

Spalding High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120642
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	327330
Inspection dates	10–11 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Victoria Godley

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll	
School (total)	966
Sixth form	209
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Richard Baggaley
Headteacher	Mr Tim Clark
Date of previous school inspection	27 June 2006
School address	Stonegate Spalding Lincolnshire PE11 2PJ
Telephone number	01775722110
Fax number	01775762531

Age group	11–18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. At the time of the inspection Year 11, 12 and 13 were absent on study leave. Documentary evidence was used to form judgements, which included tracking assessment information, monitoring information and evaluations. The inspection team also had the opportunity to interview a number of students from each of these year groups.

Description of the school

Spalding High School is an 11-18 girls' grammar school with boys admitted to the sixth form, serving Spalding and the surrounding area. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is low. Most students are from White British backgrounds and the number of students with English as an additional language is very low.

The school received specialist sports status in 2003, redesignated in 2007, and was awarded high performing specialist status (HPSS). Students enter the school with attainment which is well above average but there is a wider range of ability than is the case in many grammar schools.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Spalding High School is a high performing specialist school which provides an outstanding quality of education. From well above average starting points, students attain consistently and exceptionally high standards overall. They make at least good and mostly outstanding progress.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The drive of the headteacher and his senior team have directed significant improvements since the last inspection with great integrity and commitment to the well-being of students and staff. Personal development and wellbeing is outstanding overall. Students' behaviour both in and around the school is exemplary. Their attendance is exemplary, they feel valued, safe and greatly enjoy coming to school.

Students play their part in school life, for example, there is an active school council and buddy system. The student representatives spoke eloquently and informatively and they, like their senior management team know their school well. Self-evaluation is accurate and identifies the improvements since the previous inspection. Monitoring and evaluation are in place but there could be more rigour in the monitoring framework the school applies, to ensure greater consistency in departmental performance.

Inspectors agree with the school that teaching and learning is outstanding in the main school and good in the sixth form. Teaching styles are rapidly developing in the sixth form and more active learning opportunities are beginning to take shape. Overall, the curriculum is outstanding and specialist college status in sport is having an excellent impact across the full range of subjects. For example, the physical education department has played a key part in developing leadership awards; all students follow the junior sports leaders programme and leadership accreditation has also been introduced in modern foreign languages and dance.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is outstanding, not only because of the work within the local community but also because of students' excellent cultural understanding both in Britain and abroad. All students feel equally valued and achieve very well. The school provides excellent value for money.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that the effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are outstanding. Through their excellent attitudes to learning, students make very good progress in achieving exceptionally and consistently high standards. Students' progress is secured through regular mentoring and target setting.

The inspection team did not observe any lessons in the sixth form but agree with the school's judgement that teaching and learning are good. The school has begun to introduce more active teaching styles and opportunities for independent learning, however the impact of these strategies are not yet fully evident.

This is reflected by students' excellent outcomes and also the development of more active teaching styles. Most students meet very challenging targets and retention rates from Year 12 to Year 13 are very high. This is due to the excellent support and guidance they receive. In turn, students make a strong contribution to the school in mentoring younger students, and sports coaching. Leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding, as evidenced

by the high level of success achieved by its students along with their excellent personal development and the contribution they make both to the school and the wider community.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the rigour of the school's monitoring and evaluation framework in order to ensure greater consistency in departmental performance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

The standards at the end of Year 11 are exceptionally and consistently high, with 98% of students achieving 5A*-C at GCSE including English and mathematics. The number of students achieving A*-C at GCSE including a modern foreign language is also particularly high. Standards are well above the national average at the end of Year 9. Although, English results in 2008 were not as strong as mathematics, school's tracking data indicates that students are now doing better.

Students come into the school with well above average attainment and the progress they make by the end of Key Stage 3 is outstanding. Inevitably progress between Key Stage 3 and 4 is less dramatic, but by the time students complete their GCSEs they have once again made exceptional progress. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make very good progress.

Achievement in the sixth form is also outstanding. The proportion of students achieving higher and pass grades at GCE A level is consistently above national averages. The school sets challenging targets for students which most achieve or exceed.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The ethos of the school allows students to feel safe and well supported. It supports their overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, as shown by their excellent attitude and strong relationships with peers and adults. Behaviour is exemplary, students present themselves as well mannered and respectful. They enjoy school, this is evidenced by parents' views, their outstanding attendance and very positive attitudes to learning. Healthy lifestyles are encouraged through the provision in school menus. The sports specialism encourages participation in a wide range of sporting activities.

