

# Ulverston Victoria High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112385
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	310874
<b>Inspection dates</b>	31 October –1 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Sonya Williamson 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>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1189
6th form	205
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Julie Wilkinson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Karen Hanks
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 November 2004
<b>School address</b>	Springfield Road Ulverston Cumbria LA12 0EB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01229 894140
<b>Fax number</b>	01229 483902

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Ulverston Victoria High School is of above average size. It serves a mixed rural and urban area with below average levels of deprivation. The proportion of students receiving free school meals is broadly average. Although the proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities is low, there is an average proportion with statements of special educational need. Very low proportions of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds or do not have English as their first language. The student population is stable and very few students join the main school after Year 7. The sixth form serves students from the main school and from neighbouring schools. The school has Investor in People status and has a Sportsmark award. It has specialist status in mathematics and computing.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing and governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

The students at Ulverston Victoria High School are well mannered and friendly but the school is not enabling them to achieve their best. Students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory and their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. Assemblies provide good opportunities for reflection and the school is working hard to promote students' cultural awareness. Students make positive contributions to the local community. They understand the importance of healthy lifestyles and adopt safe practices. Students benefit from the effective way the school works in partnership with external agencies and neighbouring schools to enrich its provision. Although the school's specialist status has not made a significant impact on standards, it has improved information and communication technology resources and the opportunities for supporting students with their mathematical development. The curriculum is good and students enjoy a wide range of activities outside lessons, particularly for music and sport. Students receive good pastoral care and they are supported and guided well as they enter each new key stage of their education. However, they do not have a good understanding of how well they are doing and what the next steps should be in their learning because marking often lacks detail and teachers do not place sufficient emphasis on helping students to achieve their individual targets.

Achievement and teaching are both inadequate. Students enter the school with standards that are above average and attain standards that are average: this represents inadequate progress. In 2006, achievement at the end of Key Stage 3 was in the lowest percentile of all schools nationally and there was underachievement in several subjects in Key Stage 4. Although lessons seen as part of the inspection ranged from outstanding to inadequate, there were too many lessons where the pace of learning was slow, activities were not sufficiently stimulating and the levels of challenge and support were not sufficiently well matched to students' needs. Teachers have access to data about the previous attainment of students and the grades and levels they are expected to achieve but they do not use this information consistently to plan their lessons.

Leaders and managers have been working under difficult financial constraints for some time. Despite this they have not selected the main priorities for improvement and driven them forward in the school. Roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability are not clear. This means that systems to check that improvement strategies are in place, working effectively and having an impact on students' academic achievement and personal development are not rigorously or consistently applied. Consequently, leaders and managers have not had secure evidence with which to judge the effectiveness of the school. They had judged the school to have good overall effectiveness but it is inadequate. Some concerns that were identified at the time of the previous inspection remain. Although there are pockets of more effective practice that are beginning to move some departments forward, outcomes for students have not been consistently improved. Leaders and managers have therefore not demonstrated the capacity to improve and the school does not provide satisfactory value for money.

Parents report that consultation and communication between school and home are poor. More than half of those parents who returned inspection questionnaires expressed negative views about a range of aspects of the school. These included variable standards of teaching and progress, perceived poor behaviour and poor accommodation. Although governors have recently begun to challenge the school appropriately, as well as maintaining their support, they have not ensured that safeguarding procedures meet current government requirements.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 3**

The sixth form is satisfactory and has satisfactory capacity to improve. Standards are broadly in line with the national average. Achievement is satisfactory overall.

Teaching and learning are good in the sixth form and, as a result, standards and achievement are better than in the rest of the school. No inadequate teaching was seen in the sixth form.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of the sixth form has a clear vision for improvement and development. Several initiatives, such as a target-setting procedure for students, are being implemented. Students appreciate this as it helps them to focus on how they can improve. There is good guidance and advice to enable students to make informed choices about higher education and careers opportunities. Partnership work with higher education institutions is a particularly good feature of provision.

The staying-on rate from Key Stage 4 into the sixth form is good and the drop-out rate between Year 12 and Year 13 is low.

