

Holly Lodge Girls' College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104688
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	377110
Inspection dates	14–15 March 2012
Lead inspector	Marguerite Murphy 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	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,150
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	180
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Killeen
Headteacher	Julia Tinsley
Date of previous school inspection	24 June 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 37 teachers in 37 lessons, most of which were full lesson periods. During the course of most lessons, students' work and data on their attainment and progress were scrutinised. In addition, each inspector selected small groups of students to speak with outside the classrooms towards the end of some lessons. Through this and other incidental discussions with students around the school, inspectors gathered the views of a large number of students directly. They observed the school's work and looked at documentation related to its monitoring, evaluation and development planning, and safeguarding policies and procedures. Inspectors took account of the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, but there were insufficient responses available for this school. Inspectors analysed the questionnaires returned by 74 parents and carers, 178 students and 89 staff. Meetings were held with members of the governing body and several staff, including senior and middle leaders. Discussions took place with teachers whose lessons were observed.

Information about the school

Holly Lodge is an above-average-sized secondary school. Most students are of White British heritage and a below-average proportion, less than 12%, is from a range of minority-ethnic groups. Very few of these are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. A much higher proportion of students than the national average is known to be eligible for free schools meals. The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs who are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special needs is above average.

The school is a specialist arts college and has a number of awards, including the Inclusion Quality Mark and 'Success in Adding Value' (awarded by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust). A recent letter from the Minister of State for Schools congratulated Holly Lodge on being one of the 100 top performing schools for sustained improvement between 2008 and 2011. The school exceeds the current floor standard.

Holly Lodge Girls' College is part of the Liverpool East post-16 collaborative partnership.

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

- Holly Lodge Girls' College is a good school that has continued to improve and demonstrate a sustained good performance since its previous inspection. The school is not outstanding because the levels of progress made by all students from entering to leaving the school are not significant enough to result in outstanding achievement. The sixth form is satisfactory and improving.
- Students are reaching and sometimes exceeding average levels of attainment, such as in the proportion gaining at least five GCSEs at grades A* to C with English and mathematics included by Year 11. This represents good achievement from their starting points on entry to the school, although a below-average proportion reach the highest A* and A grades. The achievement of students in the sixth form is satisfactory overall but on an improving trend. The school's plans to ensure that sixth form provision is more closely matched to all students' requirements are not fully embedded, although the early signs of improvement are reflected in the better retention rates of the current Year 12.
- Teaching is consistently good and sometimes outstanding. Teachers know their subjects well and make effective use of resources and well-planned activities to engage students in their learning.
- Students feel safe and their behaviour is good and often outstanding. This makes a positive contribution to their learning as they work well collaboratively, value each other's views and show respect for the teachers and other adults who work with them.
- Leadership and management are good and the school demonstrates a high level of pastoral care and a commitment to the inclusion and safeguarding of all learners. This ensures equal opportunities for all students to succeed, including the relatively large proportion whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable. There is an appropriate focus on developing literacy skills across the school, but leaders are aware of the need to accelerate this further, particularly for those students who enter Year 7 with low reading skills. School self-evaluation, while accurate, is not precise enough in its evaluation of the impact of the school's actions on students' rates of learning, for example, in observations of teaching.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment, particularly for students in the sixth form and those more-able students who are capable of achieving the highest grades in GCSE examinations, by:
 - building on and sharing the best practice that already exists in teaching to ensure that students' progress in lessons and over time is accelerated from good to outstanding
 - embedding the school's existing plans to ensure that its sixth-form provision and entry requirements enable all students to succeed in the most appropriate courses and qualifications to meet their needs
 - taking more focused and rapid action to narrow the gaps in some students' reading skills on entry to the school and throughout Key Stage 3.
- Ensure that the school's self-evaluation focuses more sharply on clear evidence of the impact of its actions on the achievement of all groups of students by:
 - developing further the skills of senior and middle leaders to observe lessons and scrutinise students' work with a more relentless focus on evaluating the quality of learning and progress for students of all ability groups.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

The proportion of students gaining five A* to C grades at GCSE with English and mathematics included has risen from 34% in 2009 to 63% in 2011, which was above the national average. Although the school's tracking information shows that the 2012 results are unlikely to match this, current Year 11 students are making good progress from their slightly lower starting points in Year 7. Most parents and carers who completed inspection questionnaires feel that their children are taught well and are making good progress, and inspectors found this to be an accurate view. Students of all backgrounds and abilities achieve well, including disabled students and those with special educational needs.

Most students enjoy their lessons and are confident to work in a variety of situations, particularly as part of a team or group, developing well their speaking and listening skills. For example, students in a Year 11 drama class were totally absorbed in rehearsing their group performances of scripts, constantly suggesting improvements in response to the teacher's reminders about body language and intonation. Consequently, they made excellent progress in understanding how to achieve their target grades and provide constructive feedback to other groups. Inspectors saw several such examples of students' mature responses to valuing each other's work. In a Year 11 physical education lesson students successfully refined their skills in performing a sequence of trampoline movements, assisted by constructive feedback from the teacher and their peers.

