



Up Holland High School: A Specialist Music, Maths & Computing College

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 119751
Local Authority Lancashire
Inspection number 291531
Inspection dates 28–29 September 2006
Reporting inspector Alan Brine HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Sandbrook Road
School category	Community		Orrell, Wigan
Age range of pupils	11–16		Lancashire, WN5 7AL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01695 625191
Number on roll (school)	919	Fax number	01695 633379
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Robert Foster
		Headteacher	Mr Peter Doyle
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	28–29 September 2006	291531

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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

Up Holland High School is an average sized 11–16 comprehensive school which was awarded specialist college status in September 2005. It is situated in the pleasant historic community of Up Holland and draws students from a wide area including parts of Wigan, St Helens and Skelmersdale. As a result, the intake to the school is broadly comprehensive. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is very low. The proportion of students with special educational needs is below average, while the percentage eligible for free school meals is broadly average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Up Holland High is a popular school, well supported by its parents, that provides its students with a very safe and orderly environment within which to learn. As one parent said 'I have nothing but praise for what Up Holland has done for my child and I would have no hesitation in recommending it to other parents'. Recent success in achieving specialist status has begun to offer the opportunity to address some persistent factors, such as the state of the accommodation, which have in the past proved a barrier to the school reaching its aspirations.

The school provides a satisfactory education for its students. Standards in examinations and tests are improving and are now around what would be expected in a secondary school. Students make satisfactory progress overall. The school has introduced a number of strategies designed to raise attainment further which are beginning to make a positive impact on student performance.

Students are well cared for and supported overall. However, they are not given clear enough guidance about their progress and how to improve further. Their personal development is satisfactory. Most enjoy coming to school, attend regularly and behave well. There are, however, examples of less appropriate behaviour which, on occasions, disrupts learning. Students have opportunities to exercise responsibility and most understand the importance of healthy lifestyles and making a positive contribution to the community. There are however, too few opportunities for them to explore cultural diversity and discuss or reflect on more significant aspects of human life.

Teaching is satisfactory; some lessons are good and a few are outstanding. Inadequate teaching is rare. More attention needs to be paid to establishing a clear, shared understanding of the features of effective teaching. The curriculum offered to the students is satisfactory, while extra-curricular provision is very good. To date, attempts to broaden the scope of the courses offered at Key Stage 4 to secure a more effective match to the students' needs and aspirations have met with only partial success. Provision for citizenship does not meet current requirements.

The leadership team ensure the day-to-day running of the school is orderly. They have been effective in identifying many of the issues which are proving to be barriers to success. While judgements about the relative strengths and weaknesses of the school are broadly accurate, there is a tendency to over-estimate the quality of some aspects of the provision. In particular, the judgements about the quality of teaching are not sufficiently rigorous.

The leadership team has successfully secured specialist status for the school, but they have been less effective in coordinating initiatives within a clear strategic vision and in monitoring the impact of actions taken. Steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection, but overall the pace of change has been too slow. Some staff, and specifically some with middle management responsibility, do not have sufficient understanding of their role in the drive for improvement within the school. The school's capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Establish a clear, shared understanding about the characteristics of effective teaching and learning.
- Ensure all initiatives for improvement are placed within a more strategic vision, are understood by all staff, and are monitored and reviewed carefully.
- Quicken the pace at which improvements are implemented.
- Ensure all students have a clear understanding of their progress and how they can improve.
- Develop the effectiveness of middle managers.
- Extend the curriculum to provide more vocational learning, a programme for citizenship and further opportunities for students to develop their understanding of cultural diversity.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The overall achievement of students in the school is satisfactory. The standards attained by students when they enter the school in Year 7 are just above average. They make good progress at Key Stage 3 where their performance in all the core subjects is above the national average in the end of key stage tests. Progress slows at Key Stage 4 and, as a result, students' overall achievement is satisfactory. Students leave the school with GCSE results which are broadly in line with those we would expect to find in a secondary school. The achievement of students in English across the school is particularly good, reflecting the high quality of the teaching in this subject. The progress students make in science and mathematics is broadly satisfactory.

There has been a general improvement in examination and test performance over the past three years, although GCSE results dipped in 2006. The improvement in the achievement of students in information and communication technology (ICT) has been particularly significant and was confirmed by observations made during the inspection. The school has introduced a number of strategies to raise standards, most of which have been successful. The decision, for example, to introduce modular courses in science and mathematics is beginning to provide a more effective basis for supporting students to raise their performance. When taking into account results in English and Mathematics, the performance of boys and girls at GCSE in 2005 was broadly similar. This partly reflected some underachievement by high ability girls. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. The percentage of students achieving 5 A* to G grades has, for some years, been significantly above the national average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students' personal development is satisfactory. Their social and moral development is good. Most form positive relationships with adults and their peers and respond well

to the opportunity to discuss social and moral issues. They respect the values and opinions of others and most have a strong sense of acceptable conduct. Their spiritual awareness is limited because of insufficient opportunities to explore their own and others' beliefs or to reflect on deeper aspects of human experience. They have little understanding of what it means to live in a diverse, multicultural society.