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

- Improve achievement and raise standards across the school.
- Ensure leaders and managers at all levels set clear and agreed priorities, monitor their implementation and evaluate their impact.
- Improve the quality of teaching.
- Ensure that assessment data is effectively used to identify, challenge and address underachievement.
- Ensure safeguarding procedures meet current government requirements.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 4**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 3**

Inspectors agree with the school that the majority of students enter Year 7 having achieved standards that are above the national average. Progress to the end of Year 9 is unsatisfactory so that many students do not achieve the standards of which they are capable. Provisional data for 2007 show that there has been some improvement in standards in English and science but mathematics results show a slight decline. School data show that there are discrepancies in achievement between groups of students. The lower attaining students make unsatisfactory progress. Girls and higher attaining boys have not met expectations in English. Lower attaining girls underachieved in mathematics and science. Too many pupils who should have achieved Levels 5 and 6 in mathematics and Level 6 in science have not met their targets. Students in Key Stage 3 with statements of special educational need have made good progress in their reading. Strategies to improve the achievement of the more able students in mathematics were successful, with more achieving the higher levels.

In 2006, the standards reached by students were above national averages at the end of Key Stage 4. Achievement overall was satisfactory, but there was underachievement in mathematics. Provisional data for 2007 show a decrease in standards overall and the school did not meet its main targets. The data on achievement show that progress made by pupils between entry in Year 7 and the end of Key Stage 4 was significantly lower than would be expected. Some subjects attained high pass-rates at GCSE such as history, music, resistant materials and textiles.

Students in the sixth form make satisfactory progress overall. Standards in GCE A level English language, English literature, food technology, product design, French, further mathematics and music was particularly high in 2007. Whilst all students of all abilities students make satisfactory progress, performance across all subjects in the sixth form is inconsistent.

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

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory and have some good features. Many of the students have positive attitudes to learning. However, in some lessons where the teaching is insufficiently motivating, low-level disruption by a few students adversely affects learning. The school has developed effective strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour and these are beginning to work. Consequently there are fewer exclusions than in previous years. Behaviour overall is good in lessons and around the school. The majority of students are polite, courteous, smartly dressed and friendly. Relationships between students and with their teachers are good. Attendance is slightly above the national average. The school works hard with the support of external agencies to engage a few persistent non-attenders. Most students enjoy school, if not always their work. This is reflected in high take-up of the wide range of activities available outside lessons. The impact of sporting activities and an emphasis on healthy eating options encourages students to adopt healthy life styles. Students say that they feel safe in the knowledge that the few incidents of bullying and racism are dealt with quickly and effectively. Students take on responsibility by serving on the school council, organising events and raising money for local and national charities. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are prepared satisfactorily for their future economic well-being, although the school provides little opportunity for the development of independent learning skills.

Personal development and well-being in the sixth form are good. Students are self-confident, articulate and polite young people who work independently and collaboratively. They are good role models for younger students and are encouraged to act as their mentors.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 4**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Teaching and learning in the main school are inadequate: a significant proportion of lessons seen during the inspection were inadequate and students made limited progress.

The least successful teaching and learning is characterised by an over-reliance on worksheets and too much teacher talk, curtailing students' opportunities for independent learning and

active participation. The students' work seen demonstrates a lack of regular and diagnostic marking by teachers. Students lack awareness of their current levels of attainment and do not know how to improve their work with sufficient skill or confidence. Teachers use a narrow range of teaching and learning strategies that fails to motivate and engage students. Too often the work set fails to challenge the students adequately because teachers have not made effective use of data to plan lessons that meet students' individual needs. As a result, students do not achieve as well as they should.

In the better lessons - the majority of which were seen in the sixth form, and in subjects such as history, physics, health and social care, German, French and English - students were engaged and motivated and classroom relationships were good. Clear and focused lesson objectives were shared with students and were well linked to previous and future work. Teachers had high expectations of their students, who made good progress.

Bright informative displays in classrooms create some stimulating learning environments, for example in mathematics and English. This helps to compensate for the poor physical state of the buildings in parts of the school.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

The curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced and is developing to meet the needs and interests of all students. The school has reviewed its lower school curriculum and introduced a key skills programme to provide appropriate additional support for a minority of students. Different needs, interests and aspirations of students in Years 10 and 11 are met through the provision of pathways that allow for combinations of academic and vocational courses. These are delivered in school and through good relationships with external partners. For a few students with learning or behavioural issues, a more personalised curriculum is designed using alternative pathways. All curriculum pathways are accredited. The vocational courses meet the needs of the local labour market. Preparation for employment is further met by a well planned programme of careers education and placements for work experience. High participation rates in a wide range of enrichment activities support students' personal development.