Students' contribution to the community is excellent locally, nationally and globally. They are keen to raise money for a range of charities chosen by each year group and fundraising activities range from running cake stalls to whole school sponsored walks. The school council makes a clear impact on school life, with students suggesting improvements such as a weekly study period which has been implemented to encourage independent working. The outstanding academic standards they achieve and wide range of enrichment activities prepare them well for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Lessons are well planned and teachers' excellent subject knowledge promotes student engagement. Students cooperate readily, demonstrate initiative and enjoy positive relationships within the classroom environment. This can be seen in the way the students demonstrate extended listening skills, the confidence to speak and the ability to enquire further into a subject when unsure.

Students take a great deal of pride in their work. They bring a strong foundation of prior learning and social skills, respect and consideration which contributes to enhancing the impact of teaching and as a result thrive and make outstanding progress. In the best lessons and the ones most enjoyed by students there is regular referral to learning objectives, an emphasis on students taking responsibility for their own learning and a variety of teaching strategies. Assessment is undertaken regularly and students are guided to assess their own and the work of others. The school has improved its provision in meeting individual needs and challenging all abilities and there is evidence of consistently outstanding practice in some classrooms.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding in the way it serves the needs of learners. It is enriched by many visitors, such as a Ukrainian choir, regular trips, for example, Year 7 recently visited a Sikh temple, and it has an extensive range of clubs, including the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, which students value.

Students enjoy their learning and show high levels of achievement because the school ensures that the largely traditional academic curriculum is designed to meet their needs. Students with special needs benefit from support tailored to their requirements, including initiatives such as reading buddy schemes, and therefore they make excellent progress. The GCSE programme is personalised so that some students have a reduced number of examinations whilst others have the opportunity to study subjects such as the triple science award.

The school has used its specialism in sport to impact on personal development, strengthen primary and secondary links and increase participation in sport in the wider community, as well as developing a range of partnerships which is breaking down barriers and increasing access to sport for large numbers of young people.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

There is a very high level of commitment in caring for all students but especially those with specific needs. Health and safety are rigorously promoted and safeguarding requirements are met. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and what it offers their children.

Students know their challenging academic targets and most know what they need to do to improve through assessment feedback from teachers, however this can be variable. Students from Year 9 to Year 13 have one-to-one interviews annually with senior staff to discuss their progress and their performance is tracked carefully by heads of upper and lower school, with

mentoring in place for those who might fall behind. Personal targets are set by students themselves with the help of form tutors, and these are reviewed termly.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher and senior leadership team have a common sense of purpose to strive for excellence and lead by example. Together with middle leaders, the team takes forward areas of development and continues to sustain the school's very high achievement and standards. Staff feel fully supported and are enthusiastic about the openness and support practised by all levels of management. Self-evaluation procedures are in place and the school knows itself well. However, more rigour could be applied in the school's quality assurance and monitoring frameworks to ensure all departments perform at a consistently high level. Targets set are challenging and accountability for students' progress is well supported by line manager links and performance management procedures. The specialist programme is well led and managed with senior and middle leaders working closely with governors to evaluate progress and develop a vision for future developments. Parents have an overwhelmingly positive view of the school and it has a very good reputation within the local community. Governors are very well informed and have an excellent understanding of the strengths and the areas for improvement of the school. They achieve the right balance between challenge and support. The leadership and management provide the school with excellent capacity to improve further.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	1	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	1	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	

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	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	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

12 June 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Spalding High School, Stonegate, Spalding, PE11 2PJ

Your school was judged outstanding in all the major areas of its work. I would like to thank you all, on behalf of the inspection team, for your openness and cooperation during our visit. We greatly appreciated your comments and opinions and were very impressed by your maturity and positive attitude to your education.

Some of the things we found were:

- You are set challenging targets, and exam results are consistently high.
- You make excellent progress.
- Your behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary.
- You have very positive attitudes to your learning and are most successful when teachers encourage you to think for yourselves and to work actively in lessons.
- The school provides a very good range of courses which help you to achieve high standards.
- There are many opportunities for you to take responsibility and to be involved in activities and events.
- Your tutors and teachers provide excellent guidance for you and your progress is closely monitored.
- Relationships are very strong throughout the school.
- The leadership and governance of the school are outstanding.

In order for Spalding High School to continue to improve we have asked your teachers to:

Increase the rigour of the school's monitoring and evaluation system so that all departments perform at a consistently high level.

We are confident that your school can continue to provide a high quality education and improve further. We wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Victoria Godley

Lead inspector