

# Guilsborough School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	122061
<b>Local Authority</b>	Northamptonshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	363951
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 January 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Trevor Riddiough HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11-19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1393
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	276
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Angela Carter
<b>Headteacher</b>	Christine Staley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 February 2008
<b>School address</b>	West Haddon Road Guilsborough Northampton NN6 8QE
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<b>Age group</b>	11-19
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 40 teachers in 41 lessons, seven tutor groups and one assembly. Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders and other staff, groups of students, and members of the governing body. They observed the school's work and looked at the tracking of pupils' progress, performance data, students' work, whole-school and subject development plans, numerous policies, school documents and case studies. Completed questionnaires from 150 students and 444 parents and carers were received and analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How effectively does monitoring and evaluation at all levels ensure that intervention leads to sustained improvement in students' progress and attainment?
- To what extent is leadership at all levels securing improvements in teaching and learning both in the main school and in the sixth form?
- How well is assessment used to promote the progress that students make?
- To what extent does the curriculum meet the needs of students of all abilities?

## Information about the school

Guilsborough School is a larger-than-average comprehensive school with a sixth form. It takes students predominantly from the rural area of Guilsborough and surrounding villages. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The school population is largely White British and very few students come from minority ethnic backgrounds. None are at the early stages of learning English. The school was awarded specialist technology status in 1998. The school has received many national awards. It also holds full International School status and is a member of the Creative Partnerships Change School Programme. It is a member of the Secondary School Initial Teacher Training Partnership linked to a local university.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**1**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**1**

## Main findings

The school provides an outstanding education for its students. Care, guidance and support are excellent and parents and carers confirmed in their questionnaires the schools' ability to 'take account of the individualism of each child'. This is a key strength of the school and, together with good teaching and an excellent curriculum, ensures that students make outstanding progress in their learning. Attainment over recent years has been very high, and the rapid progress of current students shows that these standards are being maintained. Leaders show an exceptionally high level of ambition, drive and commitment to improvement. Teamwork is strong, and all aspects of the school's work are subject to rigorous, ongoing evaluation, so that the school's motto, 'striving for excellence,' is accomplished. The school's capacity to improve further is, therefore, outstanding.

The school has established a very thorough system for recording and tracking the assessment of students' attainment. This is used to evaluate their progress regularly, to identify any concerns and to agree an appropriate response to improve their achievement. This data shows that there has been significant improvement for a range of students across the school who had not been reaching their challenging targets. As a result of the strategies put in place to adjust their courses, provide support and specific additional teaching, they are now exceeding those targets and making excellent progress. This includes those students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school's specialist subjects make a substantial contribution to the improvement in overall standards and progress, and performance in English has also improved markedly since the last inspection so that it now equals that in mathematics.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. In the very best lessons, students are challenged to work independently, to think deeply and to take responsibility for their learning, although this practice is not yet universal. The use of assessment is a priority for the school and it has improved since the last inspection. Most, but not all, students are confident in using grade or level criteria to assess their work and to identify what they need to improve. They know their targets and are motivated to achieve them.

The school has developed a distinctive and personal curriculum designed to meet the needs of all students whatever their ability. A range of pathways is available coupled with effective guidance on which way to go. There are alternative courses for those students whose needs are not fully met by an academic course. Students identified

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as gifted and/or talented are supported very well by extra-curricular opportunities. Opportunities for early examination entry are extensive. These positive features contribute exceptionally well to the students' academic success.

Outstanding care and support create an extremely safe and supportive environment where all students thrive, especially those whose circumstances make them the most vulnerable. Behaviour in lessons is good and the atmosphere around the school is calm and happy. Students have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy and safe, and are exceptionally well prepared for their future working lives. Older students support the younger ones effectively as mentors and in class.

Outstanding leadership and management provide the school with a very clear direction and have ensured significant and continuous improvement. The systems for review and evaluation of the school's performance at all levels across the school are rigorous and used well to identify areas for further improvement. However the use of the information gathered by middle leaders is not always sufficiently diagnostic to bring about the changes that are required to secure consistently high quality of teaching right across the school. Despite this, once these areas have been identified, they are then pursued vigorously until complete. The school's priorities are strongly focused on raising students' achievement, improving the quality of their experience and developing all students as rounded individuals.

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Ensure that all teachers consistently use strategies to develop students' independent learning skills
- Ensure that the best practice seen in assessment to support learning is shared throughout the school.

