

Halifax High at Wellesley Park

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	107566
Local Authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	356183
Inspection dates	26–27 May 2011
Reporting inspector	David Scott

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	788
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Janet Sherrard Smith
Headteacher	Jackie Nellis
Date of previous school inspection	16 October 2007
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. The inspectors observed teaching and learning and made visits to 43 part-lessons, seeing 42 teachers, including several accompanied by members of the senior leadership team. Meetings were held with the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team, a member of the governing body, School Improvement Partner, staff and several groups of students. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at self-evaluation documentation, monitoring and assessment information, lesson plans and school policies. They analysed questionnaires from 96 students, 52 staff and 125 parents and carers. The school's safeguarding procedures were also evaluated.

Information about the school

Halifax High is smaller in size than most secondary schools. Most students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students who are from minority ethnic groups is over four times that found nationally. The largest group of students are of Asian or Asian British Pakistani heritage. Girls outnumber boys. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is over twice that found nationally. A third of all students, an above average proportion, has a disability or special educational needs, the largest group being those with moderate learning difficulties. The school is a specialist languages and performing arts college and has achieved the Inclusion Quality Mark and has been recognised as an Investor in People on three successive occasions. The school has met the government's floor targets for academic performance in each of the last three years. Since the previous inspection there have been a number of changes in the senior leadership of the school. A new headteacher was appointed in April 2010.

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	3
Achievement	3
Teaching	3
Leadership and management	3
Behaviour and safety	3
Does the school adequately promote the pupils' well-being?	Yes
Does the school adequately promote community cohesion?	Yes
Does the school provide value for money?	Yes

Key findings

- Cultural harmony is a major feature of this satisfactory, but improving, school. Its inclusive ethos is much appreciated and valued by all members of the school community. Whatever their backgrounds, students work well together and have good relationships with staff. They are happy and feel very safe.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory, but sometimes good or better. Nevertheless, teachers are not routinely taking opportunities to promote students' literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects.
- In some lessons, teachers' explanations are too long and they do not engage students consistently as active participants in lessons. Questioning does not challenge and probe students' thinking regularly or develop their speaking skills through opportunities to explain their ideas. This is particularly the case for the more-able students. Marking does not always guide students on how they can improve their work. Where there is good practice, it is not shared throughout the school.
- Engagement with parents and carers is improving through the newly established parents' council.
- Attendance has improved markedly over the last year. The number of persistent absentees has reduced significantly although punctuality to lessons is more variable.
- Students' awareness of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues and respect for diversity are promoted particularly well through inspiring assemblies and reflective tutorial time.
- The headteacher leads the school extremely well, with good support from a newly formed senior leadership team. Her commitment and determination to raise standards are evident in all her work. The governing body has an increasingly effective grasp of how to probe and challenge school performance data. The monitoring of teaching and learning is developing well but is not

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always precise enough to drive improvement. Nevertheless, the school's honest and accurate self-evaluation means that it is well placed to carry on improving.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen teaching to accelerate progress in lessons and raise attainment, in all subjects by:
 - ensuring teachers provide challenging activities matched to the needs of all students, supporting the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills
 - staff asking more probing questions in lessons which give students opportunities to develop their speaking skills and explain their ideas fully, especially for more-able students
 - ensuring students develop as active and independent learners in order to challenge their thinking and accelerate progress
 - reviewing targets more systematically with students so that they clearly understand what to do to improve their work.

- Sharpen the effectiveness of leaders and managers in driving improvement by:
 - ensuring that tracking and monitoring information is analysed robustly and new developments are judged against clear success criteria
 - implementing a programme of coaching and mentoring to spread good practice in assessment, particularly in marking throughout the school
 - extending the capacity of leaders at all levels to manage their areas of responsibility more consistently.

Main report

Halifax High is making a real difference to the students in its care. It provides a satisfactory standard of education, but one that is improving steadily. The school has undergone recent significant changes of senior leaders and teaching staff, mainly because of restructuring. The school's priority during this period has been to re-establish a shared vision among all staff in order to raise attainment and to bring about much needed stability. This has increased the confidence of staff, parents and carers.