The great majority of students enjoy their experience of school. They attend well, work hard in lessons and take advantage of the many additional activities on offer. Unfortunately, those students and parents who expressed some concerns about behaviour are justified in doing so. Although the inspection team did not observe inappropriate behaviour, students report that a small minority disrupt learning in some lessons because they are not engaged by their learning and teachers do not have effective strategies to deal with low level disruption. Many students take part in some form of sporting activity and select healthy options in the canteen; their awareness of health related issues is also evident in, for example, imaginative anti-smoking displays. They work sensibly and safely in laboratories and practical rooms and feel secure in school, as adults are readily available to help if needed. Many students contribute to the school and wider community through activities such as involvement in the 'Student Voice', in the production of a high quality newsletter and in sports coaching in local primary schools. They make steady progress in acquiring work related skills, and the majority go on to further education and training when they leave.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school considers teaching and learning to be good; inspectors judge them to be satisfactory. Good lessons proceed at a lively pace, with students clearly aware about what they are to learn. Tasks follow a sequence of increasing challenge and teachers make frequent checks on learning. Above all, stimulating activities capture students' interest so they respond with enthusiasm and hard work. Although there is very little inadequate teaching, a significant minority of lessons are mundane and uninspiring. At times, students are not clear enough about the purpose of what they do and are occupied largely with undemanding tasks using textbooks or worksheets. In a significant proportion of lessons, work is not pitched at the proper level because teachers are not alert to the diverse needs and capabilities of their students. Little teaching is outstanding because there are too few opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning. The quality of marking is inconsistent. Much is little more than a check on presentation and organisation. Comments on the quality of work are not elaborated and the meaning of marks or grades is not made clear. As a result, students are not sufficiently well informed about the standards reached or how to improve.

The monitoring of teaching through lesson observation has not brought about real improvement because staff do not have a shared understanding of good practice. Consequently, there are no clear benchmarks to judge the quality of teaching through

its impact on learning, with the outcomes used to set improvement targets for individual teachers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. In Years 7 to 9 students follow the National Curriculum and those who have made good progress in French have the opportunity to study Spanish in Year 8 and beyond. In Years 10 and 11 the school's recent attempts to introduce more vocationally oriented courses have met with only partial success. As yet, therefore, the choice of vocational subjects is limited and there are few opportunities for work-placed learning other than the two weeks' work experience undertaken by all students in Year 10. Students with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by effective teaching assistants and make satisfactory progress. The well planned personal, social and health education programme ensures that students are properly informed about leading healthy and safe lifestyles. Provision for citizenship does not meet current requirements. Extra-curricular provision is very good. In addition to extra GCSE courses in electronics and statistics, numerous sporting, creative and musical activities are provided at lunchtime and after school which students appreciate and enjoy.

The recently gained specialist status has enhanced provision across the school, particularly in ICT which was an issue of improvement at the last inspection. Specialist status has also had a good impact on strengthening links with local primaries across a number of curriculum areas including music, mathematics, ICT, physical education, science and art.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school takes good care of all its students. Child protection procedures are in place and there are good links with numerous outside agencies. Health and safety arrangements are secure and meet requirements. Parents rightly praise the caring and safe environment which the school provides and the efforts made to ensure that new students settle quickly. The school is particularly effective in the measures taken to ensure the safety and happiness of vulnerable students. For example, a member of the support team runs a weekly nurture group for students at lunchtime. These students flourish in an atmosphere which builds their confidence and provides a valuable social and learning experience. Procedures to track all students' achievement and progress exist. The impact of the arrangements is reduced because the quality of the information often lacks precision; there are too few links with target-setting and marking.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school considers leadership and management to be good. Inspectors found them to be satisfactory. The headteacher has improved the effectiveness of the school through innovations such as the successful acquisition of specialist school status. However, the pace of change has been slow. The leadership team's drive and determination to raise achievement has been inhibited in part by the lack of a clear strategic framework within which to place the improvements and initiatives. Managers work hard to ensure that this is an inclusive school and seek to remove barriers to learning wherever possible.

The monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school are satisfactory. However, job descriptions clarifying the roles of some staff, most notably student learning and development managers, are not yet fully in place. There is too much inconsistency in the effectiveness of middle managers. The process of faculty reviews is relatively new. These are not yet rigorous enough to enable effective evaluation and action planning to occur.

Financial planning is satisfactory and takes into account the school's broad priorities. Day-to-day financial management is good. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are very committed and support the work of the school well. However, they are not as clear as they should be about broader strategic matters relating to whole-school improvement, for example, in taking forward curriculum development in vocational subjects. Similarly, the training of governors is not closely aligned to school development priorities.

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

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?	2

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.

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

The Students

Up Holland High School: A Specialist Music, Maths & Computing College

Sandbrook Road

Orrell

Wigan

Lancashire

WN5 7AL

29 September 2006

Dear Students

Thank you for the contribution you made to the recent inspection of your school. We enjoyed visiting your lessons and talking with many of you. We also read carefully the questionnaires completed by your parents. These were very helpful to us.

This is a summary of our main findings, which I hope will interest you.

- We think your school is providing you with a satisfactory education overall. You are helping the staff to make sure the school is very safe, secure and well organised.
- The senior leaders in the school are working hard to improve the school. Your new status as a specialist college is a very positive move. We think the school should do a bit more to extend the range of courses available for you to study in Years 10 and 11.
- We were impressed by the attendance and behaviour of most of you and by your enthusiasm to participate in the life of the school. Occasionally the behaviour of a small minority is interfering with the learning of others and you can help the school by trying to eliminate this.
- Much of the teaching in the school is satisfactory and some is good. We think the school should seek to ensure that all teaching is effective and that you are given more opportunity to learn in exciting and interesting ways.
- The school is good at making sure you are cared for and supported. We think you need more information about your progress. You can help the teachers by asking them to give you more guidance about ways you can improve your work.

Thank you again for welcoming us to your school. We wish you well in the future.

Yours faithfully

Alan Brine

Her Majesty's Inspector