

# Flixton Girls' High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	106364
<b>Local Authority</b>	Trafford
<b>Inspection number</b>	309108
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 June 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Alan Brine HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	972
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Graham Barrick
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Julie Hazeldine
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 February 2004
<b>School address</b>	Flixton Road Flixton Urmston Manchester Lancashire M41 5DR
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 912 2949
<b>Fax number</b>	0161 747 1701

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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

Flixton Girls' High was designated as a specialist sports college in 2006. It is an average sized community school in Trafford where 40% of students attend local grammar schools. The proportion of students who are entitled to free school meals is broadly average. The percentage of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is just below the national average but the proportion who speak English as an additional language is low. The proportion of students who have special educational needs is high. The school has hosted the North Trafford Sports Partnership since 2005 and was re-awarded with a Sportsmark in 2007. The school received a NACE Challenge award in 2007 for its provision for the able, gifted and talented and it currently holds an Artsmark 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 inspectors agree with the school that the quality of the education it provides is satisfactory. Following the appointment of the new headteacher in September 2007, the school has established a clear vision for its future. Its capacity for improvement is developing quickly and is satisfactory. The new headteacher has a clear mission for the future of the school linked closely to a 're-launch' of the school's status as a specialist sports college.

The school has been through a period during which GCSE results declined to levels below the national average. However, at Key Stage 3 standards are slightly above the national average and rising, and achievement is good.

The issue of declining standards at Key Stage 4 is being addressed by: implementing a more effective process of target-setting; establishing robust strategies to support good behaviour; providing more opportunities for staff to improve the quality of their classroom practice; and reviewing the curriculum to ensure it matches students' needs more closely. Whilst it is too early to judge the full impact on the actions being taken, the school's own monitoring is predicting a strong rise in performance with students now on track to reach the schools' more challenging targets.

Students' personal development is satisfactory although restricted social skills limit the progress of some. Many parents and students are concerned about poor behaviour and its effect on the life of the school. The newly introduced behaviour for learning policy is having a positive impact in lessons and there are plans to extend this to embrace a more comprehensive approach towards rewards and sanctions linked to the school's sports college status. However, some of the social behaviour out of lessons and around the site is inappropriate. The school has yet to embed a clear understanding amongst all staff that everyone has responsibility for setting and enforcing high standards and that a key to changing attitudes lies in improving the quality of the learning. For example, the negative behaviour towards students by some staff does not model the values of mutual respect which the school is seeking to promote.

Students' progress and the quality of teaching are too variable and the school has yet to establish a clear shared understanding about what constitutes best practice. Too much teaching fails to engage students effectively. Monitoring of teaching is not yet rigorous enough and, as a result, the school does not have a clear enough picture of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching.

The curriculum is satisfactory and the arrangements for the care, guidance and support of the students are good. The school is making good use of its specialist status to extend the quality of its educational provision and help secure the good care, guidance and support of the students.

The new headteacher, working with the good support of her governors, has taken decisive action to address the difficulties caused by long absences within senior leadership. The interim leadership team is working well together focused on the core priorities of raising aspiration, promoting empowerment and delivering excellence. Some very decisive action has been taken to address specific issues, including improving the security of the site.

The new headteacher is seeking a sea change in the school in order to raise expectations and improve aspirations. It is early days in this process of change. The sense of urgency about improvement has been communicated clearly and the school is in the process of translating this into a programme of action but still has some way to go to ensure this is understood by

all involved in its implementation. The arrangements and responsibilities for monitoring the current provision and the impact of new initiatives have yet to be clearly defined and established.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve teaching and learning to ensure more consistent high quality.
- Improve development planning to manage the process of change more effectively.
- Establish more rigorous systems for monitoring the current provision and the impact of proposed changes.
- Ensure that a culture of mutual respect pervades the life of the school at all levels and that clear standards are set to improve behaviour.

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**

Students' overall achievement is satisfactory. Progress is greater between Years 7 and 9 than in Years 10 and Year 11. Students enter Year 7 with levels of attainment that are in line with all schools nationally although there is a lower percentage of students with the highest scores. Standards in the Year 9 national tests have risen significantly over the last two years to above average. This represents good progress. In 2007, school targets were exceeded in English and mathematics and were met in science.

