

Holden Lane High School Specialist Sports College

Inspection report

Unique reference number	124385
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	393525
Inspection dates	20–21 June 2012
Lead inspector	Trevor Riddiough HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection 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	914
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Hollins
Headteacher	John Patino
Date of previous school inspection	23 May 2011
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Pankaj Gulab
Kathleen Harris
Stephen Wall

Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 31 lessons taught by 31 teachers, of which two were joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors made short visits to other lessons. Inspectors met with senior leaders, groups of students, staff, members of the interim executive board, the shadow governing body, and a representative of the local authority. They observed the school's work, and scrutinised students' work and records of students' attendance, behaviour, exclusions, results of parents' and carers' questionnaires conducted by the school and monitoring information on the quality of teaching.

Information about the school

This school is an average-sized comprehensive school serving the north area of Stoke-on-Trent. There are more boys than girls. Most students are from White British backgrounds, and the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is low. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs (including those supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs) is broadly average. The school is a designated specialist sports college. It holds a number of awards including Healthy Schools status, the Artsmark Silver, the Inclusion Quality Mark and the Leading Parent Partnership Award. The school meets current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

At the time of the previous inspection in May 2011, the school was judged to require special measures. Inspectors have monitored its progress at regular intervals since that time. The school has undergone significant change to its staffing and management structures. Since the inspection in May 2011 a new headteacher took up post. There have also been a number of changes in teaching staff and to those in leadership positions. The school is now fully staffed with qualified teachers. An interim executive board was appointed in September 2011, replacing the existing governing body. The school has worked in close partnership with a National Leader in Education and the local authority in addressing the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection.

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 of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.
- The school provides its students with a satisfactory quality of education. It is improving securely and quickly because good and effective leadership is providing clear strategic direction and a sustained drive to improve teaching and learning, raise attainment and challenge low expectations of students’ attitudes and capabilities. The school is not yet good overall because teaching is not ensuring that enough students make the good progress of which they are capable, particularly in mathematics. Furthermore, levels of attendance, while rising, are still below average. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Achievement is satisfactory and it is improving quickly and securely across all subjects. Although attainment in mathematics has been lower, the gap with other subjects is closing securely because staffing is now stable and the quality of teaching in mathematics is of much better quality.
- Teaching over time is satisfactory. Leaders have ensured rapid improvement and there is an increasing amount of good teaching. Improved teaching is enhancing students’ attitudes to learning. In some lessons, teaching lacks activities that challenge all students appropriately and questioning sometimes fails to deepen students’ understanding.
- Behaviour is satisfactory as students behave well around the school and are generally sensible and considerate. Students feel safe and well cared for. School leaders support consistent use of the school’s behaviour policy, and this is improving students’ behaviour quickly.
- The recently appointed headteacher swiftly identified strengths and weaknesses in all key aspects of provision and ensured accurate evaluation. With the senior

leadership team he has effectively tackled the key issues raised at the last inspection. Performance management systems are robust and contribute well to raising standards across the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that students' achievement is good or better by:
 - accelerating students' progress in all aspects of mathematics
 - further improving students' literacy skills.
- Improve attendance so that it reaches the national average and reduce the frequency of persistent absenteeism.
- Increase the proportion of good or better teaching by ensuring that:
 - all teachers plan engaging learning activities of appropriate challenge for the range of needs in the class
 - all teachers use high-quality questioning techniques to deepen students' learning
 - good-quality marking and feedback are used consistently across the school.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

The legacy of underachievement in all subjects and especially in mathematics has been addressed by leaders and managers. Expectations have been raised of what students can achieve and this is having a positive impact on achievement. The majority of staff use data effectively to inform their planning so that students are challenged appropriately. The school's tracking system indicates that students' progress has improved and therefore the percentage of students achieving five good GCSEs including English and mathematics is expected to rise significantly in 2012 to at least average levels. The number of qualifications already achieved in English and mathematics and observations in lessons support this view.

