

Flixton Girls' High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106364
Local Authority	Trafford
Inspection number	355939
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Joan Davis 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	885
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Graham Barrick
Headteacher	Mrs Julie Hazeldine
Date of previous school inspection	25 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Forty lessons were observed and 39 teachers seen. Meetings were held with groups of students, governors, staff, the School Improvement Partner and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including the school improvement plan, school assessment data, value added analyses and the school's self-evaluation of its work. Inspectors also considered an analysis of 158 parent and carer questionnaires as well as those from students and staff.

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

- The impact of the school's actions to improve behaviour on the learning and progress of students currently in the school.
- The impact of the school's strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Learning and progress of all students, particularly in mathematics and science.

Information about the school

Flixton Girls' High School is a slightly smaller than average secondary school near Manchester. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is slightly below the national average. The percentage of students from minority-ethnic groups is slightly below the national average as is the percentage of students who speak English as an additional language. The percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. The school has specialist status for sport and is a foundation trust school. The school has achieved a number of awards including Healthy School status, the Artsmark Gold Award, the Sportsmark and the NACE Challenge 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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Flixton Girls' High School is a good school. There are a number of outstanding features including the way in which the school promotes community cohesion and has developed excellent partnerships with local, national and international institutions. There has been a rising trend in attainment since the previous inspection so that now students achieve well and make good progress in most areas of the curriculum. The learning and progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are also good.

The school provides a wholly inclusive environment where all students are valued and encouraged to achieve. Students receive outstanding care, guidance and support and, as a result, they acquire skills that equip them well for the next stages in their lives. A large majority of students feel safe in the school and provision for safeguarding is outstanding. Students say that there is little bullying and that when it happens it is dealt with effectively. Behaviour is good in general, allowing lessons to proceed productively. Students are friendly and polite and a large majority say that they enjoy school.

The quality of teaching is good. Excellent displays and the orderly environment in classrooms combine to create a very good climate for learning. Students show enthusiasm for their studies and participate well in lessons. Teaching in English, mathematics and science is improving under new leadership and outcomes for students in these subjects are rising as a result.

The use of assessment to support learning is variable. In some subjects, assessment is used effectively, such as in English. However, this good practice is not always shared with other departments and therefore assessment is inconsistent. Too often, the marking of work does not give students advice on how to improve.

The curriculum provides a wide range of courses appropriate to students' abilities and interests. The school does well in tailoring the curriculum to the needs of the students and, as a result, students achieve well. The school benefits from productive partnerships with a variety of institutions which have had a highly positive impact on outcomes for students. The impact of the specialism both in the school and in the local community is outstanding. This area of the school's work is particularly well-led and there is a determination to use sport to engage and inspire students to achieve their potential.

The headteacher has shown vision and tenacity in driving the school forward since the previous inspection. There is a sharp focus on improving outcomes for students and weaknesses in provision have been tackled robustly. Expectations at all levels are high and there is a tangible confidence and ambition that attainment will continue to rise. The school has invested considerable resources in building capacity at middle leadership level and, as a result, the leadership and management of teaching and learning are good. Self-evaluation is accurate and enables the school to determine effectively priorities for

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development. Planning for improvement is fit for purpose. As a result, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is good. The school is highly effective in its commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination. Its contribution to community cohesion is outstanding. The school provides good value for money because the quality of provision is good, as are outcomes for students.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment further by:
 - improving the quality, consistency and frequency of marking so that students are better informed as to what they need to do to improve their work
 - improving the quality of teaching by ensuring that all lessons include a range of activities that better meet the needs and abilities of individual students.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students arrive at Flixton Girls' High with prior attainment that is broadly in line with the national average. For many key measures attainment was above the national average in 2010. This represents good progress; therefore the achievement of students is good. The attainment of students currently in Year 11 is average. However, given that attainment of this cohort of students when they entered the school was below average, this still represents good progress. Attainment was poor in science but this has been robustly addressed by dynamic new leadership and performance in this subject improved dramatically in 2010. Current progress in science is good. Improvement in performance in mathematics has lagged behind that in English, but this is being addressed by improvements in leadership and also the quality of teaching in the subject. As a result progress in mathematics is improving. For example, in a good Year 8 mathematics lesson, students worked productively in groups and discussed the topic with enthusiasm. The teacher's good subject knowledge and skilful questioning ensured that all students made good progress. The progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities has been consistently good since the previous inspection and remains so, largely because the learner services team is passionate about ensuring that these students have every opportunity to achieve their potential. The school has robust systems for tracking the performance of students and employs effective intervention strategies when students are not performing as well as they might.