The curriculum in the sixth form is satisfactory. A few vocational courses support an otherwise wide-ranging academic curriculum. The curriculum prepares students well for their preferred future pathways.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 3**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

When students enter the school they are cared for, guided and supported effectively. They spend two days in the school during the summer term following a structured timetable. This builds their confidence before moving to their new school. Students are well informed about their choices of subjects at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 and guided to appropriate pathways. They are equally well informed about life after the sixth form and the choices available for further education and career progression. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities make good progress because of the individualised care and support they receive.

Students are not sufficiently aware of what aspects of their work need improvement. Teachers do not consistently use target-setting and constructive marking. Where targets are set, too many students do not understand what strategies would help them achieve these targets. Academic mentoring of students by heads of year is in the early stages of development. A significant proportion of the parental questionnaires returned expressed concern about the variable rates of students' progress in lessons.

Child protection and other health-and-safety procedures are satisfactory. Risk assessments are robust within the school and for educational visits, including those overseas. Procedures for safeguarding students do not meet current requirements.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 4**

**Grade for sixth form: 3**

Leadership and management are inadequate. Although the headteacher and senior leaders have vision, it has not permeated through the school. Staff are not clear who has overall responsibility for key areas of work. There are only pockets of good practice where the vision of middle leaders has permeated to their staff teams. Targets are not being appropriately used to raise standards. Targets are in place but some are unrealistically challenging and therefore have not been met. Where targets are appropriate they are not consistently being achieved because teachers do not use them sufficiently well. Not all teachers and middle leaders identify and respond to underachievement or analyse the reasons for it. Self-evaluation is not secure or accurate; much is descriptive rather than evaluative. Crucially, it does not focus sufficiently on the impact of provision and leadership and management on students' academic achievement and personal development. It is not accurate because it does not arise from robust and consistently applied checking and evaluation. Self-evaluation does not allow the school to identify accurately the most urgent priorities for improvement.

Not all students achieve as well as they should. However, there are pockets of better achievement in some subject areas where data provided by senior managers are used more effectively. Students with statements of special educational need also achieve well because their progress is closely monitored.

Governors are just beginning to realise the importance of challenging as well as supporting the school. The curriculum committee, for example, debates a range of pertinent issues and some governors attend departmental meetings. However, governors have not ensured that all statutory procedures are in place or that all policies are agreed.

In the sixth form, leadership and management are better because of clear direction from the senior leader, more rigorous use of data to inform priorities and satisfactory achievement for students overall.



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

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	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	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	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	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	2	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?	4	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	3

<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>	4	3
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	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4	
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	4	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	No	No
Does this school require special measures?	Yes	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

2 November 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Ulverston Victoria High School, Cumbria, LA12 0EB

Thank you so much for the help you gave all the team when we inspected your school recently. You were confident, articulate, polite and friendly. Your smart appearance is a credit to you.

There are good features of your school. Your school encourages you to adopt healthy lifestyles and to behave safely. You get along well with each other and show good support for your community and those less fortunate than yourselves. You told us that you are able to take part in a good range of activities outside lessons and we agree. The choice of subjects and courses available matches your needs well and you get good advice when you have to make decisions about your future. A few of your teachers teach lessons that are outstandingly good and in these lessons you achieve very well. You have accurate views of what types of teaching help you to learn most effectively and you explained to us very well why you enjoy these lessons.

Although most of you enjoy coming to school and behave well, we have found that your school does not provide you with a good enough standard of education in some important aspects of its work. These include leadership and management, the quality of teaching and the standards you achieve. However, your sixth form is satisfactory and the teaching there is good. Your school will be in placed in 'special measures'. This means that the school will be supported to improve by the local authority and inspectors will return regularly to check that progress is being made.

The things we have asked your school to do most urgently are to:

- Improve achievement and raise standards
- Make sure leaders and managers set clear and agreed priorities, check that they are happening and see if they are having a good effect
- Improve the quality of teaching
- Make sure that assessment data about you is effectively used to identify underachievement and help you meet your targets
- Ensure safeguarding procedures meet current government requirements.

You can all help your school by continuing to come to school regularly, maintaining your positive attitudes and working as hard as you can to do as well as you can. We wish you all a happy and successful future.

Yours sincerely

Sonya Williamson HMI

(Lead inspector)