

Mossley Hollins High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106266
Local Authority	Tameside
Inspection number	309077
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Bernard Campbell 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	734
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J Denton
Headteacher	Mr Drew Duncan
Date of previous school inspection	10 May 2004
School address	Huddersfield Road Mossley Ashton-under-Lyne Lancashire OL5 9DJ
Telephone number	01457 832491
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Mossley Hollins is a smaller than average secondary school that caters for pupils from a broadly average socio-economic background. The proportion of pupils from socially advantaged backgrounds is below average and fewer students than average have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is average. The proportion of minority ethnic students is broadly typical of schools nationally. Mossley Hollins was designated as a specialist school in performing arts and sport in 2005. In 2007 the school achieved Artsmark Gold, the International School Award and Investors in People.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Mossley Hollins is a good and improving school with some outstanding features and an excellent capacity for further improvement. The school is popular and many parents praise the quality of education, and the leadership of the headteacher. As one parent said, 'My son is extremely happy and has progressed well at Mossley Hollins. He finds his work fun but challenging, and staff supportive. The headteacher and his staff are doing an excellent job. I wish I could go too!'

The school is a strong cohesive and inclusive community with an impressive ethos of positive attitudes and excellent relationships. Parents value the school and its leadership highly. The school thoroughly analyses the views of all stakeholders, including parents, students and all staff, and uses this information well to drive improvement. One parent said, 'I have never encountered a school that considers everyone's opinions as well as Mossley Hollins.'

The school has successfully tackled the issues identified at the time of the previous inspection. As a result, standards in the school have risen steadily and the students' achievement is good. Achievement in mathematics and in the specialist subjects, sports and the performing arts, is particularly impressive. GCSE results have improved significantly since the previous inspection and in 2007 over half of Year 11 students gained five A* to C grades including English and mathematics. The evidence of progress made by current Year 11 students indicates that the school should meet its statutory targets for GCSE in 2008.

The school makes an outstanding contribution to students' personal development through high aspirations and the value and attention given to each individual. There are high levels of mutual respect, and students and staff feel that their views are listened to and that they have an influence on school life. Both students and teachers enjoy their lessons and there is a high level of participation and collaboration in learning. Students have broadened their experience through good international links and extensive extra-curricular activities. The school identifies rigorously the pastoral and academic needs of individual students and is meticulous in monitoring and evaluating the impact of actions by staff.

Good quality teaching successfully engages students in their own learning. A shared and systematic approach to lesson planning involving all faculties ensures that lessons are well structured with a good variety of learning activities. The sustained work of the 'teaching and learning' group has provided an effective vehicle for continuous improvement in teaching and learning. However, in a minority of lessons, staff talk too much and provide too few opportunities for students to work independently. The school's specialist status, as a performing arts and sports college, has had a strong impact. It has increased the range of active learning and has contributed to students' ability to communicate effectively; for example, students perform short plays confidently in Spanish. Good teaching in specialist subjects has led to a high uptake of related courses at Key Stage 4. The creative partnership with a local theatre company has made a significant contribution to innovation in the curriculum and to work with the wider community. The good curriculum is enhanced at Key Stage 3 by literacy skills workshops and by the 'learn to learn' course. A revised curriculum for Key Stage 4 has been put in place from September 2008 and is not yet embedded. It offers a good range of academic and vocational options in an effective partnership with local colleges.

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. The headteacher is inspirational and is held in exceptionally high regard by governors, parents, teachers, support staff, students

and other stakeholders. This is because he has raised the aspirations and standards of students and the school community. The vision for the school is articulated very clearly. The quality of self-evaluation and action planning at senior and middle management levels is exemplary. The systems of performance management are similarly impressive. The transfer of management responsibilities from teaching staff to support staff has significantly improved the efficiency and effectiveness of the school. Teamwork between teaching and support staff is highly effective. The governing body provides outstanding support and challenge for the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Embed the changes to the Key Stage 4 curriculum to further improve standards and progress.
- Increase the opportunities for students to learn independently.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students achieve well at Mossley Hollins. They enter the school with average standards and a higher than average proportion leave with five A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics. Since the previous inspection, standards have risen steadily and are now above average. Standards at Key Stage 3 are broadly average with an improving trend in English. Standards in the specialist subjects of performing arts and sport are high and this encourages exceptionally high numbers of students to choose these subjects at Key Stage 4.