Attendance is now above average. The school works closely with families and other agencies in this respect and, as a result, there has been an upward trend in attendance since the previous inspection. The school prepares students well for the next stages in their lives. Students say that they are well informed regarding future choices and generally have high aspirations. Students are able to gain a wide range of qualifications and the school has put in place effective systems to improve literacy and numeracy. Students use information and communication technology confidently to support their learning. For example, in an outstanding Year 11 graphic products lesson, students were using a laser cutter to create very high quality materials, such as a beautifully designed pop-up book for young children.

Students have a good understanding of factors that can affect their health and a large majority participate in some form of extra-curricular sport, such as the Outward Bounds

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Trust residential course which is completed by almost all students in Year 7. There is a higher than average take-up of school meals, which offer a wide range of healthy options.

Students have a voice through the school council and students organise a wide range of activities for the local community, such as the annual senior citizens' Christmas party. The school also hosted the Trafford Secondary Dance Festival. The specialism has driven many of these initiatives, giving students a variety of opportunities, such as working with local disabled people, helping them to improve their motor skills through the medium of dance.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students appreciate the range of opportunities the school provides to raise awareness of other cultures, such as the links with schools in the Ukraine and India. An assembly seen during the inspection was particularly stimulating, encouraging students to have high aspirations. Students work well together and in a good personal, social and health education lesson students were keen to express and justify their opinions on a range of ethical issues.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

In the large majority of lessons, teaching is good or better. In the most successful lessons, effective planning, linked to previous learning, provides appropriate support and challenge to students of all abilities, ensuring that all students make good progress. In these lessons, a wide range of activities to build students' self-esteem and confidence are an

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integral part of the lesson. Teachers' highly-effective questioning and insistence that students apply themselves to their studies play a fundamental role in ensuring that students make good progress. For example, in one outstanding business studies lesson, the teacher checked the students' understanding of the work throughout and adapted the lesson in order to address weaknesses that were evident. In the best lessons, students are highly engaged and challenged, enabling them to make outstanding progress. In weaker lessons, teachers do not plan adequately to include activities to intrigue and motivate all students. In addition, occasionally too much talk from the teacher results in students becoming too passive, lacking engagement in their learning.

Assessment practices are far too variable. In the best lessons, teachers give the students opportunities to assess their own work and that of others, which helps them to reflect on their learning. However, good practice, where it exists, is not shared across the school. As a result assessment is inconsistent. Furthermore, in general, students' work is not marked regularly enough to have a positive impact on their learning. Too often, marking is cursory and does not give students sufficient information as to how to improve their work.

The curriculum is good. A wide variety of vocational and more traditional subjects is offered. The school plans carefully to ensure that provision meets the needs, abilities and interests of the students. Enrichment and international days provide the students with the opportunity to engage in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. The specialism also makes a large contribution to this provision and has made improvement in participation rates in sport a particular focus. The school benefits from a wide range of partnerships with a number of institutions that has improved opportunities for the students. For example, the partnership with the local NHS Primary Care Trust has provided students with the chance to gain experience of working in a healthcare setting.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding and have had an immense impact on improving outcomes for students, such as achievement, attendance and the reduction in fixed-term exclusions. External agencies consider the school to be a leader of good practice. The school is passionate in its aim to ensure that individual students' needs are met, whatever their circumstances.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a relentless focus on driving continuous improvement. She has built a team of senior and middle leaders who have established a culture of high expectations and accountability. This has been successful in securing improved outcomes for students. The headteacher has shown resilience in her willingness to tackle areas of weakness and

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in her determination to build capacity in the school for further improvement. The leadership team has been particularly effective in inspiring all members of the school community to share its vision and ambition for the success of all students.

