through high-quality collaboration with senior leaders, curriculum leaders now effectively check and improve the quality of teaching and progress in their subject areas. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning is outstanding.
- Leaders have built a curriculum based on academic foundations. Leaders have a clear and sound rationale for ensuring high standards but with a degree of personalisation. Pupils can study a range of academic and vocational courses alongside philosophy, photography, economics and media. Leaders also have a clear rationale for how their curriculum has been designed to focus flexibly on pupils' needs and interests.
- The curriculum provides pupils with a plethora of ways they can develop as rounded individuals. Pupils take advantage of the wide range of sports on offer, charity fund-raising and a wide range of trips and visits, including to Berlin and America.
- Leaders are ever mindful of the importance the school plays in serving its community. Leaders are outward-facing and contribute to area-wide improvement. Leaders have been involved in the local authority's 'schools forum' (a group that advises the council on matters affecting school funding) and their post-16 review. Leaders have also been involved in reviews of other schools.

- Pupils' reports that are sent home to parents are clear and easy to understand. They help parents understand the progress their children are making and clearly highlight areas that pupils need to improve. This helps parents remain engaged with school. Parents' evenings have extremely high levels of attendance.

Governance

- Governors provide excellent strategic leadership. They are keen to visit the school and see it in action. However, they keep the big picture and their strategic role firmly in focus. They do not allow themselves to be bogged down in operational matters and this helps them clearly and accurately evaluate how well the school is doing.
- Governors come from a wide range of backgrounds and provide excellent challenge, especially in relation to financial and educational matters. This leads to appropriately challenging questions about how additional funding is being used, the quality of provision and the progress different groups of pupils are making.
- Governors have a detailed and sophisticated understanding of the impact leaders are having. This is helped by clear and direct headteacher's reports that show leaders' impact. Governors have responded exceptionally well to an external review of governance they themselves commissioned two years ago. They have acted quickly on the few recommendations made and are focused on making sure that pupils make excellent progress from their starting points, not just looking at attainment measures.
- Governors have worked well with senior leaders in making sure that there is an inclusive culture within school in which 'no one gets lost'. Governors ensure that the headteacher's appraisal targets are well aligned to the needs of the school. Governors make sure, along with senior leaders, that there are a handful of well-chosen priorities. This helps to set a clear strategic direction for the year ahead and prevents initiative overload.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that all staff recognise that it is everyone's responsibility to ensure that pupils are safe and feel safe. Leaders provide effective and regular updates on important safeguarding matters including honour crime, domestic abuse, child sexual exploitation, radicalisation and extremism.
- Leaders have established excellent links with other professionals and agencies including the police, health professionals and social workers. This approach helps to provide more effective and joined-up support for pupils and their families.
- Leaders ensure that suitable risk assessments are carried out for any trips and visits. Accident logs are detailed and up to date. Leaders review this information to look for ways of improving the safety of pupils in and around school. Leaders also ensure that regular contact is made with alternative providers to make sure that pupils are attending on a daily basis and are achieving well.
- The record of checks on the suitability of staff to work with children is very well maintained and meets statutory requirements. Leaders make sure that effective checks are made on newly appointed staff before they join the school, including checking references that reassure leaders of their suitability.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Leaders have successfully placed high expectations for all pupils at the heart of teaching and learning. Teachers are not complacent. They recognise that pupils start school with attainment levels higher than national averages, but still need to ensure that pupils make excellent progress from their starting points. As a result, teaching is challenging, enjoyable and develops pupils' resilience.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. This enables them to provide high-quality explanations and answer a range of questions pupils may pose. Teachers are able to provide pupils with a range of helpful examples to illustrate a learning point they are making. Teachers skilfully exploit genuine links between what they are teaching and literacy and numeracy. This helps pupils appreciate the links between various subjects and helps embed skills in writing, spelling and mathematics.
- Teachers use a range of ways to check pupils' levels of understanding, including high-quality questioning. Questions are carefully phrased and directed at particular pupils at times to check for any misconceptions or errors in their learning. This helps pupils maintain high levels of interest, expects them to explain and justify their thoughts, and keeps them on their toes during class discussions.
- Teachers keep a careful eye on the progress all pupils are making. Teachers use assessment information well to spot when some pupils are falling away from the challenging targets they have been set. Teachers and other adults provide effective support and intervention to make sure that pupils get back on the road to success.
- Teachers encourage pupils to experiment and take risks in their learning. This 'have a go' attitude helps build pupils' confidence. Teachers use time well in lessons. Pupils quickly develop a sense that learning time is precious and there is not a moment to lose. Consequently, pupils demonstrate very positive attitudes to learning.
- On a small minority of occasions, some teachers are too accepting of scruffy and incomplete work, including in science and mathematics. At times, not enough care is taken to make sure that pupils improve their spelling. Leaders are well aware of this, have rightly prioritised it as an area for improvement and are in the process of tackling it.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Leaders have successfully created a culture of high academic performance alongside developing well-rounded, thoughtful and caring young individuals. Pupils are encouraged to participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities including charity fund-raising, theatrical productions, swimming and singing.

