

Poynton High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111436
Local Authority	Cheshire
Inspection number	310599
Inspection date	22 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Peter Cox

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1596
Sixth form	320
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Malcolm Adams
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Adamson
Date of previous school inspection	2 February 2004
School address	Yew Tree Lane Poynton Stockport Cheshire SK12 1PU
Telephone number	1625 871811
Fax number	1625 874541

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school by investigating achievement and standards, particularly those in the sixth form, students personal development and well-being, the quality of teaching and learning, the curriculum and care guidance and support, the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels and the impact of the performing arts specialism across the school.

Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, its own assessment records and from national assessment data. A range of school documents was examined, along with examples of students' written work. A sample number of lessons were observed and parents' questionnaires analysed. Discussions were held with a selection of students of all ages, teachers, governors and the school improvement partner. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but there is no evidence to suggest that the schools own evaluations, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Poynton High School is a larger than average sized school with a large sixth form. The proportion of students entitled to a free school meal is small as are the number from minority ethnic groups. The large majority of students are of White British heritage. The school serves a relatively advantaged area and where a high proportion of adults have experience of higher education. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need is well below the national average, as is the number of students whose first language is not English. The school became a specialist college for the performing arts in 2002. It holds a number of awards including Investors in People, Investors in careers, Artsmark gold, Inclusion Quality Mark and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) mark.

There is a privately run kindergarten and out of school club on-site, but it did not form part of this inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school.

Students come to the school with above average standards and make outstanding progress during their time at Poynton. In 2007 by the end of Year 9, the standards achieved in national tests were well in excess of those expected, continuing a year-on-year trend. When leaving at the end of Year 11, students reach standards that are exceptionally and consistently high. In 2007, every student entered for an examination secured at least five or more passes in their GCSE's and just over three quarters of them gained five or more passes at grade C or above. Nearly two thirds of students attained five or more good grades in their GCSE's including English and mathematics, beating the national average by almost half as much again. Even more impressive was the proportion of students who reached the highest grades of A and A* - well over a quarter of them. Provisional results for 2008 at both key stages show an improvement on previous years and remain exceptionally high. The schools accurate performance data shows it to be on track to continue this trend.

The performing arts status is a significant strength of the school. It permeates everything that the school does and contributes greatly to the standards students attain. Dance, music and drama are very popular high performing subjects. In Key Stage 4, targets in the specialist subjects are regularly exceeded and standards are significantly above the national average with dance, for example, securing over three times the national average in the higher GCSE grades of A and A*.

Personal development and well being are outstanding. The school provides excellent opportunities for students to develop their spiritual, moral social and cultural awareness. This was demonstrated in an outstanding assembly that allowed opportunities for personal reflection by using literature that was inspirational and thought provoking. Much is done within subjects too, particularly through dance, music and drama where learning opportunities exist to fully appreciate and understand different cultures and religious beliefs. One dance student spoke proudly of her involvement in leading lessons at lunchtime where she taught younger students to samba. Others talk excitedly and enthusiastically about their school. They have high aspirations and really enjoy and appreciate the learning that takes place. They speak highly of their teachers. One student said that 'our teachers know what they are talking about, I have a lot of respect for them, they understand you as an individual and help you learn.' This high degree of enjoyment is reflected in the outstanding attendance rates. These are well in excess of the school's target and those expected nationally. Whilst students acknowledge the age and condition of the school buildings, they take pride and ownership of the school and particularly its interior which is impressively clean, tidy and welcoming. Students behave well and have a good understanding of how to stay safe, as was seen during the inspection when repairs to the school roof were being undertaken and scaffolding evident in a main area. Students are considerate to others, including visitors, when moving between lessons on the narrower corridors.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. A large number of the lessons observed by inspectors were excellent and fully engaged students in their learning. Teachers possess excellent subject knowledge, use high level questioning techniques and place a strong emphasis on actively involving students in each other's learning through a variety of activities such as paired working and the assessment of each other's work. Teaching and learning has benefited greatly from the specialism. Other subjects now use drama techniques to explain difficult

