

Norden High School & Sports College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119717
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	280643
Inspection dates	6–7 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Ruth James HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	699
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Geoff Knowles
Headteacher	Mr Robert Flood
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2000
School address	Stourton Street Rishton Blackburn Lancashire BB1 4ED
Telephone number	01254 885378
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Norden High School and Sports College is a mixed comprehensive for students aged 11 to 16 situated in Rishton near Blackburn. It is smaller than average. The school has had specialist sports status since September 2004. The proportion of students receiving free school meals is above average. A slightly below average proportion of students have additional learning needs, but the number of students with statements of additional learning needs is double the national average. About 12% of students are of minority ethnic background, and these are mainly of Pakistani heritage. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools quality mark for Drugs Awareness and Physical Education. It also holds the National Healthy Schools Standard Award and SportsMark Silver award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for its students. Students are well cared for, and vulnerable students are well supported. The school provides a well ordered, friendly and harmonious environment where incidents of bullying or racism are rare, and any that occur are tackled and resolved quickly.

Specialist sports college status has enabled the school to build a new sports hall, and to develop a wider range of sporting opportunities and more community links. These are promoting enjoyment and healthy lifestyles and helping to develop students' confidence and skills, for example through work with local primary school students.

Students' personal development is good. Although a few parents have concerns about behaviour, inspectors found that students are well behaved in lessons and around school. Students make a positive contribution to the local community. In school they are involved in activities such as reception duties and they undertake various charitable activities. Attendance remains slightly below average despite the efforts of the school to improve it.

Although GCSE examination results are below national averages, most students achieve the standards they are capable of. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE A*–C grades including English and mathematics is close to the national average. Students make particularly good progress in mathematics.

Teaching is satisfactory, although some lessons are good and occasionally outstanding. The school is beginning to develop strategies to improve the quality of learning so that more lessons include more of the good features that already exist. Inconsistencies remain between departments in assessment, marking, and progress monitoring.

The range of subjects and courses is satisfactory. Sports opportunities are good. Although there is a reasonable range of GCSE subjects, there are too few vocational opportunities at Key Stage 4. Advice and guidance on Key Stage 4 and Post 16 choices are good. Students find teachers approachable and helpful. Across different departments the monitoring of individual progress and guidance on how to improve work are inconsistent.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The leadership of the headteacher has provided a clear sense of direction and generated a much greater sense of urgency to bring about improvements. The new school development plan accurately identifies the key challenges for the school. Partnership arrangements are good. The impact of new initiatives is beginning to be seen, for example in the recent reduction in the number of exclusions. The school has satisfactory capacity to improve. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and monitor performance effectively. They have managed recent staffing difficulties and the building of the new sports hall well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching and learning by ensuring that all lessons have the pace and challenge that are already features of the best practice in the school.
- Further develop the curriculum at Key Stage 4 to provide a wider range of accredited vocational courses.
- Ensure that agreed policies for assessing students work and monitoring their progress are applied consistently by all teachers.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. In 2006, the school met its main targets at Key Stage 3, but fell slightly short at Key Stage 4.

Students arrive at the school with slightly below average attainment. They make satisfactory progress during Key Stage 3. In the 2006 statutory assessment tests the proportion of students achieving at least the expected level was around the national average for maths and science, but was lower in English. This was associated with staffing difficulties which have now been resolved.

Data, which takes account of students' prior attainment and contextual factors, shows that students also make satisfactory progress during Key Stage 4. At GCSE the percentage who achieve five or more A*–C grades is slightly below the national average. However, the proportion of students who achieve five or more high grades including English and mathematics is about average. Students do better in science, English language, mathematics, and graphic products than in their other subjects. Students make particularly good progress in mathematics, and almost two thirds of students gained a grade C or above in 2006. The small number of students who take French and Spanish also do well. GCSE results in physical education were satisfactory in 2005, but they were poor in 2006, when more students took the subject. Students do well in sports courses such as 'Living for Sport' and the Junior Sports Leaders award (JSLA). A high proportion of students achieve five or more A*–G grades at GCSE.

