

The Swinton High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	136987
Local authority	Salford
Inspection number	385560
Inspection dates	6–7 March 2012
Lead inspector	Charles Lowry

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Converter Academy
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	874
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jacky Davies
Headteacher	John Biddlestone
Date of previous school inspection	21 May 2007
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 40 teachers delivering 40 lessons of which two were joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. That is a total of 17 hours teaching. Meetings were held with one group of parents, three groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, school senior leaders, middle managers and two groups of teachers including heads of department, newly qualified and more experienced teachers. The inspectors observed the school's work and considered a wide range of documents, including the school improvement plan, school self-evaluation, safeguarding and equality policies and minutes of governing body meetings. They analysed 160 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, 150 received from students and 84 from staff.

Information about the school

The Swinton High School is an average-sized, mixed school that became a converter academy in August 2011. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The student population is predominantly of White British heritage with smaller numbers of students from other backgrounds. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average and 10 students have a statement of special educational needs. In 2011, the school met the government's floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. The school is a National Support School designated by the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services and is the holder of a number of awards including the Artsmark, Sportsmark, Nurture Kite Mark and Healthy Schools Award.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- The Swinton High School is a good school where students achieve well. The school is rightly proud of the progress students make by the end of Key Stage 4 including those with special educational needs or known to be eligible for free school meals. Achievement in English and mathematics is improving and has been accelerated this year so that it is now broadly in line with national averages.
- Teaching is good overall, with some that is satisfactory and some outstanding. Teachers are dedicated, knowledgeable and plan lessons well. Students have positive attitudes to learning; however, more-able students are not consistently challenged to participate actively and learn independently.
- Behaviour around school is good. Relationships between students and staff are strong and enable the school to operate as an orderly and safe community. Students are courteous, well mannered and welcoming and there are few incidents of unacceptable behaviour.
- The school promotes the spiritual, moral and social development of students effectively. Students have opportunities to participate in the school’s extensive extra-curricular programme and serve the school and wider community. There are limited opportunities for cultural development.
- The headteacher and his committed team have a shared, clear vision for the school’s future development. Performance management is rigorous and used effectively to improve standards, provide support and hold staff to account. Good practitioners have been identified but procedures to capitalise on their skills and share them more widely have yet to be fully implemented. The school was judged to be good and not outstanding by inspectors because the majority of the teaching was found to be good and not outstanding. In addition, the

school's self-evaluation does not always take account of the full range of information available on school performance.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve further the number of lessons that are good or outstanding by:
 - capitalising on the skills of those practitioners who give the best lessons to improve the quality of teaching across the school
 - providing more challenge for the most-able so that they reach the highest standards
 - providing opportunities for more independent learning to reduce students' dependency on their teachers.

- Sharpen self-evaluation even further by:
 - using the most challenging comparative data to evaluate the school's performance and set targets for further improvement.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Students' achievement is good. For the last three years the proportion of students who have left the school with at least five high grade GCSEs or equivalent qualifications has been significantly above the national average. This represents good progress overall, considering the students' starting points. However, over the same period of time progress in English and mathematics has been less marked. The school has taken steps to tackle this and results in these subjects are now accelerating at a faster rate than the national average. The most recent examination results and current tracking information indicate an improving trend. It is also confirmed by lesson observations and scrutiny of students' work.

Disabled students and those with special educational needs are fully integrated into the life of the school and, along with those students known to be eligible for free school meals, make good progress. There is also no significant difference between the achievement of students from different ethnic groups.

Most students enjoy coming to school and almost all feel that they learn a great deal in lessons. The recently introduced literacy strategy, with a clear focus on improving reading in Year 7, is having a positive impact on these students' learning and progress.

Students across the school particularly enjoy lessons that provide opportunities for them to learn practically. Learning is well paced and good in the majority of lessons, although for some students their progress diminishes when they have to sit and listen to their teachers for long periods. Progress is also limited when students are

not given opportunities to develop their thinking, work independently, or, particularly for the more-able, when the level of challenge is not sufficient. Students are aware of their targets in each subject and their progress against these targets is monitored termly by a rigorous tracking system.

Almost all parents and carers, who completed questionnaires, agree that their child is making good progress and that they are helped, by the school, to support their child's learning. As one parent commented, 'My son has made excellent progress at school; the standard of education is excellent, alongside the pastoral care'.

Quality of teaching

Teachers are committed to their work, have good subject knowledge and form strong and effective relationships with their classes. The best teaching challenges students and stimulates their thinking in a range of contexts. Such teaching provides a variety of activities to appeal to the different ways students learn and sets a brisk pace. This was clearly illustrated in one good mathematics lesson where the teacher planned and delivered a range of tasks, including practical activities, role play and group work to maintain students' concentration and motivation while they learned how to read and interpret information in graphical form. Resources, including information and communication technology, are well matched to the needs of students, promoting active and effective learning that stimulates their curiosity and desire to succeed. In the best lessons, students further develop their literacy and collaborative skills and are able to speak with confidence and understanding about their learning. For example, in one highly effective English lesson, students worked in groups critically evaluating a piece of literature. With skilful questioning from the teacher, students refined their understanding and were able confidently to share their thoughts with the rest of the group. Teachers plan their lessons well to a consistent school format and invariably include reference to the expected learning outcomes for different groups of students. However, in some lessons learning outcomes are not challenging enough for the most-able students and opportunities are missed for them to extend their thinking and further progress their learning. The teaching and progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs are consistently good. This is because of the support they receive from teaching assistants and the way teachers adapt the work to make sure that it meets their needs.

Where the teaching is satisfactory, lessons tend to be dominated by too much teacher talk. Questioning tends to be closed, directed at the whole class with answers given by individuals. This leads to passivity among some of the other students and a slow pace of learning. In the better lessons, a range of questioning is used which challenges students to think deeply about the subject. Teachers also encourage student participation by inviting them to evaluate each other's answers.