The school is a welcoming and harmonious community where students are happy. Students' awareness of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues and respect for diversity are promoted particularly well. Reflective tutorial time and inspiring assemblies involving high-quality music and drama presentations, demonstrate the positive impact of the school's specialism. Students enjoy their education and are very positive about the changing and improving ethos in the school. They mature

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into thoughtful and considerate young adults who are keen to contribute to society. They behave appropriately, respect the views of others and are confident that the rare cases of bullying are addressed promptly. The school has good procedures for safeguarding students and assessing potential risks. These meet all government guidelines and include a carefully planned approach to child protection and managing the safety of students around the school site and on educational visits. These measures contribute to students' mature understanding of how to keep themselves safe. For example, a group of student 'Frog Wardens' has been trained to guard and keep the internet safe in school.

Students' attainment is improving steadily, although it is below average. This is largely because many students experience a legacy of underachievement due to the variability in the quality of teaching in the past. This has impeded their progress, together with some having a poor record of attendance. From low starting points when they enter the school, students make increasingly fast progress and achieve satisfactorily. Teaching is overall satisfactory and sometimes good, but it does not regularly enthuse students with a love of learning or appreciation of how learning relates to their present and future lives. However, the learning opportunities teachers provide outside normal school hours and their effective preparation for examinations make a huge contribution to accelerating the progress students make by the end of Year 11. This was very evident in a Year 7 drama lesson where students were performing living statues of characters from *Oliver Twist*. Students were very well motivated and skilled at assessing each other's performance and suggesting points for improvement and, as a result, most students made good progress. Similarly, in a music lesson students listened to recorded orchestral extracts and then matched the musical instruments to their correct families. Students thoroughly enjoyed this activity and were able to recall apt vocabulary to describe the quality of the sounds they heard.

Despite this success, leaders are anything but complacent, being ever vigilant in striving to close the gap between the achievement of boys and girls. However, many do not reach average levels of attainment due to their low starting points and interruptions in learning. Students are adequately prepared for the world of work and employment. Through changes to the curriculum and the more systematic monitoring of the work of departments, unevenness in the performance of different subjects is gradually being eliminated. For example, students' performance in English has improved, but as yet sustained improvement has not been achieved in mathematics and science. Students with special educational needs and those with disabilities make satisfactory progress, as do those who speak English as an additional language. This is a result of effective guidance and a range of different strategies to accelerate students' progress being employed by the school. Students are motivated to learn and work cooperatively together because of the good relationships with staff. They behave appropriately in lessons and have an increasing desire to improve their learning. Most of those who previously demonstrated challenging behaviour have been motivated by the school's drive to help students achieve.

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The school is rightly proud of its effective pastoral support and guidance. Students new to English are integrated and supported well in lessons. Consequently, once they have mastered English, they make the same progress as their classmates. Students whose circumstances make them the most vulnerable benefit greatly from partnerships with external agencies. Staff help students overcome difficult and challenging episodes in their lives. The inclusion team provides a wide range of support to help students, whose circumstances make them vulnerable, play a full part in school life. The team is increasingly successful at engaging hard-to-reach families. For example, the recently introduced parents council sought the views of parents and carers about school uniform.

Students are keen to take on responsibilities and value the school council, whose views are regularly discussed at meetings with senior staff. In addition, the Subject Associated Students (SAS) are a group of elected students who act as ambassadors to each faculty and who are currently undergoing training in lesson observation. In collaboration with their peers from partner schools, students work regularly with representatives from the local community on joint business and leadership projects.

Students have developed a strong sense of fairness which has enabled them to improve their self-confidence and self-esteem. The school has worked hard with students, parents and carers to emphasise the importance of good attendance, which has improved markedly over the last year. The number of persistent absentees has reduced significantly though punctuality to lessons is more variable.

Leaders have brought about many improvements that are making a significant difference to the students. Through accurate self-evaluation and concerted action by all, teachers' skills have developed well and, as a consequence overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory, with a proportion being good or better. As a result of more rigorous monitoring by leaders and managers teaching is improving quickly. Nevertheless, teachers miss opportunities to promote students' literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects. Teachers make good use of information and communication technology to ensure lessons are interesting, particularly for boys. Students who find learning difficult or who have particular learning barriers are supported well because staff focus sharply on their needs. There is some good practice in the use of assessment that has been used to drive up attainment in creative arts and English. Nevertheless, this good practice has not been shared consistently with all departments resulting in its impact being too variable. In some lessons, teachers' explanations are too long. Students are not actively engaged in learning or given questions that challenge their thinking, explain their ideas or help develop their speaking skills, particularly for the more able. Target setting and marking do not always signpost clearly enough how students can improve their work.

