



# Culcheth High School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 111430  
**LEA** Warrington  
**Inspection number** 278692  
**Inspection dates** 22 March 2006 to 23 March 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr Aelwyn Pugh HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Withington Avenue
<b>School category</b>	Community		Culcheth
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18		Warrington, Cheshire WA3 4JQ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01925 762 136
<b>Number on roll</b>	1225	<b>Fax number</b>	01925 766 373
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mrs Julie Berry
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	19 January 1998	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Martyn Froggett

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 18	<b>Inspection dates</b> 22 March 2006 - 23 March 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 278692
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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Culcheth is a community high school, in a village near Warrington. It has 1,225 learners, 153 of them in the sixth form. Virtually all the students have English as their first language and come from white British backgrounds. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly above average but there is a lower than average number with a statement of special needs. Attendance is above average and the number of unauthorised absences is low. On entry to the school, pupils' attainment is above average.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

Culcheth High judges itself to be a satisfactory school. The results of this inspection confirm that judgement.

At the time of the last inspection, the school was underachieving. Following that, it went through a period of instability in management and staffing which slowed the rate of progress. Over the last eighteen months, however, the school has moved forward with far greater urgency.

Results at Key Stage 3 are above average and better in mathematics and science than in English. General certificate of secondary education (GCSE) results are well above average. Pupils' progress overall is satisfactory but slower at Key Stage 3 than Key Stage 4. Teaching is satisfactory. Pupils' personal development and the care and support provided for them are good and the contribution which learners make to the community is outstanding. The school has a strong tradition of achievement in sport and the arts.

Since the last inspection, improvements have been made in identifying and providing for gifted and talented pupils. The proportion of pupils gaining higher grades at GCSE has increased. The school has extended the range of the curriculum to include more vocational opportunities for pupils. Behaviour management has also improved. Recently introduced monitoring and review systems have enabled the school to gain an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses and to develop well-focused plans for improvement. Leadership and management overall are satisfactory. However, in his short time at the school, the headteacher has provided strong leadership and the capacity for further improvement in the school is good.

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

### **Grade: 3**

This is an effective and improving sixth form. Students speak highly of the support and guidance they receive when they are considering university entrance or when they are applying for employment. Academic progress is tracked in detail and students are fully aware of their targets. The impressive enrichment programme is a strong feature of the curriculum and students have many responsibilities outside their formal lessons and do much to support younger pupils. They also visit primary schools and local community groups to share their expertise in French and information and communication technology (ICT), for example. Standards and achievement are satisfactory and A-level results have improved each year since the previous inspection. The school recognises, however, that the proportion of students attaining the higher grades of A and B are below that found nationally. Teaching is satisfactory and there are examples of good and outstanding practice. Teachers have secure knowledge of their subjects. There is a good range of academic courses and the school is now introducing more applied and vocational programmes in order to meet the needs and aspirations of its students more closely. Leadership and management are satisfactory and the head of sixth form sets clear direction for improvement in provision.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in English at Key Stage 3.
- Improve standards and achievement in the sixth form, particularly amongst more able pupils.
- Extend the sixth form curriculum to include more vocational opportunities.
- Improve the consistency of monitoring across departments.
- Ensure that the policy for assessment for learning is implemented consistently across all departments.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

The school accurately judges achievement and standards to be satisfactory. Pupils enter the school with above average levels of attainment. The progress which they make in core subjects during Key Stage 3 is slow but accelerates at Key Stage 4 so that it is satisfactory overall. The rate of progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to that of other pupils and there is little difference between the progress of boys and girls.

Over the last five years, standards at Key Stage 3 have been significantly above average, except for English in 2005 which was just above average. In 2005, the proportion gaining higher grades in national tests was above average in all three subjects; significantly so in mathematics and science.

At Key Stage 4, standards and achievement are good. For the last two years, the percentage of pupils gaining five or more grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, has been well above average. The same is true of the proportion gaining five or more A\* to G grades.

