

# Upton-by-Chester High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111422
<b>Local authority</b>	Cheshire West and Chester
<b>Inspection number</b>	378300
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 November 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Neil MacKenzie

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,662
<b>Of which number on roll in the sixth form</b>	309
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	David Wilson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jane Holland
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 March 2007
<b>School address</b>	St James Avenue Upton-By-Chester Chester CH2 1NN
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by six additional inspectors. The inspectors saw 41 lessons and 40 different teachers. Meetings were held with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff and groups of students. Inspectors spoke to parents and carers as they brought their children to school. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including internal and external student progress data, school development planning and students' workbooks. They also scrutinised 278 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, 182 questionnaires returned by students and 34 completed by members of staff.

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

- The quality of teaching and current rates of progress for all students.
- The effectiveness of the curriculum including opportunities students have for enrichment.
- The progress made by students in the sixth form.
- The quality of care, guidance and support across the school.
- The effectiveness of leaders and managers in bringing about improvement.

## Information about the school

Upton-by-Chester High School is a larger-than-average-size secondary school. It draws students from beyond its catchment area and is fully subscribed. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also lower than that usually seen. Few students are from minority ethnic heritages and there are few at early stages of learning English. The school has held specialist status in humanities for three years, holds the International School award, is working towards a UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools award, and has the Eco School silver award. It is also a nationally-recognised Healthy Schools status, has the Artsmark silver award and Holds Fairtrade school status.

**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**

**1**

## Main findings

This is a good school. It has an outstanding capacity for further improvement. The quality of education provided by the school has improved significantly since the previous inspection as a result of principled and visionary leadership of the headteacher and governing body and accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Leadership at all levels is aspirational and determined. Leaders demonstrate the skills to promote ongoing improvement in all aspects of the school's life

Upton-by-Chester is an inclusive school where students and staff demonstrate high levels of respect for each other. Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Students demonstrate excellent development of their social skills and cultural understanding. Their spiritual appreciation and moral values are highly commendable. They make excellent contributions to an extensive range of communities, local, national and global. The school promotes excellent community cohesion and has a range of highly effective partnerships to promote students' learning and well-being. Students enjoy their education and their attendance is consistently high.

Students enter Year 7 with broadly average attainment. They progress and achieve well across the school, to reach above average standards by the end of Year 11. As a result of focused support by both teachers and teaching assistants, students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress. Progress in the sixth form is also good and many students take up places at prestigious universities. Teaching across the school is good overall and examples of outstanding practice, particularly in English, music, drama, modern foreign languages, geography and in the sixth form were observed. In the best lessons, teachers use engaging topics and maintain a high level of pace to learning; teachers know their students well and pitch the level of challenge very effectively. Where teaching is less effective teachers do not prepare sufficiently to accommodate the range of abilities and needs in their classes and progress slows as a result. In a minority of lessons, teachers dominate too much giving insufficient time for students to reflect on their learning and to develop their independent and collaborative learning skills.

A few parents and carers raised questions about the timing of subject teacher consultations and review days. The school agrees that this needs to be reviewed and also that the flow of personalised communication with parents and carers needs

further consideration. The school uses many innovative systems, but some parents and carers feel the school does not reply to correspondence as efficiently as it could.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' learning and progress further by:
  - ensuring teachers use their knowledge of students' performance to plan more specifically for the learning needs of individuals
  - providing students with more opportunities to develop their independent and collaborative learning skills.
- Enable parents and carers to become more actively involved in their children's education by:
  - reviewing protocols and expectations for the efficient response to parents' and carers' communications with the school
  - reconsidering the cycle of review days and subject consultations.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2
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In lessons, students work at a level which is generally above average and they make good progress. Students have positive attitudes to learning and are keen to do well. They are generally engaged well in the activities during lessons. Achievement across the school is good and continues to improve. Achievement in mathematics is particularly impressive and students' performance in English is now catching up. In addition, GCSE results in art, geography, modern foreign languages and religious education are particularly strong. The systems for tracking students' progress provide accurate information and assessments indicate that current students are demonstrating the potential to reach, and in some case exceed, their challenging targets again. The school had identified potential underachievement in some groups. However, they have taken decisive action to address this issue and gaps in performance are closing rapidly. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well supported and they make excellent progress as a result. Students' high attendance, their impressive success in external examinations and their good personal skills prepare them well for their next step in education or employment.

Students feel safe and well looked after and say they have a range of adults to talk to if they need advice. They also believe that bullying is rare but that when it occurs, it is dealt with rapidly and efficiently. Behaviour in lessons and around the site is good. Large numbers of students walk to school through residential areas and do this maturely, showing respect to residents and the environment. Those who travel by bus are orderly and calm. In lessons, behaviour is good and few are interrupted. Students have positive attitudes to their learning; they have high levels of concentration and engagement. When students do misbehave teachers take decisive action. The school has personalised approaches that deal effectively with inappropriate behaviour. The adoption of the school's specialism has made a significant improvement to students' personal development and cultural awareness. Students make excellent contributions to their local and wider communities. For

example, older students support younger ones to improve their reading and other skills, and sports leaders run the Global Challenge Day for 400 primary school children. There are strong links with schools across the world that mutually benefits a significant number of students. Students support many charitable events, for example, the Chernobyl Children's Aid through drama, art and music. The vast majority of students adopt healthy lifestyles. Participation rates in extra-curricular sports are high. Students respond well to the school's health promotion strategies and they have a good understanding of the importance of a balanced diet.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
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	1
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is good overall and there are examples of outstanding practice in all key stages. In the best lessons, assessment is used well to determine the academic and emotional needs of students and thus to plan for more realistic challenge and more focused support for those who need it. As a result, most students are secure and confident. The school recognises, however, that, on occasions, learning is over directed and students are not given sufficient opportunities to work independently or collaboratively with their peers. Marking is generally good and students often benefit from detailed advice on how they can improve their work. There are a few examples, however, of marking which is rather cursory. Teachers adapt well in some areas of the school where the layout of rooms is not wholly fit for purpose.

