

Inspection of The North Halifax Grammar School

Moorbottom Road, Illingworth, Halifax, West Yorkshire HX2 9SU

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 November 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Desmond Deehan. This school is part of The North Halifax Grammar School Academy Trust. It is a single academy trust. The academy trust is run by the headteacher and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Amanda Cade.

Ofsted has not previously inspected The North Halifax Grammar School as an academy under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection of the predecessor school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The North Halifax Grammar School is an ambitious and caring school. Pupils receive high levels of academic and pastoral support. As a result, relationships between pupils and staff are warm and respectful. This helps to promote a positive culture in the school. The sixth form is exceptional. Students rise to the very academic standards that teachers have of them.

Behaviour in lessons and around school is calm and orderly. Pupils show high levels of maturity. Bullying sometimes happens. When it does happen, the school takes quick and effective action. Pupils speak positively about the ways leaders respond to their concerns. For example, following recent feedback from pupils, leaders implemented effectively a programme of activities to challenge negative gender stereotypes.

The school ensures that pupils are offered an extensive range of opportunities that extend beyond the academic. These opportunities develop pupils' interests and talents as well as their character. For example, pupils recently performed 'Twelfth Night' in the Shakespeare Schools Festival. Other opportunities include The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, debating club, chess, rock choir and big band. Pupils value these opportunities and make the most of them.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has designed an ambitious curriculum. Leaders have identified the important knowledge they want pupils to know and remember. They have ensured that there are clear end-points in each unit or topic. The curriculum is sequenced logically so pupils can build secure knowledge over time. Leaders regularly review the content of the curriculum to ensure it is diverse, and that it meets pupils' needs.

The curriculum is delivered well. Teachers have a strong understanding of their subjects. In the sixth form, students particularly benefit from their teachers' expertise, which is used to deepen students' understanding and provoke challenging, academic discussion. Teachers skilfully check what students have understood before moving on to more challenging concepts. However, in key stages 3 and 4, some staff do not consistently adapt the curriculum so that all pupils make as much progress as they are capable of. Leaders are aware of this and have developed an approach to the curriculum known as 'The Trivium'. Leaders intend this approach to bring more consistent academic rigour to lessons. This is at an early stage of implementation.

The school is ambitious for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils' needs are identified appropriately. There is appropriate oversight of these pupils by leaders. However, in some lessons, the strategies to support pupils with SEND are not used consistently.

Most pupils are confident and fluent readers when they start at the school. Even so, leaders have implemented a reading programme for pupils in Year 7 who find some aspects of reading more challenging, such as reading for comprehension and inference. Sixth-form students take the role of 'reading ambassador' to help support younger pupils with their reading. The school promotes reading for pleasure through the 'NHGS 99'. This is a list of recommended reads for pupils that is widely promoted and discussed around school. Pupils also celebrate 'World Book Day', and they can take part in book clubs and a poetry recital event.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. Low-level disruption in lessons is rare. Most pupils work hard and have a positive attitude in lessons. The behaviour and attitudes of sixth-form students are exemplary. Students' attendance in the sixth form is high and students are highly committed to their learning.

The school promotes the wider development of pupils very well through a programme called 'The Ambit'. This offers pupils, and students in the sixth form, an impressive range of wider opportunities, such as trips and cultural visits, charity work, sport, extra music tuition and academic clubs. Pupils and sixth-form students receive high-quality careers advice and work experience. Many pupils and sixth-form students take leadership roles in school. For example, pupils and sixth-form students can apply to become prefects, reading ambassadors, bullying ambassadors and members of the inclusion and equality committee. This allows pupils and sixth-form students to make a positive contribution to school life.

Pupils do not have a deep enough understanding of fundamental British values. A small number of pupils show a lack of tolerance towards some of their peers who have protected characteristics. Leaders are aware of the need to strengthen the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme and work on this has begun.

Leaders, including trustees, have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas to develop in the school. Trustees and leaders are united in their vision for the school. Trustees fulfil their statutory duties. There are detailed development plans in place to support the strategic direction of the school. Staff enjoy working at the school. They consider leaders to be mindful of their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, lessons are not adapted sufficiently so that all pupils are able to achieve their potential. As a result, some pupils are not making the progress that they are capable of. The school should ensure that strategies are implemented consistently in all lessons to promote higher levels of academic challenge and support for all pupils, including those with SEND.
- The PSHE programme requires further development. Pupils do not have sufficiently detailed knowledge of fundamental British values and a small number of pupils are not tolerant of protected characteristics. The school should continue its work to plan and develop the programme to further raise the profile of tolerance, inclusion, equity and justice.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	136788
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	10267840
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,247
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	339
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Amanda Cade
Headteacher	Desmond Deehan
Website	http://www.nhgs.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, there is a different headteacher. The current headteacher has been in post since January 2023.
- The school is part of The North Halifax Grammar School Academy Trust.
- The North Halifax Grammar School converted to become an academy in June 2011. When its predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- A very small number of pupils access alternative provision. This provision includes one registered provider and one unregistered provider.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Year 8 to Year 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders over the course of the inspection.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with the chair of the board of trustees and several trustees. The lead inspector reviewed documentation relating to governance, including minutes from trust board meetings.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: English, mathematics, history, religious education and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also visited a sample of lessons in other curriculum areas and spoke to additional subject leaders.
- An inspector met with the leader responsible for the sixth form.
- An inspector met with the special educational needs coordinator and visited a sample of lessons to look at the support given to pupils with SEND.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first. Inspectors met with leaders responsible for personal development and visited form time.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils and students formally throughout the inspection and spoke with them informally at social times and in lessons.
- A range of school documents were reviewed, including the school's self-evaluation and the school improvement plan.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils, parents and staff gathered through Ofsted's questionnaires.

Inspection team

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