



Harper Green School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105257
LEA Bolton
Inspection number 277326
Inspection dates 22 March 2006 to 23 March 2006
Reporting inspector Ms Julie Price Grimshaw HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Harper Green Road
School category	Community		Farnworth
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Bolton, Lancashire BL4 0DH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01204 572941
Number on roll	1480	Fax number	01204 793031
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr R Gorner
Date of previous inspection	20 January 2003	Headteacher	Mr Peter Jefferies

Age group 11 to 16	Inspection dates 22 March 2006 - 23 March 2006	Inspection number 277326
------------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Harper Green School is a larger than average mixed comprehensive school with 1,480 pupils on roll. Many pupils come from areas of high economic and social need. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above the national average. The school's population is largely white British with a small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school was awarded specialist arts college status in 2003.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Harper Green School is a good school; overall, the school's evaluation of its work shows a clear awareness of strengths and areas for future development. Pupils make good progress during their time at the school, and over recent years there has been an increase in the percentage of pupils achieving five or more higher grades at general certificate of secondary education (GCSE). Most of the teaching is of good quality, and there are a few examples of outstanding practice; however, in a small minority of lessons the teaching is unsatisfactory. Pupils' behaviour, both in lessons and around the school, is a major strength. The school provides a safe and pleasant learning environment, and buildings are maintained to a very high standard. The school cares for its pupils well, and good support is provided for those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Systems to monitor the progress of individual pupils are established within subject departments; however, practice in this area is inconsistent, and consequently too many pupils are not fully aware of their targets, or of what they need to do in order to improve.

The school provides a good range of curriculum activities, well suited to the needs of all learners. Leadership and management across the school are good; pupils are fully aware of the school's high expectations, and behaviour management systems are very effective. The quality of teaching and learning is monitored routinely; procedures are currently being developed in order to increase the rigour and accuracy of such evaluation.

Overall, specialist college status has had a positive impact on the work of the school, especially through successful community projects such as the Farnworth Arts Festival and the 'Creative Crew', a weekly group run for parents by arts teachers at the school.

Steps have been taken to act upon issues raised at the last inspection and bring about improvement. The school provides good value for money and clearly demonstrates the capacity to make the necessary further improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop and refine whole school systems for ensuring that all pupils are aware of their targets and how to achieve them.
- Implement effective strategies to ensure that all teaching is of at least good quality.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students arrive at the school with academic standards that are below average. From this starting point they make good progress and in the 2005 national tests for year 9, results were broadly in line with the national average. In 2004, Key Stage 3 test results dipped in English and remained broadly static in science. English results did improve in 2005, but science results did not. Consequently, at Key Stage 3, students did less

well in science than in English or mathematics. The school has identified this issue and taken appropriate remedial action.

Over recent years there has been an upward trend in the percentage of students gaining five or more grade A*- Cs in GCSE examinations. In 2005 this percentage represented broadly average standards and good achievement. Across Years 7 to 11 the good progress made in lessons shows most students are achieving well, given their standards on entry to the school. Similarly those students with learning difficulties and or disabilities do well. Most students are studying for nine GCSEs; however, a higher than average proportion, especially girls, do take more.

The school recognises that whilst it has previously made a considerable effort in supporting students at risk of not obtaining grade C at GCSE, this has meant less support for the more able. Consequently, students now are more closely monitored, and those at risk of underachievement, at all levels, are supported with the aim of reaching their potential.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school accurately judges personal development and well-being as good.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. Well planned assemblies provide opportunity for reflection. A good range of visits and trips at home and abroad, enriches their cultural awareness.

Most pupils enjoy coming to school and attend regularly. However, too many families take term time holidays, despite the school's efforts to counter this; as a result, attendance is just below the national average. Learners' behaviour is outstanding; almost all pupils act sensibly and courteously to each other and to staff. Pupils feel safe in school and are confident in the school's ability to deal with the rare occurrences of bullying.

Pupils play an active part in the school community and are given opportunities to take positions of responsibility, such as becoming prefects. Regular meetings of the school council are effective in allowing the pupils' voice to be heard.

Healthy lifestyles are encouraged through good provision for sport during and after the school day. Pupils are allowed to drink water during lessons; the school is doing a good job in offering healthy food options and is keen to develop this further.

Pupils receive good preparation for their future economic well-being through work experience and careers lessons and guidance.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall, with some outstanding practice and a little that is inadequate. In the great majority of lessons, teachers display consistently good skills in classroom management and so create an environment in which effective learning takes place. The school ensures that all its teachers, particularly temporary teachers, are well supported in maintaining this high standard. Pupils behave outstandingly well, except on those occasions when teaching is inadequate, and are very ready to co-operate with teachers and each other.

In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations, a good knowledge of the subject, and work with energy and enthusiasm. They question pupils effectively and so draw pupils into the work. The work set is relevant to pupils' needs and abilities and enables them to make progress. In these lessons pupils are given ample opportunities to speak and debate at length and so develop their skills in communication. In contrast, in the less effective lessons, the teacher talks too much and pupils are required to be passive. The majority of teachers share lesson objectives with pupils, refer to them as the lesson progresses and so ensure that pupils know what is expected of them.

