

Woodhey High School

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	105361
Local Authority	Bury
Inspection number	308842
Inspection dates	3–4 October 2007
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 category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	984
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Luise Nandy
Headteacher	Mr Martin Braidley
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2004
School address	Bolton Road West Ramsbottom Bury Lancashire BL0 9QZ
Telephone number	01706 825215
Fax number	01706 825989

Age group	11-16
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Amended Report Addendum

The school has demonstrated sound financial management. A budget deficit has been eliminated and significant funding has been secured to enhance the fabric of the buildings. Nevertheless, the overall use of resources has not successfully eradicated underachievement or provided sufficient overall value for money.

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors. The team was accompanied by a second HMI who shadowed the inspection.

Description of the school

Woodhey High School has been designated a specialist science college since 2005 and is situated in the market town of Ramsbottom. It is of average size and the proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is very low. The proportion of students with special educational needs is below average, as is the percentage eligible for free school meals. The school has been awarded recognition in a number of areas, including SportsMark, Careers Education Quality Award and Healthy Schools status. Woodhey has also been a hub school for the School Sports Partnership programme since 2005. As part of the school's developing extended service provision, it offers an onsite drop-in centre providing a confidential service to support students over health, careers advice and welfare issues. The centre received the Dr Narinder Prabhaker Award for team innovations in 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

Important features of the school are good. It is a very orderly and supportive community, which is well regarded by most parents, and has a strong commitment to the personal development of students and to their welfare, guidance and support. However, important aspects of students' achievement and of the leadership and management of the school are inadequate. Progress in addressing issues raised at the time of the previous inspection in 2004 and in more recent routine school improvement visits has not been systematic or effective enough. However, recent changes in the leadership and management of the school, coupled with a successful bid for specialist status and additional capital funding, mean the school now has capacity for improvement. A number of key changes have been made to, for example, the monitoring of students' progress and the targeting of underachievement, which are beginning to prove effective. However, it is too early to judge the full impact of all the changes. Therefore, in accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it should reasonably be expected to perform. Significant improvement is required in relation to students' achievement and to leadership and management.

Although standards are above average, the school has recognised that the achievement of students in the past three years has been below that expected. There are some signs of improvement, most notably in the performance of students in English at Key Stage 3, which are beginning to work through into the overall profile of students' achievement. However, across the school as a whole, students are not making enough progress. The school has yet to establish a clear and shared understanding across all subjects of what constitutes effective learning. Too much teaching is not building fully on the students' positive attitudes to learning in order to ensure they make good progress. While some teaching is good, there is not enough which challenges and engages students actively in their learning.

The school has a number of positive features. The good quality of the students' personal development reflects the care, support and guidance they receive. The strong commitment of the school to inclusion is reflected in the positive progress made by students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has developed a range of links with the local community, many of which enrich the educational experience of the students. Most students have positive attitudes towards learning and enjoy coming to school. Their attendance and behaviour are good.

The curriculum is satisfactory, and the range of additional activities is a particular strength. Specialist status has led to enrichment of the curriculum in mathematics and science, as well as to extra facilities. The school has made some progress in developing the Key Stage 4 curriculum so that it better meets the needs of all students. The provision for religious education does not meet requirements, an issue that was identified when the school was last inspected.

The senior leadership team, which is supported well by the governors, has recognised that, as well as providing a good pastoral system and promoting students' personal development, it must ensure better academic outcomes. However, the school's self-evaluation of its provision is too generous and is not based on a sufficiently rigorous and systematic programme of monitoring. As a result, for example, the current school improvement plan lacks rigour and is not focused clearly enough on improving teaching and learning as the key to sustained higher achievement. While improvement since the last inspection is inadequate, the recent changes

to, and restructuring of, the senior leadership team have begun to have a positive impact on the school. Clearer mechanisms are being established to monitor the quality of the provision and target areas of underachievement. There is still a need to secure greater consistency in the effectiveness of the middle management in order to ensure that the potential for improving teaching and raising achievement is realised.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure the vision for further improvement across the school is clearer, more strategic and better focused on raising the achievement of all students.
- Make sure the plans to improve the monitoring of the school's work are implemented systematically and effectively.
- Establish a clear and shared understanding the most effective ways of promoting students' learning.
- Develop greater consistency in the effectiveness of middle management across the school.
- Address the continued failure to meet statutory requirements for religious education at Key Stage 4.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