Students make good progress and particularly good progress in mathematics at both key stages. In the recent past a number of lower ability students made less than expected progress due to problems with some vocational courses at Key Stage 4. These problems have been dealt with and the school's evidence shows that in the current Years 10 and 11, students of all abilities are making good progress. In lessons, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress in developing their confidence as learners and in literacy skills workshops. Aspirations at the school have been rising steadily and learners are now being challenged by higher expectations of what they can achieve.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students are very mature, thoughtful and polite in their behaviour which contributes well to the extremely positive school ethos. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding due to the excellent attitudes and relationships in the school and its strong community spirit. This is underpinned by a clear sense of direction, shared moral values and many cultural opportunities provided especially in sports, performing arts and the school's international links.

Students feel very safe and report that there are few incidents of bullying. They respond very well to strategies for managing behaviour and as a result, exclusions have reduced substantially. Students' attendance is good. Their evident enjoyment and highly positive attitudes to all aspects of school life contribute significantly to their good achievement. Students develop good habits as learners and acquire a good range of essential skills including information and communication technology (ICT) and social skills that prepare them well for their future education, training or work. Competence in financial literacy is developing well as the school improves its provision in this area.

Students demonstrate their strong commitment to healthy lifestyles through high levels of participation in physical education, other extra-curricular sporting activities and their involvement in the school's anti-smoking activities. They respond in a mature way to teaching about drugs, sexual and physical health and have a well informed understanding of unsafe behaviours, for example in preventing bullying on the internet. Students' contribution to the community is excellent. They relate to each other and adults with openness and respect and play an active and informed role in school, for example through the school council and the school's arts and sports councils. Students build positive relationships with people from different backgrounds through the school's international links and they are beginning to make links with other communities through theatre events in the region.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. The school has implemented effective strategies to promote good teaching and learning across the school and has developed a systematic approach for checking the quality of teaching. Senior leaders have a detailed and accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement. The positive relationships between teachers and students are an outstanding feature of classroom life and teachers consistently plan and manage lessons well. The strengths of the good and outstanding teaching show in the detail of lesson planning and the focus on learning outcomes. In the best lessons, energetic teachers have high expectations of their students who are able to work independently in response to challenging tasks. For example, in Year 8, students developed an understanding of other faiths and cultures because of the teacher's skilful ability to create a calm and thoughtful classroom atmosphere in which the feelings of others were explored through challenging and well directed questions. This enabled students of all ability levels to take part. Learning support assistants make a significant contribution to the quality of learning because they work closely with teachers and provide care and direction to students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities which boosts their progress. In a small number of lessons, teaching is less effective because too much whole-class talk by teachers leaves less time for students to work independently and does not provide sufficiently for the range of needs in the class. The school sets challenging targets for students, who are aware of the levels they have achieved and what they need to do next to improve their skills. The monitoring of students' progress by senior leaders is a very strong feature of the school's work and effective steps are taken to address underachievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The broad and balanced curriculum for Years 7 to 9 has a strong focus on English, mathematics and science and is enhanced by drama, ICT, literacy skills lessons and a 'learning to learn' course. Students are well prepared to move onto their GCSE or vocational courses. A well planned and improving curriculum in Years 10 and 11, from September 2008, has enabled students to opt for a mixture of academic and vocational courses designed to meet a range of needs and aspirations. The school has worked effectively, in partnership with local colleges and other providers, to ensure students have good access to courses within and beyond the school day and to eradicate any conflict between off-site and school-based courses. These more personalised courses include advanced level courses to stretch the most able, college courses or apprenticeships to meet vocational aspirations or to support those students who may show

