

# Holden Lane High School Specialist Sports College

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124385
<b>Local Authority</b>	Stoke-On-Trent
<b>Inspection number</b>	314912
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 June 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Davinder Dosanjh 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>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	1058
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Richard Hughes
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jacqueline Lewis
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 April 2004
<b>School address</b>	Milton Road Sneyd Green Stoke-on-Trent ST1 6LG
<b>Telephone number</b>	01782 234449
<b>Fax number</b>	01782 208351

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<b>Age group</b>	11-16
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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

Holden Lane High School is a larger than average-sized 11 to 16 school situated in the north of Stoke-on-Trent. It became a specialist sports college in 2001. There are slightly more boys than girls. About 15% of all students are eligible for free school meals, which is above average. The general social economic profile in the area is less favourable than the national picture. The majority of students are White British. The proportions of students identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with a statement of special educational need are above average. The school has received a range of awards, which include the Sportsmark Gold and Healthy Schools Status.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Holden Lane is a satisfactory school. It has some aspects which are good. It is an inclusive school where care and support for students are a real strength. Students' personal development is good and is one of the strongest features of the school. Students are polite and courteous and feel safe. Behaviour is good and the school behaviour policy is implemented effectively in most lessons. Students make a good contribution to the school, local and wider communities. They act as prefects, bully buddies and some 30 students are involved with a Kenyan exchange with eight students going to Kenya. The student voice has been enhanced by the Holden Lane Improvement Team (HIT) whereby students help the school to improve and some have been trained to observe lessons. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and enhanced by well planned activities in the curriculum.

Students' achievement is satisfactory overall. Students enter with standards which are broadly average, although many have weak writing skills. They make satisfactory progress up to Year 11. The introduction of the skills curriculum in Key Stage 3 is ensuring current students make better progress and school data indicate this to be the case. However, the opportunities for extended writing remain limited in Years 7, 8 and 9. GCSE results show improvement since the last inspection and, despite a dip in 2007, progress made by Year 11 students shows the school is back on track to raise standards further. There are rigorous procedures for checking students' progress and for identifying and supporting those who are underperforming. The achievement thermometers displayed around the school clearly indicate to students the progress they are making and they provide a visual check for all.

Specialist sports status has brought many benefits to the school with the number of students involved in sport increasing. Facilities have improved which have allowed a wider choice of activities on offer. The sports specialism makes a very strong contribution to the work students undertake in the community and the development of good healthy lifestyles. Large numbers of students complete the junior sports leadership award and take part in coaching and officiating at events. These include organising events for primary schools and involvement in many events, from golf days to putting on a dance festival at the local theatre. The specialism has been used to promote the house system in school which encourages sporting competitions across year groups.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There are examples of good and outstanding teaching but the quality is inconsistent. In the most successful lessons, teachers establish good relationships with students. Teachers have high expectations and motivate students with their enthusiasm for the subject and through a variety of interesting activities. Where teaching is less successful, students are not engaged in the lesson and the tasks set by teachers provide little challenge, enjoyment or encouragement of independent learning. Whilst pastoral care is a strength of the school, academic guidance is satisfactory. Opportunities to inform students about the next steps to improve their learning are not always taken. Marking and the setting of homework are very variable across the school, both of which are concerns expressed by parents.

The good curriculum meets the needs of learners well and is broad and flexible. It is regularly reviewed and developed. There are opportunities for the more able to sit examinations early in subjects such as geography and French. The school works closely with local colleges to provide appropriate courses for students who are disaffected. Partnerships with other agencies,

organisations, schools and colleges are good. These partnerships increase the choice of courses on offer, establish sporting links and ensure the well-being of students.

The quality of leadership and management is good. The strong direction provided by the senior leadership team is leading to actions being put in place which are now starting to show sustainable progress. Leaders clearly understand what needs improving and what needs to be done. Data are used very effectively to set challenging targets at whole school and department level. Leaders and managers have been successful in improving attendance, rigorously monitoring teaching and improving the progress being made by the current Year 11. The school, therefore, has a good capacity to improve further.

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

- Ensure that teaching is consistently of a high quality with a range of learning activities that engage and challenge students and promote independent learning.
- Ensure that marking informs students about how well they are doing and the steps needed in order to improve and reach the next level.
- Provide more opportunities for extended writing in Key Stage 3 to raise standards and achievement.