The attainment of students when they enter the school in Year 7 is above average. Standards at the end of both key stages are above, and in some cases, well above average. In 2006, the overall achievement of students across both key stages was below what would be expected. While the progress made by students in science at Key Stage 3 was satisfactory, it was inadequate in mathematics and English. Overall GCSE results in 2006 also reflected inadequate achievement and, again, students' progress in English and mathematics was below expectations. The school has recognised the patterns of underachievement and is taking steps to address the issues. In particular the mechanisms for tracking and supporting underachieving students have improved, and targeted action is being taken in specific subjects where underachievement is particularly evident. Results in 2007 showed some improvement. The percentage of students achieving higher grade passes at GCSE has risen slightly, although the school did not meet its statutory targets. At Key Stage 3, there has been a significant rise in students' achievement in English and mathematics, although again the targets were not met. Key Stage 3 science results in 2007 also improved and were in line with the school's target. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well as a result of the good support they receive and this reflects the very strong culture of inclusion in the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of students are good and are strengths of the school. The strong ethos is reflected in the positive attitudes of most students, who say that they feel safe and secure. They appreciate the school's provision for personal support such as the weekly 'drop-in centre'. Students speak with authority about the benefits of healthy eating and regular exercise. They particularly like the wide-ranging access to physical education and sport. Although the role of the school council could be extended further, its members take their responsibilities seriously and relish opportunities such as being invited to join the interview panel for new staff appointments. Other students in the school show a keenness to take on responsibilities such as librarians, form captains and prefects.

The number and regularity of fixed-term exclusions are reducing due to the firm application of strategies for managing behaviour. Students' behaviour observed during the inspection was outstanding. However, in some lessons pupils adopted a passive attitude towards their learning particularly when they were not fully engaged by the teaching. The effective promotion of good punctuality and regular attendance has resulted in attendance that is above the national average.

Students' spiritual, moral and social development is good overall although there is scope to extend their understanding of cultural diversity. They show a healthy respect for their peers and for the teaching and support staff. Students enjoy the many opportunities provided to take part in community projects such as charity fundraising and working with students in local primary and secondary schools. This adds significantly to their personal development and leads to growing confidence in the outside world.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Teachers' subject knowledge is good, lessons are very orderly and relationships with students in the classroom are usually very positive. Questioning techniques and discussion is often utilised well to challenge students' thinking and to allow them opportunities to develop their ideas. There is much good practice but it is inconsistent. Teaching does not always capitalise fully on the very positive attitudes students bring to their learning. Expectations about what constitutes effective lesson planning are not consistent. The range of strategies used to stimulate and engage students is sometimes too narrow. In some lesson planning, insufficient attention is paid to the detail of structuring learning activities to ensure students make good progress. Teaching does not always engage students actively enough in their learning. In a number of lessons there was limited evidence of planning to address the different needs of students. Whilst the constructive and effective use of features such as peer assessment was seen in some lessons, high quality assessment for learning was not in evidence in many of the lessons seen.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum addresses the needs of most students satisfactorily. While it meets most statutory requirements, the school has not yet addressed the shortfall in the provision of religious education at Key Stage 4 raised at the time of the previous inspection. The opportunities for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good. At Key Stage 3 students are taught all National Curriculum subjects and benefit from a discrete lesson in citizenship. The school is beginning to consider developments in the Key Stage 3 curriculum to provide a greater focus on students' wider learning skills. The school has made some progress in extending the Key Stage 4 curriculum to ensure that it better meets the needs of all students. It has introduced vocationally related courses involving attendance at local colleges for a number of students. Other students, including those with additional and special educational needs, and the more able, have amended programmes that match their individual needs effectively. These developments are beginning to make an impact on students' achievement and the school is planning to extend this type of provision. Specialist school status has led to enrichment of the curriculum in science and mathematics, for example the provision for students to study the