concepts. For example, in science, students acted out the process of electrolysis resulting in a clearer understanding of scientific principles. These creative approaches to teaching and learning bring fresh experiences to students, who recognise and appreciate the changes. Teachers believe these approaches to be effective in encouraging a more collegiate relationship between different subject areas. The curriculum is outstanding because it contains a highly effective blend of academic and vocational courses that meets the needs of all students very well. The school provides many high quality extra-curricular activities that are well received by students, who talk of having 'lots of opportunities'. Safeguarding procedures meet current requirements. Students appreciate the high levels of care, support and guidance when deciding on routes to take at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. All spoke warmly of the residential visits to Anglesey available to Year 6 students prior to starting at the school. Here they met their new teachers, which made the transition smoother. Students understand their achievement targets and are confident in how to reach these because of the regular, helpful feedback given by their teachers. However, some of the targets set at Key Stage 4 by the school, could be more challenging.

Leadership and management throughout the school are outstanding. The school is exceptionally well led by a committed and dedicated leadership team. The headteacher has a clear vision and is relentless in maintaining an agenda for improvement. The school knows itself well through well informed evaluations of performance in each subject and honest, robust and regular reviews of its strengths and weaknesses. Students speak highly of the headteacher and her deputy as being 'amazing' people who along with other senior leaders and managers have the students best interests at heart. Middle leaders are very effective in their roles, are given the appropriate responsibilities and are robustly held to account. The school is supported by an outstanding governing body that, in turn, holds the leaders of the school to account very well. The quality of leadership and management of the specialist subjects is outstanding. They are highly effective with other colleagues and provide additional drive and enthusiasm in helping maintain the momentum of sustained improvement. The school is recognised nationally for its high achieving specialist subjects. Community cohesion is a significant strength. There is extensive community involvement through timetabled activities in Key Stage 4. In addition, the performing arts teachers are highly creative and influential in sharing their outstanding practice within the school and to teachers from the wider community. There are strong supportive links with partner primary schools which help improve standards, particularly in the performing arts, of those pupils due to start their secondary education. A range of projects are impacting on the wider community groups too, some of whom benefit from Indian and ballet dance classes and others by a range of additional activities including the 'music academy'.

The school has a strong track record in meeting its targets. However, they agree with inspectors that the combining of two sets of data for target-setting in Key Stage 4 is not as clear as it might be nor sufficiently challenging. The school provides excellent value for money and demonstrates an outstanding capacity to make further improvements from an already high performing base.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The vast majority of students in the sixth form join from the main school. Some of those who come from other schools choose to because of the success of the specialist subjects. Students' achievement is outstanding, helped by the strength and impact of the high quality teaching and learning particularly in the specialist subjects. As a result of this, standards at the end of Year 13 are well above average and rising. Much has been done by the school to improve

standards since the previous inspection. Students' personal development is particularly good, they are articulate young people who are polite, confident and have high aspirations. The percentage of students who do not complete their studies is very low and practically everyone moves on to further education, training or employment. As in the main school, all other aspects, including leadership and management are outstanding because the school has developed a strong sense of shared purpose and responsibility for raising standards and improving the lives of all the students in its care.

What the school should do to improve further

- Revise the current system for setting targets in Key Stage 4 to help raise standards even further.

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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	16-19
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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?	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	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	2	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
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	1	

The quality of provision

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	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	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	
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	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Poynton High School, Stockport, SK12 1PU

Thank you for making me and my colleague so welcome in your school recently. We really enjoyed our time with you and are delighted to report that we consider your school to be outstanding.

You have played a major part in the school achieving this judgement. Your attendance is exceptional, as are the standards you reach at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. At the end of Year 13, standards are good and improving, supported by the performing arts specialism and the outstanding teaching and learning that goes on.

Clearly, you enjoy coming to school. You told us that you appreciate the effort and friendliness of your teachers. It is very obvious that you and your teachers, including the governors and senior leaders, have worked hard to get to where the school is now. It's important that this continues. You can help in this by remaining eager to learn and continuing to do your very best, rising to the challenges and opportunities presented to you.

We have asked the school to look at improvements in one area. To look again at the way targets are set for Key Stage 4. We believe the targets set for you in Years 10 and 11 could be even more challenging, providing you with a road map for even greater success.

Good luck for the future!