Almost all parents and carers who responded to the questionnaires were positive about the school and felt it keeps students safe and helps them to enjoy their time at school. The school's own recent surveys of parents' and carers' views were similarly positive. A few parents and carers raised concerns, including the way unacceptable

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behaviour was dealt with. Inspectors observed behaviour in lessons and around the school and judged it to be satisfactory.

The governing body is very supportive of the school and fulfils all its statutory duties. It has a good understanding of the needs of the local community. It is becoming increasingly effective at holding the school to account for students' achievement. The school is a cohesive society and has a detailed understanding of its own community and the different ethnicities and cultures represented. However, the school is at an early stage of raising students' understanding of the broader national context.

The vision and clarity of purpose of the headteacher have created a welcoming and harmonious ethos which permeates throughout the school. As one parent commented, 'She has been like a breath of fresh air'. Within a short space of time, she has established new systems for quality assurance, with clear lines of accountability which are focused on raising attainment. This vision has been shared with all staff, who embrace it wholeheartedly, and has been recognised by gaining a national award for staff development. Strategies for improving weaker teaching, including whole-school training have been implemented. For example, digital cameras have been used for lesson observations to provide teachers with 'real-time' feed-back. Consequently, teaching is improving, and learning and progress are accelerating. A number of leaders are either new to the school or new to their responsibilities. Although they have begun to make changes, it is too early to measure the impact of these. Not all leaders and managers are focused on evaluating the impact of teaching on learning using measurable success criteria to accelerate achievement.

Strongly committed senior leaders ensure equality of opportunity and inclusion for all. Students whose circumstances make them vulnerable or who previously displayed challenging behaviour now enjoy their learning and make the expected progress. Partnerships with a family of schools are strong as are links with other agencies which contribute effectively to the students' steady progress. Since the last inspection, the school has reduced exclusions, raised attainment and has improved attendance significantly. These actions demonstrate a strengthening capacity to make the further improvements.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Halifax High at Wellesley Park 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 inspector received 125 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 788 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Q1 My child is happy at school	66	53	55	44	3	2	1	1
Q2 My child feels safe at school	66	53	55	44	3	2	1	1
Q3 The school helps my child to achieve as well as they can	62	50	55	44	7	6	1	1
Q4 The school meets my child’s particular needs	57	46	59	47	7	6	1	1
Q5 The school ensures my child is well looked after	62	50	59	47	2	2	1	1
Q6 Teaching at this school is good	56	45	61	49	6	5	2	2
Q7 There is a good standard of behaviour at this school	38	30	61	49	25	20	1	1
Q8 Lessons are not disrupted by bad behaviour	27	22	55	44	32	26	10	8
Q9 The school deals with any cases of bullying well	55	44	58	46	6	5	3	2
Q10 The school helps me to support my child’s learning	59	47	57	46	6	5	3	2
Q11 The school responds to my concerns and keeps me well informed	57	46	55	44	11	9	2	2
Q12 The school is well led and managed	57	46	62	50	5	4	1	1

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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 achievement of all pupils. ■ behaviour and safety. ■ the quality of teaching. ■ the effectiveness of leadership and management. <p>and taking into consideration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ how well the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
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.



31 May 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Halifax High at Wellesley Park, Halifax, HX2 0BA

On behalf of the inspection team I would like to thank you very much for the very warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed meeting you and seeing you at work and recreation. We very much valued the discussions we had with you and were particularly impressed with how your attendance has improved since the last inspection and your lively presentations and performances in assembly.

You go to a satisfactory school, but one that is improving steadily. Inspectors were particularly pleased to see the way you get along and treat each other with respect. You, and your parents and carers, told us that Halifax High is a caring and happy place where you feel very safe.

Your headteacher and teachers are determined to help you succeed and give you the best possible education. We have asked them to:

- plan work that will challenge and engage you in all lessons, develop your speaking skills by showing you ways to learn by yourselves, particularly the more able among you
- give you clearer advice on how to improve your work so that you can achieve your very best
- look closely and regularly at information about your performance and to share with you how best you can make improvements in all subjects.

You too can all play your part in improving the school by arriving at your lessons on time and working hard to achieve your targets and by following your teachers' advice when they mark your work. Once again, it was very good to meet you all. We wish you and the school all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

David Scott
Lead inspector

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