The GCSE results deteriorated over the last three years, with the percentage of students attaining five or more A\* to C grades falling to well below average in 2007. School assessment information for the current Years 10 and 11 indicate that students are making better progress and are on track to meet the school's more challenging targets. This is, in part, the result of improved intervention strategies. However, the pattern of achievement is not consistent across all subjects. Whilst the school did not meet all its sports specialist targets in 2007, it is now in line to do so.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported and make good progress. As a result, no student left Year 11 without a qualification last year. The school recognises that some of the more able students have not been challenged enough and so do not attain the very highest levels or grades. It has begun to implement appropriate strategies to tackle this.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

Many students say they like their school and enjoy lessons particularly where teachers create a climate of mutual respect. However, the negative, over-assertive behaviour towards students by a minority of staff does not model values of mutual respect and, for some students, their enjoyment of school is compromised. Student behaviour is satisfactory. The new initiatives to improve behaviour are having a positive effect in classrooms but have yet to impact fully on behaviour around school. Most students have acceptable attitudes to learning. The school is making good progress in improving attendance, which is now satisfactory.

Students know who to turn to for support and are confident that this will be provided. The school encourages students to choose healthier lifestyles and, through its specialist status, offers an increasing range of sport-related activities.

The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Students work well together and take their responsibilities seriously. However, the personal development of some is very constrained by poor listening and social skills. The school misses some opportunities to enhance spiritual and cultural awareness and student understanding of racial diversity. These aspects of personal development are less secure.

Students make good progress in developing the personal qualities that will enable them to contribute effectively to the community, as in their positive involvement with local primary schools as sports leaders. Some develop initiative by taking an active part in school life as council members, school leaders and peer mentors. The development of their core skills, self-confidence and self-esteem is satisfactory and, for some students, links with local colleges promote independence. As yet, students do not have enough opportunities to develop work place and enterprise skills.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, although this masks considerable variation in performance across departments and teachers. While the school has identified priorities for development and actions are being taken to promote improvement, it has yet to establish a clear shared understanding of what constitutes good practice. Some teaching is outstanding and, in the best lessons, teachers create a good working ethos by setting high expectations ensuring students know what they need to learn and providing a good range of activities. Questioning techniques are used effectively to challenge and extend their thinking. As a result, students enjoy these lessons and participate actively. However, across some lessons, teaching is too didactic and opportunities are missed to promote independent learning and develop literacy and oracy skills.

In the less effective lessons, activities are not appropriate to the needs and abilities of the learners, so that expectations are too low and, consequently, students say that they are bored. While behaviour is usually managed well, students are often too passive. Marking is of variable quality and, although opportunities to review the learning are sometimes used in lessons, not all students understand what they need to do to improve. Insufficient attention is given to structuring lessons so that the learning is effective and some teachers miss opportunities to probe students' thinking.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. In Year 7, students are involved in a 'learning to learn' programme designed to make them more independent and resilient as learners. However, these skills are not yet being transferred to other areas of the curriculum. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved since the last inspection, though its use is more firmly embedded in some departments than others. Students have yet to become confident with making use of ICT independently as a learning tool. At Key

Stage 4 the school has introduced a range of vocational courses. It is working in conjunction with other providers to deliver two new diplomas from September. Numbers for vocational courses have been low but are rising.

Personal, social, citizenship and health education and work related learning are taught across all year groups as part of the life skills course and there are plans to develop this provision next year. The school has yet to gain a clear understanding of how these are being developed across the wider curriculum and not all students are able to identify how or where they are being taught about citizenship. The school offers some activities within the curriculum to support learning, such as history visits to Erdigg House, and a range of extra-curricular provision, such as theatre trips, and sports, dance, drama and philosophy clubs, but has yet to monitor uptake or impact on students' personal development.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Good arrangements to ensure health and safety are in place. Risks are carefully assessed and suitable action taken to minimise them. One very positive impact of the recent initiatives was the decisive and highly effective action taken to improve the security of the site. Procedures for child protection are well established and understood by staff. Strategies to improve attendance have been implemented effectively and monitoring procedures strengthened by the appointment of a school attendance officer.