### **Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

**1**

Students start at the school with levels of attainment that are broadly average. They progress exceptionally well and, by the end of Year 11, attainment is high in most subjects, with only slight variations year by year. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive well-targeted support and, as a result, they too make exceptionally good progress. There are few differences in the achievement of different groups of students in the school; most students achieve the top GCSE grades that could be expected of them. In lessons, students concentrate very well. Activities are generally well planned and students have regular opportunities to extend their learning. Consequently they make rapid progress.

Students say readily how much they enjoy school and this is indicated by their high attendance. 'Many things we do here are amazing.' said one. They feel extremely safe. One group of students reported that, 'Teachers take our concerns seriously and always follow them up'. Students make excellent use of opportunities to be healthy, for example, in choosing healthy options in the canteen and in the high take up of

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extra-curricular sport. They respond well to the strong encouragement to promote healthy bodies and healthy minds. Students make an extremely positive contribution to school and community life through mentoring younger students and supporting them in class, in their work with local councils and in the extensive charity work that is undertaken. Students are prepared exceptionally well for the world of work. The school ensures that all students possess very good basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information technology and this, coupled with their wider experiences in enterprise and in the workplace, promotes confidence and self-belief. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. This is supported through the establishment of 'Olympic Ideals' which has made the school's values tangible to all students and results in their strong sense of empathy, moral purpose and justice.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Teachers have good subject knowledge and the majority plan lessons effectively, matching objectives to students' abilities. The exceptional relationships in classes give students confidence and ensure that they work together very effectively. Students take a great pride in their work. Teachers use a good range of activities to make learning interesting, which serves to engage students well. A very small minority of lessons are too teacher-led, which means that learning is suppressed and students are denied the opportunity of establishing the wider skills of independent learning. Generally, lessons are organised well and teachers maintain a brisk pace. Most, but not all, teachers use a range of strategies to assist students in understanding how to make their work better and they use the tracking system

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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effectively to identify those students at risk of missing their academic targets. These students are then linked closely to the wide range of interventions provided to ensure that they catch up.

The curriculum provides exciting experiences, both in lessons and on educational visits, which students remember. These contribute greatly to students’ high-quality learning and their wider personal development. For example, the technology specialist college activities include a design and business project with many sponsor links designed to make learning more meaningful. The school offers a wide range of experiences to enrich learning in imaginative ways and to meet the needs of each individual student. There are several learning pathways to suit different learners’ needs. Early examination entry allows for different groups of students to achieve success at the end of Year 10 and then build on these successes and focus on other courses or start AS levels. Enrichment activities and special events are arranged to overcome transport barriers and include visits to universities, arts festivals, music concerts and team events which are always well attended. The virtual learning environment enables teachers, students, parents and carers access to learning resources day and night.

All students are known extremely well as individuals. As a result, well targeted support is provided as and when needed to encourage progress and personal development for all students. The school cares sensitively and precisely for students with a wide range of needs, as well as for those whose personal circumstances make them vulnerable. This contributes to their outstanding achievement. Careful and highly individual guidance and support are provided so that their transition to and from school happens smoothly and choices are made appropriately.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers at all levels show an outstanding commitment to ongoing improvement, which is embedded into the day-to-day life of the school. Every aspect of the school's work is subject to rigorous monitoring and evaluation. Central to the school's success are the careful monitoring of students' progress and the flexibility of its responses to keep all students on track. Its ability to tailor the curriculum to support the progress of each individual student is exceptional. This is summed up by a comment made by a middle leader, 'It is the minutiae of what we do that makes us outstanding – everything is picked up and changed if need be'. As soon as an area

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for improvement is identified, plans are put in place to tackle it. In 2009, boys' results in English were not quite as high as girls', but the school was very quick to analyse the reasons why, and to take decisive action, which led to improvement the following year.