Standards and progress in the sixth form are satisfactory. The overall pass rate of students has risen since 2003 but the proportion gaining A/B grades is lower than that found nationally.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Most pupils show interest in their lessons and enjoy their education. As a result, attendance is good. Sixth form students speak enthusiastically about their learning and the opportunities to develop social skills. Pupils throughout the school behave well and act responsibly. Relationships among learners from all social and ethnic backgrounds are good. Pupils from Key Stage 4 and the sixth form support younger pupils who encounter personal difficulties. The pupils' willingness to take responsibility is impressive. There are many examples of pupils' ideas improving school procedures.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good overall with strengths in social and cultural development. Whilst spiritual development is satisfactory, the school is continuing to develop this area of provision. Pupils have a

good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy through diet and regular exercise. This has led to the achievement of the Healthy Schools Award. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the community. For example, the swing band plays at local events and pupils from Year 11 have won local and national awards for the refurbishment of a communal room in a local hospital. Pupils are prepared well for their future economic well-being.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with some good and outstanding features. Harmonious relationships among pupils and between pupils and teachers are strong features of lessons. As one pupil commented, 'Our teachers really care for us'. In the best lessons, teachers have the highest expectations of what their pupils can achieve and skilled questioning encourages them to think deeply about the subject matter. In an outstanding Year 9 history lesson on the rise of Hitler, for example, pupils were fully engaged and demonstrated perceptive levels of understanding of Germany between the wars. Similarly, Year 10 pupils, considering the poem 'Nothing's Changed', demonstrated high levels of industry and were able to make perceptive comments on the nature of apartheid in South Africa. However, the school recognises that, in some lessons, pace slows, challenge is not realistic and activities are too teacher-directed. In these sessions, there are often too few opportunities for pupils to develop their thinking further.

Most pupils are aware of their individual targets. However, marking and assessment are inconsistent. They range from regular and detailed comment to brief remarks which are not linked to how improvements might be made.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The school's curriculum is satisfactory. In years 7 to 11, it is broad and balanced, meets statutory requirements and makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development and education for citizenship. The school is currently conducting an extensive review of the curriculum, in order to ensure greater flexibility in Key Stage 4 and to provide a wider range of vocational courses. Work-related learning is satisfactory. It includes enterprise activities and the development of education and business partnerships. There are effective curriculum support arrangements for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The sixth form curriculum offers a good range of academic courses but provision for religious education is limited. Plans are in place to develop more vocational courses. The enrichment opportunities for sixth formers are very good.

Throughout the school, pupils are offered a wide range of extracurricular activities, particularly in sport and the arts.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The school cares for its pupils well. Child protection procedures are in place and good attention is paid to health and safety procedures and risk assessments. Pupils interviewed said that they felt safe and could turn to an adult in confidence for help and support. The school takes instances of bullying seriously and takes action when it is reported. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for those in public care is good. The school is committed to providing equally for the well-being of all its pupils. Pupils care for each other. This is seen in the way older pupils support younger ones. This helps new entrants to the school to settle down quickly. Pupils receive good guidance when choosing options and making career choices. There are many examples where teachers track pupils' academic progress effectively. However, this is not consistent across the school.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Inspectors agree that the school's leadership and management are satisfactory. They consider the leadership of the new headteacher to be good. He has an ambitious vision for the development of the school which has been communicated effectively to staff, pupils and governing body. Under his direction, senior managers have produced an accurate analysis of the school's strengths and weaknesses which has drawn on a range of evidence, including the views of pupils, parents and the community.

Since the restructuring of the senior management team, the rate of progress has accelerated. Expectations of staff and pupils have been raised and better monitoring systems have been put in place. These initiatives have led to definite improvements in pupils' behaviour and personal development, both of which are now good. There have also been improvements in standards and in the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. However, these developments have been variable because of a lack of consistency in the quality of planning and monitoring amongst middle managers.

Resources are allocated carefully. Governors discharge their responsibilities well. The financial position is sound and the school gives satisfactory value for money. There is a need for further investment in some areas to improve the provision for pupils. The senior management and governors recognise this and have clear priorities and well-founded plans for further development. This, together with the growing expertise within the staff, indicates that the capacity for improvement is good.

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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>	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
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>	3	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
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	2	

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3	3
<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>	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
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	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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**

Thank you for all your help when we inspected your school on 22 and 23 March. We particularly enjoyed hearing your views and listening to you talk about the work you were doing. Please pass on my thanks to your parents and carers for returning the questionnaires and say we took all their views into account.

I thought you might like to know what our view of your school is.

- Your test and examination results are good in Key Stages 3 and 4. In the sixth form they are satisfactory and improving.
- You do not make the progress you should in the core subjects in Key Stage 3 but you make up for that in Key Stage 4.
- Your behaviour and attendance are good.
- You are very ready to take responsibilities and to offer ideas to help improve the school.
- You make an outstanding contribution to the community and have a long tradition of doing very well in sport and the arts.

Staff work hard and want to make the school even better. To help them I have asked them if they could:

- raise standards and achievement in English at Key Stage 3
- raise standards and achievement in the sixth form, especially amongst the more able pupils
- provide more vocational opportunities in the sixth form
- make monitoring more consistent across all subjects
- make sure that all teachers are consistent in the way that they assess and mark your work.