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 join the school with attainment that is broadly average, but many students have weak writing skills. Standards at Key Stage 3 are below average overall. They improved significantly in English in 2006 to be just above the average but declined in 2007. Standards improved in mathematics and science in 2007. Students' progress in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. The school is responding to inconsistent performance in Key Stage 3 by introducing a skills curriculum. This has been in place since September 2007 and has already begun to ensure that students are developing subject, literacy and learning skills which will allow them to make better progress in the future. However, the opportunities for extended writing remain limited.

Standards at Key Stage 4 are broadly average. The percentage of students gaining five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE has improved since the last inspection when it was 36%. In 2006, it rose to 63% but slipped in 2007 to 54%. When mathematics and English are included, the school shows the same improvement and similar slip in 2007. Girls do much better than boys. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to other groups. Overall, students make satisfactory progress from the time they join the school in Year 7 to when they leave in Year 11.

The school did not meet any of its targets for Key Stages 3 and 4 in 2007 and performance in the school's specialist subjects of GCSE physical education (PE) and dance were also weak. However, the school is on track for the current Year 11 to do significantly better and for them to achieve challenging targets and better GCSE results. There is strong evidence to confirm this in the school's own data, which is supported by results already achieved in a number of courses, such as English, PE and information and communication technology (ICT).

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Students generally enjoy school and show considerate behaviour, respect and positive attitudes to each other. This reflects their good social development. Students' attendance has improved and is now average. Behaviour is good overall. However, a minority of parents still have concerns and a few students need to be reminded of the school's expectations. Students understand what constitutes right and wrong, reflecting their good moral development. Students are polite and understand how to relate to adults. Cultural development is good and students are particularly enthusiastic about the links with Kenya through 'Dreams and Teams'.

Students say any incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively when they are reported. They are safety conscious both in lessons and out and know how to stay healthy and safe. Many students take part in the large variety of sports clubs on offer as part of the school's specialist status. They are aware of sexual health issues. Students respond well to the opportunities provided by the school to contribute successfully to the community. This is demonstrated in the close links they have with local primary schools as part of specialist status where they organise and officiate at sporting events. Students influence school decisions via the school's Holden Lane Improvement Team (HIT) such as refurbishing the toilets, and they decide on fundraising activities.

The school prepares students adequately for life after school. Their preparation is enhanced by activities such as building a go-kart to race against other schools as part of a national challenge, as well as the opportunity to take vocational options in Key Stage 4. The school recognises that that work-related learning and enterprise education require further development.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Students thrive in lessons where the learning is varied and challenging, and where teachers are secure and confident in their subject knowledge. Students respond well to high expectations and the teacher's use of focused questioning skills to draw out their learning and understanding. Learning is engaging and enjoyable when the work is related to the students' interests and abilities. For example, in a Year 7 English lesson, guided questioning was used effectively to challenge students to recall essential facts, empathise with the character's feelings, relate their knowledge to cultural practices around the world, and to interrogate the text. Questioning was also used to elicit higher-level verbal responses in a Year 9 PE lesson. The most effective lessons in Key Stage 3 use the skills framework in planning, which ensures that students can understand what they are being asked to do and how they can make progress. Self-assessment is used well in these lessons. Learning is inhibited in a significant number of classrooms where the work does not meet the needs of all students, in particular the more able, and where positive behaviour is not encouraged. A minority of students are also disengaged from the lesson for long periods of time because there is a limited range of stimulating learning activities.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad and increasingly meets the needs of most learners. Students experience a diverse curriculum at Key Stage 3, developed around a skills-based framework. This recent

innovation is already having a positive impact on the students' achievements, especially where this is embedded in departmental practice, for example within the science department. Other curriculum areas, such as the personal development curriculum, are being further developed to include more opportunities in relation to careers guidance and support, and work-related learning. At Key Stage 4, the curriculum has been designed to reflect different learning pathways matched to the students' prior learning. The introduction of the BTEC course in PE is an indicator of the more recent positive impact that specialist school status is having on student outcomes. Together with the established links with local 14-19 provision, the school is well placed to implement a new diploma in media and creative arts, and to support a personalised learning programme for all students. The contribution the school's specialist sports status makes to the local area is highly valued. As a fully extended school, a wide range of clubs and extension activities, covering sports, outdoor pursuits and arts activities, as well as family and community learning opportunities, enrich students and the wider community. Student take-up of these opportunities is high.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