Leaders and managers at all levels review the school's tracking data regularly to identify individuals and teaching groups who perform below, at or above expectations. Various interventions are helping students to gain lost ground and reach the challenging targets set by the school. There are good signs of success, especially for the groups of students that the school has targeted, namely those of higher ability, those entitled to free school meals and disabled students and those who have special educational needs. The gaps between the attainment of these groups and the national average are narrowing. Attainment in mathematics has improved to average levels, and the gap with other subjects is closing. The improved progress evident for disabled students and those who have special educational needs is largely due to the improved identification of all students' needs and more targeted support to meet them throughout the school.

Students' reading, writing and communication skills are often weak on starting at the

school and this inhibits students' achievement across the curriculum. The school's leaders are aware of this and have introduced measures to improve levels of literacy and, as a result, achievement is rising in this area. However, this is at an early stage and the impact of this new strategy is patchy.

Parents and carers who responded to the recent school questionnaire indicate that they are happy with the progress their children make in the school. Inspection evidence showed that students make the most progress in lessons that are challenging, interesting and active. For example, in a physical education lesson, students quickly learned the skills of accurate bowling techniques. They were given competitive bowling targets to meet that were time-limited, supported by student coaches who fed back on areas to improve. As a result, students could see and enjoy the progress that they were making. In an English lesson, active group work exercises enabled students to swiftly develop explanations of meanings and link these to the text in *Gulliver's Travels*.

Quality of teaching

The school has had a concerted and sustained focus on developing teaching and learning and, as a result, improvements are beginning to impact positively on the progress students make throughout their time in school. Staffing shortages in some subjects, notably in mathematics, have been overcome; inadequate teaching has been virtually eliminated and teachers have a clear idea about what constitutes good teaching. Responses of students in discussions with inspectors and those of parents and carers to the school's own questionnaire appreciate these improvements, particularly in the teaching of mathematics. This is summed up by one Year 11 student who said, 'Mathematics is like a new department now and we all have our own teacher.'

When teaching is good, lesson planning is sharply focused on learning. In these lessons many opportunities are afforded for group and independent work, which leads to high-quality learning. Students show good attitudes to their work, which is exploited by many teachers who employ more dynamic and creative approaches in the classroom. In a religious education lesson, video clips, factoids and practical group work were all used effectively to develop students' own arguments for the existence of God. In an English lesson, students were involved in highly independent group work activities such that the teacher commented, 'I feel redundant; the students are learning without me.' High-quality questioning is used to develop students learning further. In one lesson, a teacher used a 'no hands up approach' to questioning. In another, the teacher challenged the class to give an 'outstanding answer'. Teachers develop good relationships with disabled students and those who have special educational needs, which build their confidence and encourage them to participate.

However, these positive features are not yet universal. In less successful lessons, activities are always not suited to individual students' needs or interests. Questioning is not used effectively to elicit and deepen students' understanding. In these lessons, students sometimes become passive and disengage from the lesson. Marking is generally helpful in supporting learning but inconsistencies both within subject areas

and across the school result in students not always knowing what they need to do to improve their work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

A number of questionnaires have been instigated by the school together with student, teacher and parent interviews to gauge perceptions on behaviour. All parties have stated that behaviour has improved significantly and that students feel safe. Student behaviour observed in classrooms is positive with individuals responding to expectations conveyed by teachers. Outside the classroom during lesson changeovers and break-times, behaviour is orderly and sensitive to the needs of others. Students are courteous and polite when they interact with visitors and adults around the school as well as their peers. The school has taken steps to ensure students are aware of the inappropriateness of different forms of bullying and prejudice. The school has also taken care to alert students about the dangers of extremism which has raised awareness of students to the risk of developing prejudicial opinion and given them an understanding of extremism.

There has been a focus on developing positive behaviour for learning. Students have risen to this challenge and appreciate the improved environment for learning that has been created. The 'respect and pride' agenda is promoted in all aspects of the school's work and is evident across the school. Behaviour is effectively monitored and is constructively managed to ensure students' needs are catered for and expectations are reinforced appropriately in school and at home. The proportion of exclusions has risen very slightly in the current year but this reflects the more consistent application of the school behaviour policy and a clear raising of expectations. School records show that incidents of bullying have reduced significantly and are now rare. Students report that where they do occur, they are dealt with swiftly and effectively through the school's newly formed pastoral system.