Students of Pakistani origin do well at GCSE. Students with additional learning needs make satisfactory progress and achieve results in line with expectations.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Trips and visiting speakers broaden students' cultural awareness and the links with Ghana and the work done on social diversity give them an understanding of multi-cultural issues. Students are involved in the life of the local community through sport and charitable activities and they benefit from extensive opportunities to contribute to the school community through the student council, peer mentoring, as librarians and as receptionists for visitors. Students' behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. They are keen to learn, work well together, and show mutual respect. Very occasional bullying and isolated racial incidents have occurred but students confirm that staff deal with incidents promptly and they are generally resolved well, ensuring that students feel safe and secure. Students know how to stay fit and well through active participation in sports and by healthy eating. They enjoy their work. Absence rates are slightly above average but the school is working hard to encourage regular attendance. Student mentors play an important role supporting the well-being of their peers and some play an informal part in the appointment of staff. The skills students require to secure their future economic well-being are well developed and they have the personal qualities to make a success of their lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is a developing understanding of what is required to ensure that students make good progress in their lessons. This is being supported by a programme of appropriate in-service training and an increasing commitment to sharing good practice within and across curriculum areas. The best lessons are characterised by well-planned, interesting learning activities which proceed at a good pace, stretch all students well, and take account of their preferred ways of learning. Students are also involved in the process of seeing how well they have met learning objectives which have been clearly explained to them. They are therefore well motivated to learn. However, these strengths are not yet sufficiently well understood and embedded in all the teaching. For example, in some otherwise satisfactory lessons the quality of planning is inconsistent, opportunities to stretch students through incisive questioning are missed and the pace and challenge of learning is relatively mundane. The quality of marking is inconsistent and does not always follow agreed procedures. As a result not enough teaching is good. Good relationships are evident in nearly all lessons and the vast majority of students are well-behaved even when the teaching fails to excite and challenge them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum for its students. It is enhanced by opportunities made available by the school's specialist sports college status. Students appreciate the increased range of opportunities to take part in extra-curricular sport and follow accredited courses such as the Junior Sport's Leaders Award. Take up for extra-curricular sport is high. Opportunities provided through the school's specialist status have also contributed to the personal development and academic achievement of vulnerable groups of students. Enterprise education provides a further enhancement to the statutory curriculum across all years. The personal, social and health education programme supports students' personal development well. In Years 10 and 11 the school is beginning to broaden the curriculum, for example, through its developing partnership arrangements with other local schools. Although students and their parents are generally happy with the range of courses available to study in Years 10 and 11, the school has been slow to introduce vocational courses and there are not yet sufficient opportunities for students to choose courses which have a work related dimension.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care, guidance and support provided for students are satisfactory. Pastoral care is good because staff know their students well. Work with external agencies is effective at supporting vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties or disabilities. These students, and others in the school particularly appreciate the effectiveness and support they receive from learning mentors. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported in lessons by staff and work is set at a level that meets their needs. Registration sessions at the start of the school day do not make productive use of time or prepare students well for the working day ahead.

Good arrangements, including the well-regarded peer mentor arrangements, are in place to support students joining the school in year 7. This helps them to settle in quickly and become part of the school community. Year 9 options are managed well and effective careers guidance prepares students well for further study or careers.

Arrangements for safeguarding students are in place. The school's work with looked-after children is effective because they are well supported and fully integrated. Students speak positively of the usefulness of the citizenship programme.

Staff are making increasing use of assessment data about students' progress to set targets and track their progress. However, the school systems are not yet effective enough in contributing to good achievement because there is too much inconsistency in the way that they are used.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher's understanding of the school's strengths and what needs to be improved and how is providing the direction and drive to raise standards. His leadership is excellent. He is well supported by able senior staff and committed and enthusiastic teachers and support assistants. Self-evaluation is good, but there is variability in how such information is used to improve performance. The school's capacity to improve further is satisfactory. Agreed assessment and monitoring procedures, for example, are not being applied consistently by all teachers. The school's commitment to equality of opportunity results in most students continuing their education or securing employment linked to training when they leave. Governance is satisfactory. Governors know the school well and have been successful in resolving recent staffing difficulties. Consequently there is now greater stability and there is continuity in teaching in all subject areas. Learning resources are good and they are used well. The fabric of the buildings is poor in places and space is restricted for science and computer technology. The school has good links with partner institutions to promote students' well-being and academic progress. There have been satisfactory improvements since the previous inspection.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

8 June 2007

Dear Students,

Norden High School and Sports College, Lancashire, BB1 4ED

Thank you for contributing to the recent inspection of your school. We enjoyed visiting Norden High School and Sports College. We were able to visit lessons and to talk to a number of you and to some of the staff. We also looked at the results of questionnaires sent in by your parents. The majority of your parents are supportive of the school.

Since the school achieved specialist sports college status a new sports hall has been built and there are good sporting opportunities available, as well as other extra-curricular activities. Many of you told us you enjoy these.

We found that most of you make satisfactory progress at school and get the qualifications you are capable of. At GCSE many of you do well in English, mathematics and science and design technology. Progress in mathematics is particularly good.

Most of you enjoy being at school. We found that you behave well in lessons and around school. Some of you benefit from helping with sports in local primary schools. The school cares for you well and learning mentors help some of you with particular difficulties.

Some lessons are good and a few are outstanding but we found that teaching is satisfactory overall. We have asked your headteacher to look at ways to improve lessons so that more of them are as good as the best. We have also asked him to make sure that in all subjects your progress is assessed and monitored effectively to help you achieve as much as you can. You can help by continuing to work hard and doing your very best, so that you get the best possible results which will benefit you in the future.

The school has good arrangements for helping you choose your Key Stage 4 options in Year 9. We have asked the school to consider offering more vocational and work related courses as well as GCSE subjects. You also receive good guidance on your choices after you leave school.

We are confident that your headteacher and all the staff are working hard to make your school even better. We wish you every success for the future in all that you do.

Yours sincerely

Ruth James

HMI