

Huntington School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121673
Local authority	York
Inspection number	327545
Inspection date	4 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Wendy Ripley HMI

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1,497
Sixth form	302
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Leach
Headteacher	Mr J Tomsett
Date of previous school inspection	January 2006
School address	Huntington Road Huntington York YO32 9WT
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards; teaching and learning; the curriculum; and the extent to which students feel their views are taken into account as part of the school's decision making and planning processes. The inspectors collected evidence from documents, analysis of parental questionnaires, meetings with students and staff and lessons observations. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate.

Description of the school

Huntington is a very popular, larger than average, mixed secondary school with a sixth form. The school serves an economically diverse population, drawing pupils from the north-eastern suburbs of York and the adjacent rural area. The proportion of students entitled to a free school meal is very low. Most of the students are White British and the proportion who speak English as an additional language is very low. A fewer than average number of students exhibit learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Huntington is an established Technology College and a Leading Edge school. It was designated as a High Performing Specialist school in 2007 and was awarded Training School status in 2008. The school has very recently achieved Healthy School Status. Having also achieved World School Status, the school will offer the International Baccalaureate Diploma to students with effect from September 2009.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Huntington is a good school with many outstanding features. Parents hold the school in high regard and, as with students, have noticed significant improvements over the last two years. Parents explain, 'Staff have always encouraged students to work hard, achieve good results, behave responsibly and to have respect for themselves and others, but there is now a much warmer and more inclusive ethos where the support and encouragement received helps students become grounded and very well balanced individuals.' These improvements are a result of the concerted efforts the school is making to fulfil its vision, 'to inspire confident learners who will thrive in a changing world'. Leaders and managers have instigated significant step changes in the school's culture to work towards this vision and have secured the wholehearted support of a very dedicated staff team. All members of this team are determined to engage students more in their learning and develop young people who leave the school equipped with a broad range of personal skills and attributes and inquiring minds as well as academic success, all of which stands them in excellent stead for their future lives.

Students' standards on entry to the school have fallen somewhat since the last inspection and are now more in line with national expectations. Most students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make outstanding progress from their starting points. As a result the standards students attain at the end of Key Stage 4 have remained consistently above average for several years. Over the last three years the school has achieved a 10% rise in the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE level qualifications at A* to C including English and mathematics. This placed it in the top 17% of schools nationally in 2008 on this measure and every student achieved at least one GCSE or equivalent qualification at grade A* to G. The school's rigorously maintained and analysed student tracking and assessment data predicts that the school will meet its challenging targets in the 2009 national examinations, including in its specialist subjects.

Teaching and learning are typically good. A range of effective strategies has improved the quality of teaching and learning, academic guidance and teachers' use of assessment to set challenging targets for learning. The range of teaching styles and learning resources has been significantly enhanced and continues to develop, underpinned by a range of well thought through activities that are linked closely to the school's development plan and vision. As a result the proportion of outstanding lessons is increasing, learning activities are being more closely matched to individual learning needs and students are engaged more as active participants. All of this is increasing students' enjoyment of learning. Students are currently making much better progress in Key Stage 3 than Key Stage 4, and in some subjects - such as science - rather than others. During the inspection it was clear that students' progress is best in those lessons where teaching and learning initiatives are firmly embedded and both staff and students alike have the confidence to be more creative with their ideas and take some carefully calculated risks with learning. Here teachers pitch the level of challenge exactly right based on a sure knowledge of students' learning and include all learners. Students rise to the demands of this teaching, are eager to succeed and enjoy working together to solve problems and exchange ideas. This speeds up their progress. Progress is slower in Key Stage 4 partly because teachers, not wishing to compromise good academic standards, have generally taken

a more cautious approach to introducing new techniques and encouraging active independent learning. It is also because older students have found it difficult to move away from the methods and routines they have become familiar with and so have proved more resistant to new techniques and ideas.

Students of all ages say their curriculum is now good and the range of subjects and qualifications they can study has improved considerably over the last two years. Inspectors agree. Students in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form feel they have been extremely well supported to make the right curricular choices and report that this helps them to achieve as well as they do. School leaders have worked hard to make the school more inclusive by developing a broader range of academic and vocational programmes that more effectively meets the needs of students of all abilities. Actions to broaden the curriculum in tandem with carefully targeted individual support and mentoring are improving the achievement and engagement of lower ability students and previously disengaged groups such as underachieving boys. Another positive outcome has been a further reduction in the school's low exclusion rate. The enrichment of the curriculum through the school's specialist status has helped to improve the quality of learning across the school. Extra-curricular provision including the range of trips and visits is good.