The management of attendance has recently been tightened and structured so that it is appropriately and robustly promoted. As a result attendance has improved, but not yet enough to bring attendance to average levels. Levels of persistent absenteeism have remained at above average levels. The school has taken steps to significantly reduce the percentage of students who are late in the morning. Through a supportive 'meet and greet' and patrol system in the morning with follow-up of persistent latecomers and appropriate sanctions, there has been a significant and ongoing improvement in punctuality.

Leadership and management

The school is improving securely and rapidly because leaders and managers at all levels are driving the school purposefully forward. Leaders and managers evaluate the effectiveness of the school accurately and use the outcomes astutely to provide a sharp and effective focus on tackling identified weaknesses. Expectations and ambition are high. Consequently, students' achievement is rising securely and students demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and school life in general. The roles and responsibilities of senior and middle managers have been clearly defined so that all leaders and managers know exactly what is required of them and are

confident in carrying out their responsibilities. Leaders and managers at all levels are working strongly and effectively as a strong team in pursuit of improvement. Staff and students report that the school is now 'a tightly run ship'. The speed of developments over the past year demonstrates a good capacity for further sustained improvement.

The quality of teaching and learning is improving rapidly and securely because monitoring is now regular and rigorous. Weaker teaching has been tackled vigorously and effectively. The outcomes of accurate evaluation are used effectively to set targets for improvement in performance management and to target professional development with a sharp focus. Previous identified weaknesses in the care, guidance and support provided for students have been successfully tackled. The recently established pastoral system is having a strong impact on improving students' behaviour and positive attitudes to learning.

The curriculum is satisfactory and improving. It prepares students adequately for the next stages of their lives. A full review of the curriculum has been undertaken and planning is at an advanced stage to make sure the curriculum is more closely matched to the needs and abilities of different groups of students. The school provides a wide range of enrichment activities, especially in the specialist sports subjects.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has improved significantly and is now good. The programme for teaching personal, social and health education has been rationalised and its delivery and impact are monitored rigorously. Initiatives such as the 'Worldwide Learner' programme are popular with students and play a significant part in broadening students' horizons and in developing their appreciation of other cultures and diversity. Effective promotion of equality and tackling of discrimination are seen in the equality of respect and consideration students now show to each other in and around their school.

Effective arrangements are in place to ensure a smooth future transition from the interim executive board arrangements to a new governing body. The interim executive board is highly effective in the way it holds leaders to account. The board undertake their statutory responsibilities well: procedures for the safeguarding of students are secure and the school's approach meets statutory requirements.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



22 June 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Holden Lane High School Specialist Sports College, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 6LG

I would like to thank you for welcoming us to your school when we inspected it recently. A special thank you goes to those of you who completed the school questionnaires and who we interviewed. The feedback you provided strongly informed our judgements.

Congratulations! Your school is no longer subject to special measures because it is providing you with an acceptable and improving quality of education. You have worked hard to take part in the improvements which the school has made and you should take pride in your accomplishments. You also have your headteacher to thank and his team of leaders and teachers who have also made strenuous efforts to improve. Achievement is now satisfactory and it is improving quickly because you are learning a lot more in lessons. This is because you are experiencing better teaching, especially in mathematics. We also note a number of other improvements including your behaviour and attitudes in class, and your punctuality. You also told us that you feel safe in school and that you really appreciate the support that you receive from your form tutors and newly-appointed heads of year. As a result, we notice that you become more involved in your lessons and enjoy them more.

We have asked the school to improve some areas of its work. These are to:

- raise achievement further, particularly in mathematics, so GCSE results continue to improve
- provide more good or better teaching by matching tasks to your interests and abilities so that you are challenged effectively in all your lessons
- provide you all with good-quality marking and feedback so that you can improve your work
- further improve your literacy skills
- improve your attendance.

You have a part to play and you can help your school by ensuring that you follow up the comments and suggestions that your teachers make to help you to improve your work and that you all attend well. I wish you all success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Trevor Riddiough
Her Majesty's Inspector

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