Staff know the students well and encourage them to be healthy and to keep safe. The school works very closely with a wide range of agencies to ensure that procedures are in place to support all students, including the most vulnerable. Students who need extra support or help are identified and supported effectively and those with special educational needs make particularly good progress. The Learner Services staff and key stage managers play an effective role within the pastoral support system. The arrangements for monitoring and supporting individual student behaviour are a good feature of the school's work.

Systems for monitoring academic progress and setting targets are in the early stages of development. Students are aware of their individual targets but many are unclear how these relate to their classroom learning. Parents are regularly informed about their children's progress and letters home celebrate particular achievements.

Arrangements to settle students into school are effective. Peer mentors offer support to those entering school. Older students have the opportunity to discuss their option and career choices with teachers and careers advisors at key points during their time at school. As a result, they are able to make well informed decisions about the next phase of their education.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The inspectors agree with the school that leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The new headteacher has a clear vision for the future of the school focused around raising aspiration, promoting empowerment and delivering excellence. The vision is closely linked to a 're-launch' of the school's status as a specialist sports college and this is providing a very positive opportunity to develop the leadership skills of staff and students across the

school. The recent appointment of a director of specialism is having a very positive impact on the way the sports status is starting to drive improvement and raise aspirations.

An early decision of the new headteacher was to establish an interim senior leadership team to address a period of unavoidable long absences within the senior leadership which have created significant difficulties for the school. The school is moving through a process of making a number of key strategic internal and external appointments, including that of a business manager. The team is working well together and is focused on the core improvement priorities. In addition, a specialist impact team has been established to drive through the re-launch of the school's specialist sports status.

The sense of urgency and the vision about improvement has been communicated to staff, governors and students. The school is now in the process of translating this vision into a carefully managed programme of action but it still has some way to go to ensure this process is understood by all involved in its implementation. Middle leaders are now much more actively involved in decision making. They have been given more responsibility for improving and monitoring the areas which they manage. However, at present, middle managers are not entirely clear how to translate the multiple priorities for improvement into a coherent programme of action.

While the school has a clear understanding about the overarching priorities for improvement and is establishing challenging targets to raise standards, the arrangements and responsibilities for monitoring the current provision and the impact of new initiatives have yet to be clearly defined and established.

The school is reasonably harmonious and orderly. Equality of opportunity is promoted and this is reflected, for example, in the good achievement of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Resources are managed appropriately although the accommodation in some areas of the school is not ideal. The new training ground is a very positive development, encouraging wider community use. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Governors discharge their statutory responsibilities. They have a clear understanding of the need to raise achievement and students' aspirations and, as a result, are having a greater input into the strategic management of the school. They are well informed and highly committed and understand the school well. As yet their ability to hold the school to account is too dependent on the quality of information they receive but plans are in place to tackle this.

The school is making good use of its specialist status to build the range of its partnerships with other schools and colleges and with the wider community in order to extend the quality of its educational provision and help secure the good care, guidance and support of the students.



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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
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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	2

### 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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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**

Inspection of Flixton Girls' High School, Manchester, M41 5DR

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.

We think that Flixton Girls' High is a satisfactory and improving school. Mrs Hazeldine has worked hard to involve everyone in deciding how to improve the school. She has put a vision in place to raise expectations and improve everyone's aspirations. Your status as a sports college is an exciting opportunity for everyone to get involved in improving the school and you can play an important part in this.

While most of you achieve well at the end of Year 9, results at the end of Year 11 have been dropping. The staff have taken action to deal with this and the school hopes and expects results to improve significantly this year. We hope so too.

Some parents and some of you told us you were worried about behaviour. This is improving, particularly in classes, but we think some of you could behave more sensibly around the school. We have asked the headteacher to make sure that a climate of mutual respect between teachers and students is promoted more consistently by everyone. Many of your lessons are interesting and you make good progress. However, some of the teaching could be better and we have asked the school to share the good practice more widely.

Everyone at the school is clear that things are improving and that there is a real determination to make Flixton Girls' High even better. We have asked the school to make sure everyone understands how this can happen and to check that the changes make a positive difference. You can help by supporting the improvements and getting really involved in the life of the school

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