

Holden Lane High School Specialist Sports College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124385
Local Authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	359650
Inspection dates	23-24 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Peter Cox

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	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11-16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	995
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Wright
Headteacher	Jacqueline Lewis
Date of previous school inspection	25 June 2008
School address	Milton Road Sneyd Green Stoke-on-Trent ST1 6LG
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 34 lessons equal to approximately 17 hours of teaching and also 13 part lessons of less than 20 minutes each. They held meetings with students, teachers, middle and senior leaders, the Chair and another member of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority and held a telephone conversation with the School Improvement Partner. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation including: school policies, minutes of governing body meetings, monitoring information on the quality of teaching, and the school's own data on its performance. They also analysed questionnaires returned by 68 parents and carers, 116 students and 25 staff.

Information about the school

Holden Lane is an average-sized secondary school with more boys than girls. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average, as is the percentage of students who have a disability including those with special educational needs. A well-below-average number of students speak English as an additional language and the number of students from minority ethnic groups is low when compared with the national average.

The school has been a specialist sports college since 2001. It holds a number of awards, including Healthy School status. There has been some difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff, particularly in mathematics and science. Over the last three years the school has exceeded the national minimum expectation of the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics.

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	4
Achievement	4
Teaching	4
Leadership and management	4
Behaviour and safety	4
Does the school adequately promote the pupils' well-being?	No
Does the school adequately promote community cohesion?	No
Does the school provide value for money?	No

Key findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Achievement over the last three years, when considering all subjects, has improved year-on-year but is inadequate overall. Improvements are mainly due to the relative strength of English and the offer of a suite of vocational subjects, in addition to GCSE courses. However, achievement in mathematics has been below that expected for the last three years and remains a significant weakness; it shows little sign of improvement. The gap between attainment in mathematics and the national average is too wide and is not closing quickly enough. Teaching is inadequate across subjects and this stifles learning and progress. In the better lessons, strong relationships exist between teachers and students. In these lessons, teachers' subject knowledge is good and teaching is often enthusiastic and engaging. However, poor behaviour is evident in too many lessons and impacts negatively on students' learning. This poor behaviour often extends beyond the classrooms, where students report feeling unsafe. In responses to questionnaires, a high proportion of staff, students, parents and carers expressed concerns over the poor behaviour of some students. To help address this, the school has very recently introduced a 'behaviour for learning' policy but its impact on the improvements needed is not yet evident.

Despite efforts since the last inspection, leaders and managers have not secured the necessary improvements. Members of the governing body have an awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, they do not hold senior leaders to account sufficiently well to help secure improvements. Systems and procedures for

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analysing the school's performance are weak and consequently actions to bring about improvements are ineffectual.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement urgently in all subjects and particularly in mathematics so that students leave school with attainment that is at least in line with national averages by:
 - tackling the turbulence in staffing and recruitment and retaining high quality practitioners, particularly in mathematics and science
 - providing a balanced curriculum that matches fully the needs and interests of boys and girls.

- Eradicate inadequate teaching and increase the proportion which is good or better by:
 - ensuring planning is sharply focused on meeting the needs of all students given their starting points
 - ensuring marking and feedback make clear how well students are performing and what they need to do to improve
 - developing and applying consistently the 'behaviour for learning' policy so that students know how to gain the best from their lessons.

- Eradicate poor behaviour and ensure students feel safe by:
 - eliminating incidents of bullying
 - eliminating low level disruption in lessons
 - improving punctuality so that students arrive on time at the start of the school day and for all lessons.

- Improve the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels and increase the rigour of monitoring and evaluation to ensure measurable improvements in students' performance, teaching, behaviour and safety by:
 - securing greater clarity about the roles and responsibilities of leaders and managers
 - using more effective self-evaluation processes that set a course for improvement
 - developing the leadership capacity to manage a range of improvements simultaneously and see them through to completion
 - engaging more effectively with the immediate community and particularly with parents and carers.

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Main report

Students join the school with attainment that is broadly average and make inconsistent progress. However, by the time they leave, the school manages to secure overall attainment that is broadly average when considering the indicators of five GCSE A* to C grade passes and when including English and mathematics. A higher proportion of students who left in 2010 failed their GCSEs when compared to the national picture and a much lower proportion than expected secured the higher grades of A* and A. Students' attainment in mathematics is low showing little sign of improvement, even when taking account of the school's predictions for the current Year 11 cohort. This is because the learning and progress of students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is inadequate. This results in their underachievement and lack of opportunity for all in mathematics.