The leadership and management of teaching and learning are good. The leadership team is effective in communicating consistently high expectations and is aware of further areas for development. There is a rigorous system in place to monitor and improve classroom practice. Teaching and learning have improved since the previous inspection and these improvements are having an impact on securing better outcomes for students. Middle leaders need further guidance on monitoring the effectiveness of marking, which has been identified as a weakness.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is outstanding and is a strength of the school. Provision in this respect is well-planned and embedded in the curriculum. There is a commitment from senior leaders and the governing body to ensure that students benefit from contacts with a wide variety of local, national and international institutions. For example, links have been established with a local faith school to foster greater understanding of cultural diversity. In another initiative, local retired citizens mentor students in the school, thus helping to promote inter-generational understanding.

The school displays a passion for promoting equality and tackling discrimination and this permeates the life of the school at all levels, from the curriculum to work with outside agencies, such as the 'Female Voice in Violence' project organised by ROTA (Race on the Agenda). There has been a strong emphasis on helping financially disadvantaged students so that they can participate in activities such as the Outward Bounds Trust residential course, or theatre visits. There are no significant gaps in the achievement of different groups of students.

Procedures for safeguarding are outstanding. Safeguarding is treated as a matter of the highest priority. The governing body demonstrates an exceptionally clear awareness of the importance of this area of its work. The school's procedures for child protection are extremely robust and strengthened through work with other agencies. Systems in place aim to enhance the girls' safety both in and out of school.

The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers is good and improving. School leaders have responded positively in addressing areas for improvement identified in the Ofsted survey visit in 2009.

The school benefits from the support of a capable and knowledgeable governing body. Governors have shown commitment and are growing in confidence in holding the school to account. The governing body has a good grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and statutory duties are met.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Views of parents and carers

An average proportion of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. Of these the very large majority are very supportive of the school. They feel that the school prepares their child well for the future and that the school is led and managed effectively. A very small minority of parents and carers feel that the school does not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. However, during the inspection behaviour was found to be good. Inspectors also concluded that the school employs effective systems to manage poor behaviour when it occurs. Some parents and carers feel that the school could provide more homework and the school acknowledges that this is an area for development. Some parents and carers identified marking of students' work as being an area for improvement. The inspection team endorse parents' and carers' views in this respect and we have recommended that the school improves the quality and frequency of marking. Some parents and carers feel that the school could improve its communication with parents and carers so that they can better support their child's learning. The inspection team has recommended to the school that teachers' marking should give clear advice to students as to how they can improve their work. In this way, parents and carers will have more information in order to support their child's learning.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Flixton Girls' High 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 159 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 885 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	40	25	99	62	12	8	5	3
The school keeps my child safe	50	31	100	63	7	4	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	53	33	85	53	19	12	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	21	103	65	12	8	4	3
The teaching is good at this school	24	15	107	67	19	12	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	32	20	85	53	31	19	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	25	16	102	64	25	16	2	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)	35	22	94	59	13	8	3	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	33	21	95	60	15	9	5	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	32	20	80	50	32	20	7	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	15	81	51	23	14	8	5
The school is led and managed effectively	35	22	93	58	21	13	3	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	37	23	90	57	18	11	4	3

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	35	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).

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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



4 March 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Flixton Girls' High School, Manchester, M41 5DR

Thank you very much for the warm welcome we received during our inspection of your school. We were impressed by your friendliness and the good attitudes you show towards one another. We found that your school provides you with a good education and that a large majority of you enjoy school. You appreciate the opportunities provided and the support and guidance you receive. Many of you take advantage of the wide range of extra-curricular sport on offer and realise that this is helping you to be healthy. You have excellent links with your community and this is appreciated by local residents. Your attainment is average on the whole and you make good progress as you move up through the school.

The school does well in providing you with courses that suit your interests, abilities and hopes for the future. Teaching is good overall. The school cares very well for you and tries hard to encourage you to aim high and do your best. You feel safe at school and know who to turn to if you have a problem.

We identified two main areas where we think the school should make improvements. First, we have asked the headteacher to make sure that your work is marked more regularly and that teachers give you advice on how to improve. Second, we have asked the school to try to make sure that all lessons are as good as the best by improving the variety of activities in lessons so that all of you are able to make good progress.

You can help your school to improve even more by continuing to attend school regularly, working hard and taking advantage of all the wonderful opportunities available to you.

We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Joan Davis

Her Majesty's Inspector

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