signs of disaffection. The good provision for sports and performing arts has added to a very wide range of extra-curricular activities and has encouraged the vast majority of students to opt for subjects in these areas at Key Stage 4. A well planned programme of personal, health, social and citizenship education ensures students develop as confident individuals.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides an outstanding level of pastoral support for its students. Very good transition arrangements ensure students quickly feel settled in school. Procedures to ensure their health, safety and welfare are very secure, reflecting the high level of commitment and expectations of the staff. Consistent high quality systems and expectations ensure that all students are exceptionally well supported in their personal well-being. The school works very well with a wide range of external agencies to ensure that vulnerable students are fully supported from an early age and this is reflected in the good progress these students make. The school's 'On Board Centre' (OBC) is well managed and provides valuable support to ensure students maintain their engagement in their learning. Arrangements for the safeguarding of students are reviewed regularly. Child protection systems are in place and comply fully with government guidelines. There is a very strong climate of mutual respect and consequently students are fully confident that any problems will be sorted out quickly and effectively. Students' academic progress is very effectively tracked and the extra attention provided for the few groups of students who were achieving less well has contributed to their recent improved progress. Students benefit from a good quality of academic guidance and increasingly good use is being made of targets to raise students' aspirations and achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The leadership provided by the headteacher is inspirational and he communicates a clear vision for teaching and learning and how students will achieve their best. Leaders at all levels are committed to the school's mission, which is demonstrated in a strong sense of collective endeavour. The daily operation of the school runs smoothly and a secure and caring atmosphere has been created. The very effective senior leadership team is well supported by a middle management team that is now playing a key role in raising achievement. Key management roles and responsibilities have been distributed to support staff which has transformed the way that teaching and support staff work together. Strong teamwork is at the heart of all that the school does. Good action plans are in place and the school anticipates a marked improvement in both attainment and achievement with the continued raising of pupils' aspirations, self-confidence and self-esteem as the key. Performance management procedures and the continuing professional development of all staff are highly effective and all staff are actively encouraged to develop their skills and share good practice. Governors are highly committed to the students and the staff. They provide impressive support and are actively involved in the life of the school, holding leaders to account and acting as a critical friend to leadership at all levels. Through this partnership, governors and staff work hard to provide the best they can for the students and the wider community. Governors and staff work hard to overcome the limitations created by the outdated building and everyone is looking forward to the opening of the new school buildings planned for 2010.

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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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	2

The quality of provision

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

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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Inspection of Mossley Hollins High School, Ashton-under-Lyne, OL5 9DJ

Following our visit to your school, I would like to thank you all for your welcome. I particularly want to thank those of you who spoke to members of the inspection team in meetings, around the school and in lessons about your experiences. You had lots of good things to say about your school, especially the staff, the lessons and the activities you do after school. Inspectors agreed with much of what you said. This is what we found.

Mossley Hollins is a good and improving school with some outstanding features. GCSE results have been getting better each year and most students make good progress. These achievements are the result of the excellent leadership by the headteacher and the hard work and teamwork by all the teaching and support staff.

You make a big contribution to the success of the school. We were struck by your positive attitudes and the mature way you get on with each other and staff. The school has a great atmosphere and students and teachers enjoy working with each other. The teaching in lessons is good and you have opportunities to learn in different ways and have fun! The sports and arts subjects in your specialist school are very popular and you have lots of interesting opportunities to do extra activities outside school hours.

The school takes extremely good care to make sure that you are all doing the best you can and works hard to find out how to overcome any problems you may have.

These are the improvements we have asked the headteacher and governors to make:

- make sure the changes to the Key Stage 4 curriculum help to further improve standards and progress
- increase the opportunities for students to learn independently.