Literacy is promoted well across the curriculum with students given opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding of subject specific vocabulary and activities used to promote reading comprehension. Literacy development including reading is also a key aspect of planned form time activity.

Students' work is marked regularly. In the best examples marking is frequent, swiftly returned to students and makes clear to them what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. Effective marking, for example, was seen in humanities. However, in some subjects, teachers' comments are not detailed enough to provide sufficient guidance on how work might be improved.

Students' spiritual, moral and social awareness are developed well and are effectively promoted through assemblies, form activities and lessons, that enable reflection, encourage aspiration and foster empathy. In one Year 9 history lesson, for example, students explored the concept of reasonable force and its use in challenging situations by the police. In a Year 10 assembly on the theme of 'Respect', students were given the opportunity to consider whether being shown respect depends upon how much you respect others. Although there are examples of the school encouraging students' cultural development, including school trips, these are limited.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The behaviour of the overwhelming majority of students is good. Inspectors found the students to be typically considerate, respectful and courteous to staff and each other. A small minority of students and a similar proportion of parents and carers, who completed questionnaires, expressed concern about behaviour. For the parents and carers, in particular, this concern is about disruptive behaviour in lessons. Inspection evidence shows that in the large majority of the lessons observed behaviour was good or better and in some cases outstanding. There were few examples of unacceptable behaviour either in lessons or around the school.

Students' attendance is consistently high and they are punctual both to school and lessons. Students, including those with identified behavioural difficulties, respond well to the school's strategies for managing behaviour. The school has an effective inclusion unit 'The Retreat' which provides an appropriate, short-term, alternative provision for students demonstrating challenging behaviour. The impact of this provision is that there have been no fixed-term exclusions since July 2008. Students whose circumstances make them vulnerable are well supported. One parent commented typically that their child 'has come on in leaps and bounds since coming to this school and has grown in confidence'.

Students feel very safe and are confident that any concerns they have are swiftly and effectively dealt with by members of the school's pastoral team. Disagreements, when they do occur, are effectively managed using the school's 'Seven Steps Approach' to conflict resolution. Most students who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school deals with all types of bullying well. When interviewed, students said that on the rare occasions when bullying does occur it is dealt with quickly and effectively. Issues such as cyber-bullying are dealt with well through assemblies and the school's personal, social and health education programme.

Students value the extra-curricular programme, including sporting, artistic and academic activities. It gives them opportunities to pursue individual interests and contribute to their community. They also feel empowered to be involved in decision-making through the school council. Students in Year 11 have the opportunity to be

prefects and receive training to enable them to assist their teachers in maintaining an orderly and calm environment at break and lunchtimes.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, ably supported by a strong and committed senior leadership team, communicates an ambitious vision for the school's future development, which is shared by the staff. The school's quality assurance procedures, particularly with regard to the monitoring of teaching and learning, are well embedded. The school analyses its observation records well and there is evidence to show that teachers' skills are improving. This is as a result of the monitoring that occurs, any subsequent interventions that have taken place and a regular programme of professional development. However, while there is some excellent teaching practice, it is not fully shared in the school and a few inconsistencies remain.

The school's self-evaluation provides a broadly accurate picture of the school's performance and what the school needs to do to improve further. However, the process does not always use all of the available and up-to-date information, for example, the data showing how the school's performance compares with other schools nationally. The school improvement plan clearly identifies the school's main priorities but does not indicate milestones against which progress towards achieving these priorities can be measured.

The curriculum has recently been reviewed. It offers students a range of courses that will equip them with the knowledge, skills and qualifications to allow them to progress to the next stage of their education. The drive to improve literacy and numeracy have been key development areas for the school and includes, for example, the programme introduced in Year 7 to accelerate the development of students' skills in reading.

The school has also taken effective action to address previous underperformance in English and mathematics at GCSE. Rigorous and regular tracking of students' progress identifies those students that are off target. These students are then closely monitored and given intensive intervention. The impact of these measures was a 10 % increase in the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics from 2010 to 2011. The school's current data give evidence for continuing improvement.

The school has developed strong and effective links with other schools. This has enabled the sharing of good practice, the provision of development opportunities for staff and enrichment activities for students.

The governing body is aware of the school's strengths and areas for development and provides a good balance between support and challenge. Its work is greatly valued by school leaders. School leaders and governors have ensured that the school site is safe and that safeguarding and child protection arrangements are robust and meet statutory requirements. School leaders have also been effective in promoting equality and tackling discrimination. There are few racist incidents and those that have occurred have been dealt with swiftly and effectively. Students in the school make good progress and there are no gaps in achievement between different

groups. The school has maintained improvement since its previous inspection and has good capacity to improve in the future.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



8 March 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of The Swinton High School, Salford – M27 6JU

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school. This letter is to explain our findings. We think that The Swinton High is a good school. There are several reasons for this, including the good progress most of you make at GCSE. The quality of teaching is good and you behave well and feel safe. The school is well led and managed.

We know that you and your parents and carers agree with us. The large majority of parents' and carers' questionnaires and most of yours were positive and when we talked to you, you told us you were happy at school.

The headteacher and his leadership team are very ambitious for the future of the new converter academy to be outstanding by the time of the next inspection. We have left the school's leaders and managers with the following suggestions that we believe will help. They are to:

- increase the number of lessons that are good or outstanding by providing more challenging work for you to do and giving you more opportunities to work independently
- make the school's self-evaluation sharper by using all the information that there is available on school performance to set challenging targets for further improvement.

You can continue to play your part by working hard and attending regularly. We would like to send you our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Charles Lowry
Lead inspector

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