A high level of commitment from staff helps to ensure good care and pastoral support for students. Arrangements for health and safety and the safeguarding of students are in line with current government requirements and are regularly reviewed. Proactive staff have ensured that the number of bullying incidents has reduced. Students act as bully buddies and work effectively with staff to help students new to the school at the start of Year 7. Risk assessments are rigorous and emphasise the safety of both students and staff. Arrangements to ensure that students feel safe are good. Care and support are also good for students in the care of the local authority and for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are good relationships with external support agencies such as educational psychologists. The support for persistent absentees and those at risk of low attendance is robust and effective and a reason why attendance has improved. The behaviour improvement programme centre is successful in supporting students with behavioural issues and, as a result, there have been no permanent exclusions this academic year.

Academic guidance is satisfactory but is inconsistent and, in some cases, marking fails to give specific advice on what students need to do to improve their work or to reach the next level. The setting and marking of homework are variable across the school. A small number of parents raised concerns about the clarity of the reports they receive, and the school acknowledges that this system is not working as well as it should. Changes are already in place for next year. Students receive adequate advice on the courses available at the end of Year 11. These include opportunities at other local providers as well as employment and training.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher and senior team give clear and strong direction to the work of the school. The leadership structure at all levels has undergone significant change since the last inspection. Roles and responsibilities are now more clearly defined and distributed. Middle leaders are more effective in their roles. They are involved and consulted about strategies for improvement. All leaders and managers are rightly focused on raising achievement, particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9, although the impact of this is not yet apparent in all subject areas. Additionally, changes

to exam entries and the formation of 'accelerated' groups are already showing marked improvements in results in Years 10 and 11 in some subject areas, particularly in the specialist subject area of PE, but also in English and ICT.

The self-evaluation of teaching and learning is detailed and this has facilitated the identification of underachieving students and the implementation of appropriate intervention. The teaching undertaken by all staff is regularly and accurately monitored and effectively followed up. This has enabled senior and middle leaders to identify very good teaching and that which is less than satisfactory, resulting in improved professional development opportunities and support for staff when required. However, where this support has not had the desired effect, the leadership team and governors have taken some very difficult but necessary decisions to ensure the quality of provision is improved.

The new chair of governors has worked hard to improve links with the school and to revise the governing body committee structure. Channels of communication with the school are open and consultative, and governors are well informed about the school's strengths and areas for development. Joint meetings with the leadership ensure a consistency of approach and have engendered a growing sense of teamwork and a commitment to raising achievement. Governors and the senior leadership team are working hard to provide resources to match the priorities in the school development plan. The school provides satisfactory value for money.



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**Annex A**

## Inspection judgements

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</b>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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	2

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	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	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	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>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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	2
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

27 June 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Holden Lane High School Specialist Sports College, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 6LG

Thank you for the contributions you made to the school's recent inspection. We enjoyed meeting you, listening to your views and watching you in your lessons. We particularly liked the dance rehearsals in readiness for your festival and hearing about the work in Kenya through 'Dreams and Teams'.

Your school is providing you with a satisfactory education overall and some aspects of the school are good. You receive good care and support, and your personal development is a real strength of the school. Behaviour is good and attendance has improved. The curriculum is broad and flexible and provides you with many opportunities. The achievement thermometers around school certainly give you a clear indication of the progress you are making. Specialist sports status has brought many benefits to the school and you. These include more of you taking part in sport and the competitions within the house system. Facilities have improved, allowing a wider choice of activities on offer. Many of you make a good contribution in the community by completing the junior sports leadership award and taking part in coaching and officiating at events. You take on a range of responsibilities and the Holden Lane Improvement Team enables you to be involved in influencing school decisions.

Good leadership and management are leading to improvements. The headteacher and her team are working hard to improve things and they particularly want you to achieve better results in Year 9 national tests and GCSE examinations in Year 11. The school's data shows that some of you in Year 11 have already achieved some good results at GCSE. We have asked your school to do the following.

- Improve the quality of teaching where it does not provide a range of challenging activities and encourage you to learn more independently.
- Ensure that marking informs you about how well you are doing and the steps needed in order to improve and reach the next level.
- Provide more opportunities for you to do extended writing in Years 7, 8 and 9.

It is important you continue to support the school and play your part in making it even better. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Davinder Dosanjh Her Majesty's Inspector