The school's pursuit of academic achievement is not at the expense of students' personal development and well-being. Enhancing this further is at the heart of the school's vision for the future. The role of tutors in providing individualised support and mentoring for students is not yet fully established and there is scope for further development here. Students' relationships with each other and the staff are warm, positive and respectful. The overwhelming majority of students report enjoying their education. This is reflected in exemplary levels of attendance, very good behaviour in lessons and around the school and students' growing confidence and self-esteem. Students told inspectors they feel safe and well cared for and that very rare incidents of bullying or harassment are dealt with swiftly and appropriately. They know how to lead healthy lives and enjoy the high quality school lunches. Students make a good contribution to the local and wider community. Their spiritual, moral and cultural development is strong. The 'T3' programme of personal, social, citizenship and health activities contributes significantly to this and takes careful account of the key challenges and dilemmas facing young people today. All of these factors bode well for the students' economic well-being and prepare them well to be citizens of the future. Students appreciate the increasing opportunities they are being given to take responsibility and make decisions, such as participating in interviews for new staff and the design for the student washrooms that are due to be remodelled. Nevertheless, staff and students alike rightly acknowledge that there is some way to go before most students feel they have an active say in the life of the school. Leaders have appropriate strategies in place to bring this about.

The quality of care, guidance and support provided for all students including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good overall. Child protection procedures are firmly in place and meet statutory requirements. Risk assessments and health and safety audits are robust and the subject of regular review. Effective strategies are in place to ensure that parents are well informed about the choices and options available to their children. Parents' active involvement in the school and their children's education is, increasingly, being encouraged.

Knowledgeable, enthusiastic and dedicated staff are led by an outstanding headteacher who provides strong direction and a clear sense of purpose which is effectively communicated throughout the school. Extremely competent senior leaders and middle managers have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and of those areas it should improve. This is reflected in the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation. Planning and management information is being used consistently throughout the school because its benefits are tangible. Actions are regularly monitored and reviewed. Scrutiny of the standards of students work and lesson observations are conducted regularly. Staff at all levels benefit from a good range of professional development and training opportunities and are eager to develop their skills and abilities further. The expertise and creativity that has emerged through Training School activities and the specialist technology subjects, and particularly science, has contributed to this enormously. The way in which staff reflect on and evaluate their practice to understand which strategies are proving most effective in raising standards and increasing students' enjoyment of learning is impressive. The school's promotion of community cohesion is good. For example, it shares its technology status and expertise with local schools to great effect, has helped another provider fund a family support worker to engage with hard to reach families and it hosts the council's largest single adult education provision. Further, the way in which the school initiates and fosters partnership working to broaden opportunities for its own students and other young people throughout York is outstanding. Governance is good and resources are deployed effectively. For all of these reasons the school demonstrates an outstanding capacity to sustain further improvement.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

General Certificate of Education A level results are outstanding. Independent analysis shows that standards have remained well above average for several years. Students speak very positively about the school and told inspectors that they thoroughly enjoy their time in the sixth form where the care and support they receive are second to none and staff motivate and inspire them to achieve. Parents are impressed by the sixth form not only because of the excellent academic outcomes for students but also because, 'There is a close working partnership between teachers and students and a wonderful upbeat atmosphere.'

The curriculum provides a good range of courses and access to a variety of enrichment opportunities. The quality of teaching and learning is good and sometimes outstanding. Academic monitoring and assessment are rigorous. Students are confident learners and apply themselves exceptionally well to their studies. They are well advised in selecting appropriate courses, which are closely matched to their needs and aspirations. Consequently, the vast majority of students successfully complete their courses and progress to higher education or employment. Leadership and management are excellent which ensures the quality of provision and standards achieved remain high.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the best practice in teaching and learning is embedded consistently throughout the school so as to accelerate progress in Key Stage 4 and meet the different learning needs of all students.
- Develop the role of tutors to provide more individualised support and mentoring for students.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.</i>	School Overall	16–19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1	

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	1
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

Annex A**The quality of provision**

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	



5 June 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Huntington School, York, YO32 9WT

Thank you very much for making us feel so welcome when we came to carry out the inspection of your school. It was a pleasure to talk to you about your learning and aspects of your life at school. We agree with you that Huntington is a good school with many outstanding features and it is getting even better! During our visit we were very impressed by your positive attitudes, very good behaviour and impressive attendance. You told us that while you have always had good relationships with staff and each other you now feel, 'the school is more about people and treats us with greater respect and more as individuals'. Here are some of the other things we found out.

The standards you reach in national tests at the end of Key Stage 4 are above average. Standards and General Certificate of Education A level results in the sixth form are outstanding. You are well taught and staff are working hard to introduce new teaching and learning methods which take more account of your individual learning needs and include you more actively in lessons so that you enjoy them more. At the moment these changes are more firmly in place in Key Stage 3 and in some subjects such as science. This means that while most of you have made outstanding progress by the time you leave school, progress in Key Stage 4 is currently slower than in Key Stage 3. We have asked the school to improve this and to make sure that teaching and learning take account of your different learning needs. All of you can help by telling staff what works best for you and, older students in particular, by being less resistant to trying new activities in lessons.

The curriculum has improved since the last inspection because it has been expanded to offer more subjects and qualifications which meet your needs and interests well. You benefit from the high performing specialist status your school has achieved and from World School status, which means you can study for the International Baccalaureate from September 2009. The care, guidance and support you receive are good although we have asked the school to make sure tutors provide more individualised support and mentoring for you. The leadership and management of your school is first rate. Everybody knows what they need to do to improve things for you and they work closely together to achieve this. The school knows it needs to involve you more in decision making and has plans in place to bring this about. We know that you will continue to do well and will find ways to help the staff make the school even better. We wish you all very happy and successful futures.

Wendy Ripley HMI