Members of the governing body are highly skilled and well informed. They are very closely involved in the life of the school. They have taken care to secure the future of the school through a combination of long- and short-term planning. This approach ensures financial security as well as defining the direction of future travel. The governing body has done this through the judicious use of support and challenge to leaders for the benefit of the students. The school has a broad range of partners with whom it collaborates to improve provision. It takes a leading role in sharing good practice with partner schools which require additional support. The school engages exceptionally well with parents and carers. They are given regular and detailed information about their child's progress and are consulted at an early stage when their child requires additional support or intervention. The school is determined to reach and engage all families and this is reflected in the exemplary work carried out by the school's own parent support worker. Equality of opportunity for all is at the heart of the school's work. No individual or groups of students are left behind and all are included fully in the life of the school. Procedures for the safeguarding of students are under constant review. The school's approach exceeds statutory requirements and there is excellent collaborative working with parents and other agencies to support rigorous safeguarding arrangements. The school is a harmonious community. It has put in place a range of activities to promote the engagement of a range of groups at local, regional and international level, but has yet to evaluate this work to ensure maximum impact.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

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## Sixth form

Leaders of the sixth form have set a vision of high expectations, aiming to be inclusive, caring and supportive in pursuit of academic excellence and effective personal development. This vision is fully realised at Guilsborough. There is a clear and robust analysis of the strengths and weaknesses in outcomes which is used to drive well-focused and targeted improvement strategies, for example in the way that actions have been taken to improve performance at AS level.

Students' academic progress is outstanding and is still improving. The school's data show that students are on track to meet their challenging targets and this is due to the well-focused attention paid by all teachers to the monitoring of their progress and to the provision of timely intervention. Attendance is good and most students go on to complete their courses successfully and gain places at university. This is due to the strong programme of information, advice and guidance offered throughout and to the additional personal support provided. Students' contribution to the school and wider community is exemplary, for example, in their involvement in the widely renowned and accredited mentoring programme which offers personal and academic support to younger students.

Teachers have good subject knowledge at a technical level and this is used well to promote progress in lessons. Students know their target grades and specifically how to improve their work to achieve them through the exemplary use of assessment criteria in lessons and in marking. Independent learning opportunities are carefully planned and structured to extend the learning further. The curriculum acknowledges the need for breadth and depth in an isolated rural school so that students are not disadvantaged by their situation, and a very wide range of courses is offered. The curriculum extends well beyond the classroom through the virtual learning environment which is used widely. Key skills courses and enrichment opportunities make a significant and increasing contribution to students' personal development which prepares them well for the next stage of their education. Students are known as individuals and this is highly appreciated. They are acutely aware that their progress will be rigorously checked and supported and that their personal development will be nurtured. As a result, students are mature and confident individuals who play an active role in the life of the school and beyond.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	1
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

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## Views of parents and carers

Responses from parents and carers were extremely positive, with the overwhelming majority saying that their children enjoyed school. As one parent said, 'All our children love school and we can't ask for more than that!'. Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire also indicated that they felt that the school is led and managed effectively. A minority felt that the school did not help their children to have a healthy lifestyle. The inspection found no evidence to endorse this concern.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Guilsborough School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 444 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1393 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	168	38	255	58	19	4	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	169	38	267	60	2	0	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	170	38	258	58	13	3	2	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	187	42	234	53	13	3	2	0
The teaching is good at this school	171	39	254	57	8	2	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	126	28	265	60	38	9	2	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	79	18	298	67	52	12	4	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	131	30	269	61	18	4	4	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	164	37	248	56	15	3	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	142	32	269	61	15	3	4	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	110	25	261	59	35	8	6	1
The school is led and managed effectively	185	42	238	54	3	1	2	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	213	48	216	49	8	2	1	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	36	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



21 January 2011

Dear Students,

### **Inspection of Guilsborough School, Northampton, NN6 8QE**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to me and the other inspectors when we inspected your school. Your views were very helpful and we enjoyed our discussions with those of you we spoke to in lessons, in meetings and around the school.

We found that your school provides you with an outstanding education. You told us that you really enjoy coming to school and that you feel very safe. There are excellent relationships between yourselves and your teachers and you are well supported by your teachers academically in your lessons and personally, especially if you fall behind with your work or have any problems. Your teachers prepare you well for academic success and set high expectations. Your behaviour in classes and towards each other is generally good. The curriculum provides you with some memorable experiences and there are many opportunities for you to get involved fully in school life. You take on a wide range of activities, including opportunities to show leadership skills and help younger students.

Your school is extremely well led by your headteacher and her team of leaders and managers, who are determined to ensure that it provides the best for every one of you. Even outstanding schools have areas to work on. I have therefore asked your headteacher and senior staff to work on helping you to maximise your learning by helping you to learn independently of your teachers and by giving you clear advice on how to improve. This is an area where you can help by making sure you act upon advice given, especially when your work is marked.

You can be proud to attend an outstanding school where everyone wants the best for you. I wish you all success in the future and hope that you continue to enjoy your time at Guilsborough.

Yours sincerely

Trevor Riddiough  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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