The curriculum contributes well to students' personal and academic development. It has improved significantly since the previous inspection, particularly in relation to the establishment of a more focused personal, social and health education programme (PSHE) and in the provision for vocational courses. Students also benefit from the introduction of a nationally-accredited programme for information and communication technology. The school recognises that the vocational offer needs to be extended further and that, although now good, provision for PHSE would be enhanced by more specialist teaching in the subject. There is an exceptional and

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

very well-attended range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities, of which students speak very highly. In addition, specialist status in the humanities has a profound impact on student’s international understanding and moral values. Many students host their counterparts from several countries across the globe. Students have visited China, have produced a film with Yemeni students during a visit to Istanbul and have also delivered presentations at an international conference in Michigan, in the United States of America.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding because students are known and treated as individuals. Sophisticated monitoring systems enable staff to identify quickly variations in individual student’s progress, behaviour or approach to learning. Form teachers play a key role in responding to these changes and provide excellent advice and guidance to their charges. Great care is taken at transition stages to ensure students confidently take the direction that is right for them. Significant and high-quality provision is made for students whose circumstances make them potentially more vulnerable, so that they can integrate effectively into school life, enjoy success with their peers and benefit from everything the school has to offer.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

This school has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Members of the governing body and senior leaders set high standards for all staff: they continuously monitor school performance and are able to identify areas for improvement quickly. The school has a well organised and effective programme for continued professional development. Whole-school issues, assessment for example, are continuing to improve the quality of teaching. Personalised development programmes to help staff contribute more effectively, or progress through leadership strands, are well regarded by staff. Other adults, teaching assistants for example, are well trained to meet the needs of their students. Many improvements are embedded and are supporting students’ personal and academic development well

The governing body is experienced and shares the same passion as school leaders to provide an even better education. It provides excellent support and challenge to the headteacher and ensure all statutory duties are met. Target-setting is realistic but challenging and the impact can be seen in students’ consistently good achievement. The school meets statutory child protection and safeguarding requirements well. There is an excellent network of agencies that work in partnership to provide well coordinated care. School staff are trained to give specialist support to meet the particular needs of students. There are also very strong partnerships with a range of schools and colleges to enhance students learning in both vocational and academic programmes. There are also outstanding links with educational establishments across

the world. The school promotes equality of opportunity well and discrimination in all its forms is tackled strongly whenever it occurs. The school is a very cohesive community, values of tolerance and respect run through its core. This is recognised in the school’s application for the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), Rights Respecting Schools award.

*These are the grades for the leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Sixth form

Students make good progress and achieve well. At AS level there has been improvement over last two years. At A2 level, the proportion of students attaining high grades is increasing. Progress in all lessons seen during the inspection was at least good. Lessons are well planned, challenging and enjoyable. Improved care, guidance and support systems have resulted in fewer students not completing a course. Attendance and punctuality are also improving as a result of more careful monitoring. The range of courses available is extensive. Students make the most of an excellent range of enrichment opportunities. These include the debating society, young engineers and the European Youth Parliament. Good levels of leadership exist throughout the sixth form including that of form teachers.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth Form</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

## Views of parents and carers

Those parents and carers who returned survey forms, and those interviewed, agreed this is a good school and they are happy with their children’s experience. They recognise it as a safe school. The inspection team investigated concerns raised by a small minority of those parents and carers who returned inspection questionnaires. Inspectors have made a recommendation to the school about communications. Inspectors spent some time investigating student behaviour in many contexts and judged it to be good.



## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Upton-by-Chester 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 278 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,662 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	82	29	173	62	17	6	4	1
The school keeps my child safe	89	32	173	62	8	3	1	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	50	18	162	58	44	16	11	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	64	23	167	60	29	10	8	3
The teaching is good at this school	51	18	180	65	25	9	5	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	40	14	148	53	59	21	9	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	43	15	169	61	42	15	6	2
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)	60	22	160	58	19	7	8	3
The school meets my child's particular needs	52	19	177	64	30	11	7	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	54	19	145	52	44	16	13	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	36	13	156	56	45	16	12	4
The school is led and managed effectively	59	21	163	59	25	9	8	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	71	26	168	60	21	8	11	4

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



9 November 2011

Dear Students

### **Inspection of Upton-by-Chester High School, Chester CH2 1NN**

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team to your school and working with us. We thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to talk with you about your work and to listen to your views. We judge that Upton-by-Chester High School is a good school. We appreciated your courteous manner in dealing with fellow students and adults and we recognised the positive relationships you have with your teachers. You are all great ambassadors for your school. There are many things we like about your school and these are the highlights.

- The good progress you make during lessons, and for some groups, the excellent progress.
- The excellent care, guidance and support available to you and your excellent attendance records.
- Your exceptional spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which has been justly recognised with so many awards for the school.
- The extensive range of partnerships the school has to support you personal and academic development.

There are certain things we have asked the senior leaders to do in order to improve your school even further. They are first, to further raise your levels of progress by improving teaching so that lesson planning provide tasks which are matched more specifically to your needs, and by providing more opportunities for collaborative and independent working. Second, a small number of your parents and carers felt that home/school communications could be improved and we have asked the school to review this matter.

The inspection team hope you are pleased with the things we have said about your school and that you are proud of what has been achieved by you and your school over recent years. You will see that there are still some important things to do in order to make further improvements. If you all continue to work together this should be achievable

Yours sincerely,

Neil MacKenzie  
Lead Inspector

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