



# Urmston Grammar School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 106369  
**LEA** Trafford  
**Inspection number** 277543  
**Inspection dates** 1 February 2006 to 2 February 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Ms Julie Price Grimshaw HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Newton Road
<b>School category</b>	Foundation		Urmston
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18		Manchester, Lancashire M41 5UG
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 748 2875
<b>Number on roll</b>	889	<b>Fax number</b>	0161 747 2504
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr E May
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	8 January 2001	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr M Spinks

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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Urmston Grammar School is an average sized mixed grammar school; there are 889 pupils on roll aged 11-18. The number of pupils claiming free school meals is well below the national average. The school's population is largely white British, with a small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are very few pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school was awarded specialist science college status in 2004.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 1**

Urmston Grammar School is an outstanding school; overall, the school's evaluation of its work shows an accurate awareness of strengths and areas for future development. Pupils progress very well during their time at school and standards are extremely high. Major strengths of the school include the pupils' excellent attitude and behaviour. There is a strong emphasis on pupils' personal development throughout the school, and all are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles. They are also committed to making a positive contribution to the wider community; for example, through a range of charity fundraising activities. Pupils are proud of the school and appreciate the opportunities presented to them.

The majority of teaching is of good quality, with some excellent practice. Although a significant number of outstandingly able pupils have been identified, such pupils are not always sufficiently challenged during lessons. Overall, the curriculum is well matched to the needs of pupils, and several recently introduced courses have enhanced provision. The school provides a safe and supportive environment for all learners, and this is reflected in the high levels of achievement, coupled with the fact that the great majority of 16 year olds choose to stay at the school to study in the sixth form.

The school is well led and managed, with some outstanding work carried out by middle and senior managers. Resources are deployed appropriately and the school provides very good value for money. The school has benefited greatly from its work as a specialist science college, and clearly demonstrates the capacity to make further improvements.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

The quality of the school sixth form is good. The school has an accurate view of the quality of provision, which is good overall. Achievement is good: standards are above average and students make good progress. The majority of students attended the lower school, but an increasing number, around 35% this year, join the sixth form from other schools. The student prefects are a strength of the sixth form; they organise many excellent charitable events involving younger students. All students enjoy their work and feel that their views are considered. Students believe that their chosen courses offer challenge; they receive good support and have a good dialogue with their teachers. Very good management of the sixth form has led to strengthened tutorial provision and, recently, closer monitoring of students' progress and targets.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that all of the most able pupils are sufficiently challenged in such a way as to enable them to fulfil their potential.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 2**

In the main school, achievement is outstanding and standards are well above average. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with above average standards. They make very good progress over five years, leading to General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) results which are well above average. In 2005, 96% of pupils obtained at least five GCSE passes at grades A\* to C, with a high proportion achieving A\* and A grades; this represents excellent achievement. There have been improvements in Year 9 national test results in English, mathematics and science, where results are well above average when compared nationally and above average when compared with similar schools. Pupils of differing abilities and backgrounds, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achieve well.

Inspectors and the school agree that in the sixth form achievement is good. Results fluctuate from year to year, but in 2004, 11 of the 15 subjects offered at A level had a 100% pass rate and results overall were above the national average. The progress that students make compared to their attainment at GCSE is good. Although national comparisons for 2005 are not yet available, overall results indicate good attainment with almost every subject achieving a 100% pass rate and a high proportion of students receiving A and B grades. In the last two years, students have achieved consistently well in art and design, business studies and German.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Inspectors agree with the schools' evaluation that this aspect of the school is outstanding. Pupils and students enjoy coming to school, and attendance and punctuality are excellent. They feel safe around the school. Behaviour, both in and out of lessons, is outstanding, and pupils have very positive attitudes. Movement between lessons, at breaks and at lunchtimes, is very sensible and orderly. Parents value highly the education the school provides.

The school council provides many opportunities for pupils and students to discuss issues which directly concern them. They have recently been successful in promoting healthy eating, and appropriate changes are being made to the choices offered by the school canteen. Pupils are very aware of issues related to healthy lifestyles; many participate in extra curricular sports activities and make good use of the new fitness suite.

There is a very effective buddy system provided by Year 9 pupils for new Year 7 pupils, which provides excellent support for those making the transition from primary school. In addition, many new Year 7 pupils benefit from a residential course in the Lake District organised by the school in September each year. All pupils and students are very committed to organising and participating in fundraising events that benefit the community; for example, the school has raised money for the 'Little Heart Matters'

charity which supports young children living in the Manchester area who suffer from heart and lung problems.