A high proportion of staff, students and their parents and carers expressed concerns about poor behaviour. This was seen during the inspection in all areas, including on corridors and outside, where students report feeling unsafe, despite being supervised by staff. Too many students arrive late for their lessons. They speak of being bullied or knowing someone who has been. They do feel able to take their concerns to some staff, who are generally the younger teachers. They are less willing to approach some other members of staff as they do not feel valued, respected or listened to. Students describe experiencing a divisive school community. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is inadequate overall. Strengths were seen in English lessons where groups of Year 9 students were discussing very sensibly 'what love was,' in the context of Romeo and Juliet and today's society. In addition, an effective assembly provided opportunities for self-reflection. However, these strengths are seriously undermined by the behaviour and attitudes of some students in lessons and around the school. This has a negative impact on students' well-being. In addition, opportunities are missed during registration time to reflect on issues or to follow-up topics explored in assemblies.

Teaching is not strong enough to eradicate weaknesses in students' performance. A high proportion of inadequate teaching was seen during the inspection. While there is comparative strength of teaching in subjects such as English, teaching overall fails to move students on sufficiently in their learning given their starting points. Lesson planning does not focus enough on individual students and their abilities. While students have some knowledge of levels or grades through constant re-enforcement during lessons, the marking and feedback received on their work is not helpful enough for them to progress to a higher level. Behaviour is poor whenever teaching is inadequate and consequently students' learning suffers because the pace becomes too slow. Students speak of this happening too often and inspection evidence confirms this.

Some leaders and managers display a high level of commitment and are earnestly trying to bring about improvements in the quality of teaching. However, the impact of this work is limited. The school acknowledges the difficulty in recruiting and

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retaining experienced high-quality staff, particularly in mathematics and science. Policies are not applied consistently. There is a lack of clarity and accountability amongst leaders and managers when implementing a range of initiatives. For example, there has been much work on improving the quality of teaching over time and yet the improvements required in behaviour have only recently begun to be addressed. The governing body is supportive. It knows the main strengths and weaknesses of the school but does not fully understand the significance of some of the weaknesses. This is because governors have been too reliant on information provided by school leaders and insufficiently rigorous in holding the school to account. Since the last inspection the school has demonstrated insufficient capacity to sustain improvement.

Safeguarding meets requirements. The curriculum is appropriate and generally meets the needs of most individuals. The higher proportion of boys, and particularly those of a lower ability, achieve better than girls because the school focuses on meeting their needs. However, this is to the detriment of girls, particularly those of a lower ability, who have not been provided with equal opportunities and so have achieved less well. The specialism provides a wide range of sporting activities which are, in the main, popular with students. Parents and carers are not engaged fully in the life of the school and there was a low response rate to the questionnaires. There is limited evidence of the school taking account of the views of parents and carers. However, inspectors pursued each parental concern raised during the inspection and found that, in most cases, the school had investigated them appropriately.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Holden Lane High School Specialist Sports College 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 68 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 995 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Q1 My child is happy at school	19	28	36	53	10	15	3	4
Q2 My child feels safe at school	17	25	36	53	12	18	3	4
Q3 The school helps my child to achieve as well as they can	15	22	39	57	8	12	4	6
Q4 The school meets my child’s particular needs	16	24	37	54	11	16	3	4
Q5 The school ensures my child is well looked after	17	25	37	54	12	18	2	3
Q6 Teaching at this school is good	14	21	40	59	10	15	2	3
Q7 There is a good standard of behaviour at this school	10	15	32	47	15	22	10	15
Q8 Lessons are not disrupted by bad behaviour	6	9	24	35	27	40	11	16
Q9 The school deals with any cases of bullying well	13	19	29	47	8	12	11	16
Q10 The school helps me to support my child’s learning	17	25	35	52	14	21	0	0
Q11 The school responds to my concerns and keeps me well informed	13	19	34	50	11	16	8	12
Q12 The school is well led and managed	16	24	29	43	10	15	10	15

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.

25 May 2011

Dear Students



Inspection of Holden Lane High School Specialist Sports College

You will recall that we recently inspected your school and would like to thank those of you who spoke with us during lessons, at formal meetings and around the school. The inspection team has decided that you are not receiving an acceptable standard of education and have judged your school to require 'special measures.' This means that the school will receive additional help to improve quickly and securely. Inspectors will return to Holden Lane at various intervals in the future to see how well you are doing.

There are some things that your school is doing well. There is some good teaching and learning in certain subjects, but overall good teaching is too infrequent. Some leaders and managers continue to work hard to make things better for you. However, there is much that needs improvement and you can all help by getting to lessons on time and concentrating hard on your learning. There are a significant number of occasions when some students' poor behaviour slows the learning of others: this is unacceptable. We have asked the school to make the following improvements:

- raise your achievement in all subjects but particularly in mathematics
- increase the proportion of good or better teaching and get rid of the inadequate teaching which is holding you back
- eliminate poor behaviour and bullying so that the classrooms are better places to learn and you feel safe in the social areas
- strengthen the effectiveness of leaders and managers and the systems and processes they have in place so that improvements are immediate, secure and sustained.

You can all help to improve your school by responding positively to the changes that need to be made and grasping every opportunity to learn.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Cox
Lead inspector

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