In the less effective lessons, the work does not challenge pupils enough to enable them to make progress, the pace is too slow and pupils behave inappropriately, sometimes arguing amongst themselves.

Teachers' assessment of pupils' work is mostly accurate and, in the best cases, the feedback given provides very clear guidance on what learners need to do to improve. However, not all marking does enough to improve standards of literacy. The amount of work set that requires pupils to read and investigate independently is less than might be expected. Though teachers have access to information and communication technology (ICT) facilities, such as interactive whiteboards, they do not always exploit their potential as teaching aids.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that the curriculum is good. As a specialist arts college the school provides a balanced curriculum, but places an emphasis on performing arts, by ensuring that all pupils study art, music, dance and drama at Key Stage 3 and by requiring all pupils in Years 10 and 11 to study at least one of these subjects.

The curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is designed to meet individual needs and interests and offers a good range of vocational courses. However, the school acknowledges the need to extend this provision, particularly for those pupils who are less motivated by more traditional courses, and plans to do so through further collaboration with local schools and colleges.

A well structured PSHE and citizenship programme effectively promotes personal development. The curriculum for older pupils, supported by activities, such as enterprise days and Aim Higher events, ensures that pupils and their parents are well informed of future study and career pathways.

The school is justifiably proud of its very good range of extra-curricular activities that enrich and extend learning. A recent pupil survey confirmed that many pupils enjoy participating in these on a regular basis.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support, judged outstanding by the school, are good.

Procedures for child protection are comprehensive and known by all staff. Health and safety procedures, including risk assessments, receive careful attention. The buildings are well cared for. The school liaises effectively with outside agencies to support its vulnerable pupils and those identified as being at risk. As a result, the school is a safe and orderly place in which to work.

Effective transition arrangements enable Year 7 pupils to settle in quickly. Pupils in Year 11 are happy with the good quality support and guidance they receive in making their choices for life after school.

The school has established procedures for tracking pupils' achievement as they move through the school and offers support in the form of extra classes, for example, to those who are identified as underachieving. There is a lack of coherence across subjects in these procedures, however, which is leading to surprisingly high numbers of pupils being unclear about their targets and how to achieve them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The quality of leadership and management is good at all levels. The senior management team share a corporate vision for the future of the school, and in recent years there has been increased emphasis on the role of middle managers. School managers know pupils very well and rightly insist that they live up to clearly stated high expectations. Members of the governing body show high levels of commitment to the school and carry out their statutory responsibilities effectively. In meetings, they assist school leaders by exploring issues in detail, and are involved in the selection of new staff.

Overall, the quality of the school's self evaluation is good, and this aspect of the school's work is currently being developed further with the aim of providing a sharper focus for school improvement. The school gathers the views of pupils on a regular basis through surveys conducted by external agencies, and this information is used to bring about improvements. The quality of teaching and learning is monitored across the school, but current procedures focus largely on work within subject departments, and a coherent whole-school system for evaluating and improving teaching is presently in the early stages of development. Although self-evaluation work has centred largely

upon practice within the school, senior managers are now keen to draw upon the expertise of external agencies and staff within other schools in their quest to improve the quality of provision.

Resources are well deployed; some subject departments are particularly well-resourced in terms of ICT equipment. The school provides good value for money and demonstrates the capacity to make the necessary improvements.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	3	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Following our visit to your school we would like to thank you for making us feel welcome and for sharing your views with us. We would like to tell you what we found out about your school.

We think that Harper Green is a good school. We believe that the staff care about your personal development and are committed to supporting you during your time at school. There is a good range of subjects and courses, and this means that each one of you has the opportunity to follow a programme of study that suits you. We were pleased with the work of the school as a specialist arts college; it was good to see so many of you enjoying your work in performing arts, both in the classroom and as part of the many extra-curricular activities that the school offers.

One of the things that impressed us the most was your behaviour; we visited a very wide range of lessons, and in almost all cases you behaved superbly! You also behaved well around the school at break times and during lunch. We particularly liked the way that so many of you listened carefully to each other during discussions.

Most of the teaching at your school is good, and some is excellent. In a small number of lessons, not enough learning took place and a few of you didn't behave as well as usual. You told us that the lessons you like the best are those where you are encouraged to be actively involved. We have asked the staff to think about how they can make further improvements so that all lessons are at least good.

Most of you make good progress during your time at Harper Green. We know that the staff monitor your progress and set targets for you - but we were surprised that some of you weren't fully aware of your targets and were not sure about what you needed to do to improve. We've asked the staff to think about how the system can be improved further, so that each one of you knows exactly what you need to do to achieve the best results you can in every subject.

Mr Jefferies and all the staff work hard to help you get the very best from your time at Harper Green. We were pleased that so many of you were happy to be at the school, and hope that you will work even harder in order to achieve your full potential.