A comprehensive personal, social and health programme together with a very rich programme of out of school activities, underpins the pupils' good moral, social, spiritual and cultural development.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. None of the teaching observed was less than satisfactory and some excellent classroom practice was seen during the inspection. When the teaching is outstanding, teachers have an excellent knowledge of the subject, the requirements of the courses they are teaching and how they are assessed. This inspires confidence in pupils, who know what is expected of them and what they must do in order to achieve high standards. The most effective lessons are well planned and move along at a good pace; learning outcomes are shared with pupils and there is a clear sense of purpose. In lessons, pupils behave very well, have exemplary attitudes and make an excellent contribution to their own learning. Pupils are at their best when the work is varied and allows them to be active participants in the lesson. Whilst in the most effective lessons the challenge of the work is closely matched to pupils' prior attainment, in the less effective ones too little attention is given to this. In particular, a number of outstandingly able pupils are not being sufficiently challenged, especially in mixed ability classes. In a minority of lessons teachers adopt a lecturing style of teaching and provide too few opportunities for pupils to discuss and assimilate new ideas. Marking and assessment are of a high quality and give pupils clear guidance on what they need to do if they are to improve.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum in Years 7 to 11 and in the sixth form is outstanding. In Years 7 to 9 the school offers a broad and balanced curriculum. In Years 10 and 11 pupils follow a core curriculum plus optional subjects. Recently the options have been expanded to include more practical subjects, and pupils appreciate the range of choice available to them. In some subjects the school provides additional challenges for the most able pupils, for example, by giving them the opportunity to take statistics as an additional subject, and to take three separate sciences rather than the combined science course. Whilst a full and coherent programme of citizenship is taught in Years 7 to 9, the provision in Years 10 and 11 is not yet similarly consistent. A particularly wide and relevant range of courses is available to pupils in the sixth form, including some recently introduced science based subjects.

A wide range of extra curricular activities is enjoyed by many pupils, and amply enriches the curriculum. The 'Caf, Scientifique', organised by the pupils themselves, provides

a stimulating environment in which pupils can explore topical and unusual scientific themes.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Regular monitoring of pupils' progress in Years 7 to 11 helps the school to identify and address weaknesses effectively. In the sixth form, the school makes good use of data to provide targeted support to those students who have joined from the main school, but at present does not act sufficiently early in analysing external students' data. Although the quality of reports issued to parents of pupils in Years 7-9 is good overall, these do not currently show any National Curriculum levels or teacher target grades.

Both parents and learners value the very caring ethos of the school. Well established procedures for child protection are in place. Provision for careers guidance is very good, with a careers week each year and a careers convention every two years. The school is well aware of the choices available to their pupils and students other than the routes to higher education, and these are shared with students and their parents. The school is outstanding in the care taken to integrate Year 6 pupils from over 30 primary schools. There is justifiable pride

in the high quality personal support and guidance that pupils receive. A trained counsellor provides valued support to the individual pupils who need it.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

Leadership and management are outstanding. The school identifies clear and highly appropriate aims, designed to sustain a culture of high achievement. Particular strengths of the leadership and management include the innovative and dynamic work of the science college director and the vision and commitment of the acting head of sixth form. In addition, middle managers who work as part of the academic board make an invaluable contribution to the development of the school through their enthusiasm and dedication.

Senior staff monitor the work of teachers through a formal performance management process, which is securely linked to a programme of professional development. As a consequence of this process, school managers have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school's provision. In addition, a highly competent advanced skills teacher runs a programme of informal peer observation, designed to support teachers in improving the quality of their work; evidence shows that this scheme is beginning to have a positive impact.

Members of the governing body show very high levels of commitment to the school. In meetings, they assist school leaders by exploring all issues in much detail, and ensure that any actions taken will benefit learners.

Specialist science college status has had a very positive impact on the work of the school across all subject areas. A number of events organised by the science college have been highly successful in engaging learners, and additional funding has enabled the school to refurbish and resource several areas.



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## Inspection judgements

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

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	1	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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, please accept our thanks for making us feel so welcome and for sharing your views with us. We would like to tell you what we found out about your school.

We think that Urmston Grammar is an outstanding school. You told us that some of the teaching is excellent, and we agree; your favourite lessons are those that include a variety of practical activities and those where you are invited to take an active part. Like you, we believe that most lessons are good, and that none of the teaching is unsatisfactory.

You are obviously very aware of the importance of healthy living, and we know that you are encouraged to eat healthily and take regular exercise. We are pleased that you feel safe around school, and that you appreciate the care provided by the staff. We were delighted with your positive attitudes towards learning, and you certainly deserve to be congratulated on your excellent behaviour, both in lessons and around the school in general. We were also impressed with your commitment to charity work and fundraising.

You told us that you are very pleased with the facilities at the school, for example, the new fitness suite. It was really good to hear that so many of you are involved in extra-curricular activities, and most of you felt that with such a wide range of opportunities, there is something for everyone to enjoy.

Standards at Urmston Grammar are very high - well above the national average. You obviously work hard to achieve good results. We have asked the staff to think about how they can make further improvements to the teaching so that every one of you is supported as much as possible in reaching your full potential.

We are delighted that you are proud of your school. You obviously appreciate the wide range of opportunities offered to you; some of you told us that this school is 'as good as it gets'!

We hope that you will continue to work as hard as you do, and wish you well for your future.