

Woodhey High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105361
Local Authority	Bury
Inspection number	323198
Inspection dates	17–18 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Patrick Geraghty 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 (total)	978
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Luise Nandy
Headteacher	Mr Martin Braidley
Date of previous school inspection	3 October 2007
School address	Bolton Road West Ramsbottom Bury Lancashire BL0 9QZ
Telephone number	01706 825215
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors. When Woodhey High School was inspected in October 2007, it was given a notice to improve and asked to address issues related to student's achievement and leadership and management. It was subsequently visited in May 2008, when it was judged to be making good progress.

Description of the school

Woodhey High School has been designated a specialist science college since 2005 and is situated in the market town of Ramsbottom. It is of average size and the proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is very low. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, as is the percentage eligible for free school meals. The school has received awards in a number of areas, including Sportsmark, Careers Education Quality Award and Healthy Schools status. Woodhey has also been a hub school for the School Sports Partnership programme since 2005. As part of the school's developing extended service provision, it offers an onsite drop-in centre providing a confidential service to support students over health, careers advice and welfare issues.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

This is now a good school. The governors, headteacher and senior leaders have made a determined and successful effort over the last twelve months to tackle the areas for improvement cited in the October 2007 inspection report. In particular, they have tackled inadequate achievement at both key stages and embedded comprehensive and robust quality assurance systems across the school. This has quickly and effectively impacted on the quality of provision and student progress.

Achievement is good and standards are above average. Examination and test results at both key stages are well above national averages and demonstrate good year-on-year improvement. The slow progress that many students were making at the time of the last inspection has been tackled effectively. Evidence of recent examination results together with inspection evidence indicates that students are now making good progress. Personal development and well-being are outstanding. This is a school that is characterised by a high degree of mutual respect and a strong commitment to inclusion. It is a safe and harmonious environment in which all are encouraged to engage and develop. Students' behaviour is outstanding. Healthy lifestyles and participation in numerous extra-curricular activities are encouraged and enthusiastically embraced by students.

Teaching and learning are good. Improvements to quality assurance have empowered teachers to develop their skills and place a greater focus on active learning. In the majority of good and outstanding lessons, challenge and independent learning are promoted with fervour and students respond well. There is good use of information and communication technology (ICT) to promote learning. Data is now used effectively to monitor students' progress. Challenging targets are set. Students are benefiting from the closer monitoring that ensures they make good progress. The contribution of the advanced skills teacher and the focus on raising the overall standards of teaching and learning, through a programme of classroom visiting, is enabling the best practice to be spread throughout the school. However, there remain some inconsistencies in the quality of marking and detailed feedback and in the challenge and participation offered to students in a minority of lessons. The curriculum is good and now meets the needs of all students. Subject choice has been extended at both key stages. Vocational pathways have been expanded. Effective partnerships have been developed with further education colleges. Care, guidance and support are good.

Leadership and management are good. The school's self-evaluation is thorough and accurate. Astute appointments to the senior leadership team have strengthened quality assurance and promoted an improvement culture. The governors have made a key contribution to the school's transformation; for example, the highly effective work of their monitoring and curriculum improvement committees in monitoring improvement actions and targets. The school has a good capacity to make further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure greater consistency in marking so that all students know what they need to do to improve.

- Make sure that all lessons provide challenging opportunities for students to stretch their learning and work independently.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are above average. Students enter the school with above average attainment. Standards at Key Stage 3 are well above average in English, mathematics and science. Provisional results for 2008 show further improvement with significant improvement in English, particularly for those students reaching the higher levels. Key Stage 4 results have been consistently above average since 2005. Provisional results for 2008 indicate significant improvement in the proportions of students achieving five or more GCSE grades A* to C, and five or more GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics. Both are well above national averages. Following a period where achievement fell below satisfactory levels in both key stages, the school has made significant progress over the last 12 months. A raft of initiatives is now impacting on achievement. Evidence from lesson observations, scrutiny of current work, and the school's improved tracking procedures indicate that students are now making good progress. Teaching observations undertaken during the inspection indicate that there is now a significant proportion of good and outstanding teaching to sustain and enable further progress. Good and sometimes outstanding progress was observed in English, science, mathematics, history, design and technology, music and art. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same good progress as other students.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school graded students' personal development and well-being as good; inspectors found it to be outstanding. Students say that they receive considerable support from their teachers and enjoy coming to a school that is a 'happy community'. Attendance figures are very high, well above the national average and there are very few unauthorised absences. Students benefit from the excellent pastoral system, they feel safe in school and know who to approach if they have any worries. Younger students appreciate the 'buddy' system that gives them access to older students who are always happy to help. Behaviour in and around school is exemplary. There are very few instances of bullying; students say there are good systems for dealing with any unpleasant or antisocial behaviour. They also say that incidents of racist behaviour would not be tolerated and just 'don't happen'.