An increasing number of students show a good ability to take responsibility for their own learning, particularly in the sixth form, for example through independent study and more active contributions to lessons. On occasions, the more-able students in all key stages are not sufficiently challenged to take more responsibility to further their independent learning

and reach for the higher levels or grades of which some are capable. Similarly, the less-able students sometimes make satisfactory rather than good progress when expectations of their independent work are not high enough.

There are some effective, targeted interventions in place to support those students who need additional support in their learning, for example in literacy. Despite this, some students' reading skills remain below average in Key Stage 3, which can slow their learning in other subjects. There are strengths in the way students' speaking, listening and thinking skills are being developed. For example, students in a Year 8 English lesson on the theme of the Titanic were engaged in a carousel of learning activities including a 'freeze frame' role play. When the teacher's questioning pushed for a deeper response from a 'character' who said she had mixed feelings, the reply came: '....because I'm pleased they've said women and children can go first, but scared about getting in the lifeboats.'

Quality of teaching

The vast majority of teaching is good or better and no inadequate teaching was observed. This consistently good teaching over time has contributed to the rise in students' attainment since the school's previous inspection. Teachers use their good subject knowledge and expertise well to plan tasks that engage students and develop their knowledge, skills and understanding across the well-balanced curriculum. Year 13 students gained a good understanding of the Data Protection Act because the teacher set the scene with an enjoyable starter activity that motivated them, helping to set a good pace to the lesson. Very positive relationships and the promotion of students' confidence and oracy skills are common features of lessons. Good use is made of resources to enhance learning, such as interactive whiteboard technology, photographs, video clips and artefacts. The school is committed to the promotion of literacy, communication and mathematical skills across the curriculum, but recognises that this is not consistently planned for in lessons. Where teaching and the curriculum offered are at their best, students are provided with memorable experiences that accelerate their learning. Students in a Year 7 geography fieldwork lesson were challenged to look with a new eye at the external environment around the school, including the use of their mathematical skills when examining the various construction dates and ages of the buildings. When work is particularly well matched to students' abilities and needs, they make the best possible progress. Year 8 students in a mathematics lesson made outstanding progress in their understanding of algebraic equations, due to the teacher's high expectations and their own collaborative work, exemplary behaviour and attitudes.

In the minority of lessons when teaching is satisfactory rather than good or better, students' learning slows, usually when insufficient account is taken of the full range of students' needs. This can result in lessons that are too teacher-led, with lower expectations of the pace and quality of students' work. The more-able students are not always challenged sufficiently in some mixed-ability classes, if teachers provide additional 'add-on' tasks towards the end of the lesson rather than problem-solving activities or challenges right from the start. Teachers do not consistently make effective use of assessment records in their planning to identify and plan for those students who need specific support or intervention. Teachers usually provide students with useful ongoing feedback during lessons, by effective questioning and regular checking of work with reference to target levels or grades. However, the quality and rigour of this is not consistent and teachers' marking in books is variable in its contribution to moving students' learning on with clear targets for development. The vast majority of students say that teaching is good for all or most of the time and that they learn a lot in lessons, and inspection evidence supports this view. The

school rightly identifies a need to develop the use of student voice in providing regular feedback on their experiences of teaching across the curriculum, to assist in planning for further improvement.

Good provision is made within the curriculum to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which features strongly in lessons and other activities. Educational trips and visitors, including a link and exchange visits with an African school, add to students' social and cultural experiences. Teachers encourage students to use their imagination and creativity and to cooperate effectively in group work. Year 7 students made good progress in developing their use of persuasive techniques in their writing. When asked to present their case for taking over from the teacher, one stated '.....after all, the educational specialist said I would be the new face of English!'

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The vast majority of the parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire consider that behaviour is good at the school, although 25% of them felt that their child's lessons were sometimes disrupted by bad behaviour. One-fifth of the students who completed questionnaires expressed the view that behaviour was good 'sometimes' rather than always. Inspection evidence found that students' behaviour in lessons and around the school's expansive site is consistently good and quite often outstanding. Questionnaires and discussions with students found almost unanimous agreement that students feel safe in school. The constant presence of staff in and around the buildings between lessons contributes to this, and students are clearly comfortable in speaking to staff about any concerns they may have. A minority of students say that behaviour is sometimes not as good as they would like, but that problems are dealt with quickly and good behaviour and attitudes are appropriately recognised and rewarded. The few students who on occasions find it difficult to behave well do nevertheless understand the school's clear expectations, structures and systems. The school makes carefully considered use of fixed-term exclusions when necessary, with support in place for students to complete work and re-integrate on their return. The success of this is shown in the reductions in incidents leading to exclusions.