three separate science subjects. It has also helped with the introduction of new courses in information and communication technology (ICT) at Key Stage 4, and all students have ICT either as a separate GCSE course or as part of their other GCSE subjects. This provision is beginning to address the very serious concerns about the quality of ICT raised in a recent Ofsted subject inspection of the school. The range and choice of extra-curricular activities are strengths of the school and are appreciated by students. There are good opportunities for work-related learning throughout the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides good pastoral care for all students, who feel safe and secure. This applies especially to the most vulnerable. Procedures for promoting equality and safeguarding students meet current requirements. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive extensive support and this enables them to make good progress. In addition, vulnerable students benefit from a wide range of extra provision. They particularly enjoy the Boccia sports lunchtime activities. Students appreciate the support and guidance they are given in making their option choices for Key Stage 4. The learning mentor and newly appointed intervention assistants linked to the English and mathematics departments are working well with individual students, improving their attitudes and achievements in school. The school has systems for setting targets for students and monitoring and supporting their progress towards meeting these. However, these are not rigorously and consistently applied throughout the school; some targets do not provide sufficient challenge. As a consequence the impact on raising students' standards and achievement is inconsistent.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The day-to-day running of the school ensures it is an orderly, safe and harmonious community, with a strong commitment to students' personal development and well-being. However, key aspects of the leadership and management of the school are inadequate. The senior leadership's evaluation of the school is over-generous and, as a result, the process of school improvement planning has not been rigorous and focused enough. To date, monitoring of the school's provision has been unsystematic. The school has been slow to respond effectively to issues raised by the last inspection, as well as those highlighted by the external school improvement visits over a number of years. The current school improvement plan does not provide a coherent and sharply focused framework for driving up achievement.

A clear, shared understanding of high quality teaching and learning has yet to be established across the school and the current school improvement plan has very limited focus on this as a key factor inhibiting higher achievement. Expectations about the roles and responsibilities of middle leaders are not robust enough; as a result, for example, departmental monitoring and evaluations vary considerably in their quality and effectiveness.

Astute appointments have been made very recently to the senior leadership team and this provides confidence that the school is now in a position to address the weaknesses. For example, although it is too early to judge its impact, a clear structure for monitoring the work of the school has been established. The restructuring and redefinition of management responsibilities clarifies lines of communication and accountability and this, coupled with specialist status and

increased funding, provides a satisfactory capacity for further improvement. The subject leaders are beginning to have a clearer understanding of their role and a greater sense of teamwork is emerging.

The school's commitment to equality of opportunity and an inclusive approach are evident in the quality of care and support given to vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The specialist status of the school has had many beneficial effects in broadening opportunities for students and improving resources. There is a strong focus on partnerships with other schools and the community and an increase in opportunities in science and mathematics at Key Stage 4.

Governors are knowledgeable about, and supportive of, the school. They have an awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses but there is scope for them to challenge senior leaders more effectively. The school has demonstrated sound financial management. A budget deficit has been eliminated and significant funding has been secured to enhance the fabric of the buildings. Nevertheless, the overall use of resources has not successfully eradicated underachievement or provided sufficient overall value for money.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
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?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Woodhey High School, Ramsbottom, BLO 9QZ

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.

There are many good things about your school. Your own contribution to school life is very good. Your behaviour towards each other and your attitudes to your work are very positive. The staff put a great deal of emphasis on making sure the school is a safe place where you are valued and cared for well. Your teachers work hard, and know you well. Their lessons are often interesting and well planned. The range of clubs and activities is very good. One of you told us that it is difficult to decide what to do because there is so much choice!

However, we have given your school a Notice to Improve, which means it will be inspected again in about a year's time. This is because some of you are not making the progress of which we think you are capable. Sometimes in lessons the teachers should involve you more in your learning and make sure you make really good progress. Although the school's results are above the national average, the number of students who are getting the results they should is too low. We also think the leadership of the school needs to be more focused and should monitor what is happening more carefully and systematically.

We have asked the school to make sure you all achieve well. We have suggested that the teachers need to explore better ways of engaging you in your learning and you can help them in thinking about this. We want the school to make better use of the information they have about how well you are doing to help you understand how you can achieve your very best. We also want the school to make sure it is making accurate judgements about how well it is doing so it can focus better on what needs to be improved.

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