- The curriculum provides pupils with a wealth of opportunities to understand modern-day values such as democracy, the rule of law and how Parliament works. Pupils demonstrate very good levels of understanding about the importance of human rights and the role of pressure groups. The curriculum provides pupils with rich opportunities for developing their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Pupils appreciate different cultures and benefit from a range of trips or visits and corresponding with pupils on other continents including in Nicaragua.
- The majority of parents are rightly very positive about the work of the school. Parents commented on teachers going the 'extra mile' to help their children. Pupils demonstrate a detailed understanding of how to keep themselves healthy, and the importance of a balanced diet and regular exercise. Pupils benefit from being able to have free fruit during lunchtimes.
- Pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, feel safe in and around school. Pupils have a detailed grasp of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They demonstrate an excellent awareness of how to keep themselves safe online and of the inappropriate use of mobile technologies.
- Leaders have created excellent opportunities for pupils to explore career options and pathways. Pupils experience high-quality and impartial careers education guidance. This makes a strong contribution to pupils making well-informed choices about courses. Pupils in Year 10 broaden their horizons through work experience, helping them better understand the world of work. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training and employment.
- Pupils and students contribute to assemblies to help other pupils understand and respect those who may be different from them, including those who are lesbian, gay and bisexual.
- Leaders work tirelessly to make sure that the welfare of pupils is of utmost priority. Excellent relationships have been established with other agencies and professionals, including the virtual headteacher for children looked after. Due to these quality relationships, pupils, including the most vulnerable and children who are looked after by the local authority, attend school regularly and are making strong progress.
- Inspectors sampled case files of vulnerable pupils. These showed detailed records that carefully recorded contact the school had with pupils, parents and other professionals. Consequently, the overwhelming majority of pupils told inspectors that they feel that there is always 'someone who will listen – no matter how busy they are'.
- Incidents of bullying are low and dealt with well. Leaders carefully record and analyse any form of bullying. Some parents believe that bullying is not dealt with well by the school. This is not supported by inspection evidence.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils demonstrate extremely positive attitudes to learning. They sensibly engage in class discussions, and are able to listen to the thoughts and opinions of others. The overwhelming majority of pupils say that they enjoy coming to school and take their learning seriously.

- Pupils wear their uniform with pride. Their ties are correctly worn and shirts are tucked in. Pupils come equipped with their pens, pencils and rulers, and are ready to learn. They conduct themselves around school extremely well, especially on the narrow corridors and stairwells. Pupils respect their school environment and there is little litter and no graffiti around school.
- Pupils and parents value the importance of education. As a result, attendance levels over time remain high and consistently better than national averages. Persistent absence rates remain low. Exclusion levels also remain well below the national average.
- School leaders have created a school culture that respects diversity and tolerance. Pupils demonstrated an excellent understanding of treating people different from them with equal respect. Pupils and staff are quick to tackle and challenge stereotypes.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision. Leaders have formed excellent working relationships with these providers. There are timely and effective exchanges of information so that pupils' needs can be well met.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Over time, leaders have focused on making sure that all pupils not only attain high standards at the end of key stage 4 but also make excellent progress from their starting points. This includes those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the most able, including the most able disadvantaged. This twin-track approach of high standards and excellent progress means that all groups of pupils are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training.
- In 2016, pupils made excellent progress across a wide range of subjects. Pupils made exceptional progress in English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, history and geography. Pupils studying vocational pathways achieved well in automotive engineering, health and social care, and sports leadership.
- As a result of teachers' high expectations and excellent subject knowledge, the most able pupils are challenged and stretched and achieve highly. This group of pupils have consistently achieved well above average A* to A grades across a large range of subjects over time.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils has been a key area for improvement. There are clear signs that leaders are successfully and rapidly improving the progress of this group of pupils. Leaders have carefully and thoughtfully analysed the specific barriers to learning for this group of pupils. Sensible, bespoke and effective strategies have been used, including the Year 7 pupil premium transition project, to rapidly accelerate the progress this group of pupils are making across the school and in a wide range of subjects.
- The progress of pupils in key stage 3 is strong, especially for the most able and middle-attaining pupils. Leaders have rightly identified that the progress of a small number of lower-attaining pupils at key stage 3 needs to be better in some classes. They are taking action to remedy this.