Students demonstrate good behaviour even in lessons where teaching is satisfactory or when the limitations of the school buildings may have a detrimental effect, for example, in a Year 9 music lesson in a room that was too stuffy and cramped for a group singing activity. Attendance is average and most students arrive punctually to school and lessons. The good attitudes, behaviour and attendance of sixth formers also provide good role models for younger students. Many students demonstrate a growing maturity and sense of responsibility. They respond well to opportunities to ask questions and air their views, such as in the headteacher's regular year-group 'question time' assemblies.

Leadership and management

Staff who completed inspection questionnaires or spoke with inspectors expressed almost unanimous agreement that they are proud to be a member of staff at Holly Lodge, and that the school is well led and managed. Inspection evidence confirms that leadership and management are good and the school's continuing strong performance over time demonstrates its good capacity to sustain improvement. This is despite the challenges posed by a local reorganisation of secondary provision that includes a reduction in the school's standard admission number. A long-awaited rebuilding programme has not yet been secured, making some aspects of forward-planning difficult when some of the existing

buildings are barely fit for purpose. The headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body are working effectively with appropriate specialist advice to manage some staffing reductions without compromising the school's good curriculum provision. The experienced governing body is knowledgeable about the school and its history and is fully committed to its vision of high expectations and the promotion of inclusion and equality for all learners. Members of the governing body have regular contact with the school and hold leaders to account for its performance. The school adopts good practice in its arrangements for the safeguarding of students, and this is reflected in the way in which students feel safe, secure and well cared for.

Good leadership of teaching and management of performance have been instrumental in eradicating inadequate teaching and increasing the proportion that is good or better. Leaders have an accurate view of the overall quality of teaching and learning, although there were slight variations between this and the judgements made by inspectors during individual lessons. This was due to the school's previous emphasis on lengthy descriptions of the lesson and what the teacher was doing rather than on its impact on all students' learning and progress. A new format for lesson observations is being developed to remedy this, although this is not yet in use. Professional development and training for staff is effectively targeted towards individual needs where appropriate, but also to whole-school areas for development, for example in literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. Actions taken by the school have led to improvements in areas that performed relatively less well in 2011, for example humanities subjects. The continuing strength of the school's art specialism is reflected in the often excellent progress seen in this subject in all three key stages.

The headteacher and senior leaders constantly review the curriculum to ensure that it meets students' needs, despite having to consider a potential reduction in the range of subjects on offer in Key Stages 4 and 5 due to falling numbers on roll. They also ensure that the curriculum maintains its successful promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The viability of student group sizes in some sixth-form subjects are being reviewed by leaders in liaison with other schools in the collaborative. The school has appropriate plans to build on the improvements made to attainment in Year 11 GCSEs by 'raising the bar' for entry requirements to the sixth form and thereby its targets for attainment in AS and A Level examinations.

Good leadership of, and a whole-staff commitment to, the inclusion of all learners ensures that disabled students and those with special educational needs are monitored carefully and supported to make the same good progress as their peers. The school is also recognised for its good provision for the higher-than-average number of children who are looked after by the local authority. There are striking examples of students experiencing success in personal and academic achievement because of the school's work in removing barriers to learning.

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.



16 March 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Holly Lodge Girls' College, Liverpool, L13 0AE

Thank you for your help during the recent inspection of your school. My colleagues and I enjoyed our visit and the opportunities to speak with so many of you during lessons and around the building. We did this because your views are very important to the inspection process and helped us to confirm the judgements that were made.

I am sure you will read the full report for yourselves; you will see that we judged all aspects of the school to be good: your achievement and behaviour, the teaching and leadership. Although there are also strengths in the sixth form, achievement there is satisfactory at the moment. However, this is improving and it is good to see that sixth-form students set a positive example to others by their good attendance and more independent learning. There are particular strengths in the way the school fully includes and supports all of you to make the best of what it has to offer. The curriculum and teaching are regularly reviewed to make sure there are no weaknesses, even when changes need to be managed.

One of the really strong elements of the school's success is that your behaviour and attitudes to learning are very positive, sometimes outstanding! This ensures that you can make the most of the consistently good teaching, care and guidance provided for you. Inspectors were impressed with your friendliness, the way you work together in groups or pairs in class and your confidence in talking about your work and expressing your views and ideas. We have suggested that the school should work on the following targets to help it to improve further.

- Raise attainment, particularly for students in the sixth form and those who are capable of achieving the highest grades in GCSE examinations
- When leaders observe lessons, they should focus more sharply on checking the learning of all groups of students, so that they can suggest improvements that will help more of you to make outstanding progress.

All of you can help by maintaining those positive attitudes and always responding well to the ever-increasing levels of challenge provided in your work!

Yours sincerely

Marguerite Murphy
Her Majesty's Inspector