- Year 7 catch-up funding is having a strong impact on helping pupils accelerate their progress in English and mathematics. Leaders make very effective use of additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, because their progress over time has been extremely strong.
- Teachers ensure that there are highly effective links between what they are teaching and literacy and numeracy skills. This helps pupils develop and embed skills they have been learning in English and mathematics elsewhere in the curriculum.
- School staff regularly visit and check on those pupils who attend alternative provision. Staff regularly check that pupils are attending and achieving well. As a result, the vast majority of these pupils are making very good progress from their starting points.

16 to 19 study programmes

Outstanding

- Along with other leaders in the rest of the school, sixth-form leaders expect the very best from their teachers and students and consistently communicate their high expectations. As a result, students make outstanding progress from their starting points across a wide range of subjects.
- In 2016, students' progress was extremely strong at both AS- and A-level examinations. Over time, the progress students make across a wide range of subjects, including mathematics, biology, chemistry and geography, has been highly impressive. The progress of both male and female students has been well above average.
- Teachers are highly effective at using students' assessment information to inform their teaching and drive learning forward at a demanding pace. Teachers expect and insist that students produce work of a high standard, and students make excellent high-quality notes that deepen their understanding and aid their revision.
- Teaching over time is outstanding. Students benefit from feedback that helps and informs their learning. This helps them see where they have mastered an area of learning and identifies those areas that need further work. This helps build students' resilience and motivation, and inspires them to persist with challenging learning.
- Students' attitudes to learning are excellent. They are self-assured, punctual and ambitious. Students debate issues in a thoughtful and considered manner. They show high levels of independence and cooperate well with each other and their teachers. They work hard and produce high-quality work over time. Students feel safe in school and show high levels of tolerance and respect towards each other.
- Students confirm that instances of bullying are rare and dealt with swiftly. Inspection evidence confirms that any form of prejudice or abuse would be dealt with swiftly.
- Leaders provide students with an excellent range of enrichment activities and careers advice and guidance. Students benefit from visits to a range of universities, taking part in work experience and learning about apprenticeship routes. Students also benefit from practising and developing their interview skills. This advice and guidance are of the highest quality. A significant number of students secure places at Oxbridge and other prestigious universities.

- Leaders recognise that the attendance of some students is not good enough and that further work is needed to make sure that their attendance improves so that it is in line with that of other students.
- Over time, the small number of students who have not achieved a GCSE grade C in English and/or mathematics are also well catered for. In the majority of cases, students improve their grades and achieve at least a grade C.
- The school meets the 16 to 19 study programme requirements. Leaders have ensured that students are on suitably demanding and challenging academic learning pathways. Programmes of study are well structured and clearly linked to the demands of the examination. Consequently, retention rates are high.

School details

Unique reference number	136905
Local authority	Bradford
Inspection number	10003339

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,602
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	348
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lindsey Wharmby
Headteacher	Helen Williams
Telephone number	01943 608424
Website	www.ilkeleygrammarschool.com
Email address	admin@ilkeleygs.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- Ilkley Grammar School is a larger than average secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is below the national average.

- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds or who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is below the national average.
- The school uses a number of alternative providers for a small number of pupils. These registered providers are Bradford Central Pupil Referral Unit, Pipeline, Keighley College and Tracks.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a wide range of evidence during the inspection, including through observations of teaching, many of which were undertaken jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work during lessons and sampled a wide range of pupils' written work.
- Inspectors held meetings with school staff, including the headteacher, other senior leaders and staff in charge of aspects of the school's work. Inspectors met with a group of newly qualified and recently qualified teachers. They also met with members of the governing body.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils and students in the sixth form in formal interviews, during lessons and informally at lunch and break times.
- Inspectors gathered a large range of documentation related to the school's work, gaining the school's view of its performance and information concerning pupils' attainment, progress and attendance.
- Inspectors scrutinised records concerning safeguarding, pupils' behaviour and the quality of teaching.
- Inspectors analysed 253 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, Parent View.

Inspection team

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Graham Crerar	Ofsted Inspector
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Andy Swallow	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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