Students relate exceptionally well with each other and with their teachers. This is a school where mutual respect is expected and given. Their spiritual development, appreciation of cultural diversity and understanding of different faiths and beliefs is well promoted. The personal education programme, provision for physical exercise and the new canteen arrangements are having a significant impact on promoting healthy lifestyles. Participation in the many extra-curricular activities is exceptionally high. The school council is valued by students and they feel that their opinions are listened to. Contribution to the wider community includes international projects across the curriculum and in many charitable fundraising activities. Extended learning experiences and enterprise events have developed students' workplace skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. The majority of lessons are good or outstanding and are characterised by clear objectives, a range of activities that meet the learning needs of all students and a brisk pace throughout. Challenge is always in the air through thoughtful questioning, planning for students to work independently and reference to individual targets. The use of ICT helps make lessons more interesting and engaging. In one outstanding lesson students worked in pairs or small groups making use of video clips to improve their understanding of patriotism in First World War poetry. The teacher moved quickly between groups and constantly challenged students' understanding with well targeted questions that kept students engrossed in their work. In a small number of lessons teaching is less effective because the extended introductions by teachers leave less time for students to undertake independent activities or to follow work that is sufficiently differentiated to meet their individual needs. While the marking of students' work is generally good there is a lack of consistency across the school. The school uses data to set challenging targets. Students are generally aware of the levels they have achieved and what they need to do next to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It meets all statutory requirements and in Key Stage 3 the broad and balanced curriculum is enhanced by the teaching of drama, discrete citizenship and an option to study a second modern foreign language. In Key Stage 4 there are a variety of pathways boosted by the school's specialist subjects so that students are able to choose separate sciences, five pathways for modern foreign languages and an increasing number of vocational opportunities that take account of students' strengths and interests. The science specialism has a high profile across the school. Collaboration with local schools and colleges is strong with a range of diplomas and workplace learning activities now becoming available. Master classes in science and links with Manchester University are accommodated in the school's inclusive ethos that also supports students through a lifestyles club and an alternative curriculum so that the learning needs of all students are met. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities and a comprehensive range of curriculum activities to enrich the experiences of all students, including a series of days to promote opportunities in industry and work shadowing.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. There is a strong community ethos generated by the excellent work of year heads and the special educational needs coordinator. Students settle quickly in Year 7. Parents are recognised as key partners and are regularly consulted. A thorough programme for careers education is well established and this prepares students well for their entry into further education or employment. Levels of challenge have been raised and students are very clear as to what their target grades are. The tracking of students' progress is now systematic and a standardised system is helping to ensure that any underachievement is identified and appropriate intervention engaged. Provision for vulnerable students and for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. It encompasses teams of dedicated and highly committed staff who are much valued by students. Those who are at risk are identified

early and appropriate support strategies are employed which are enhanced by well established links with external agencies. A diverse range of personalised packages are arranged to address the needs of some students and enable them to continue with their education. All statutory safeguarding requirements are fully met.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. Senior leaders and governors responded with great alacrity in producing and implementing a well structured and focused improvement plan following the key areas for improvement noted in the school's last inspection report. Governors and senior leaders have established a clear vision for the future of the school, manifested by a determination to strive for higher levels of achievement and the promotion of a strong improvement culture. This vision is further enhanced by the sensitive and collaborative leadership style embraced by the headteacher. Astute new appointments to the senior leadership team have created a group with strong complementary strengths. This talented and energetic senior team has ensured that staff and students share their vision and commitment for improvement. There are effective lines of communication and accountability. Quality assurance systems are now robust. Data are used effectively to check progress. Governors provide good support coupled with a challenging approach to school management at all levels. Governors have been a key factor in moving the school rapidly forward. Heads of faculty and middle managers work together well to promote and embed good practice. Areas of concern are speedily identified and acted upon. The school's specialist science status is well managed and used effectively to enhance the curriculum and share good practice. The school sets challenging targets for future performance. There is a strong commitment to inclusion and a strong involvement with the wider community. Structures are now in place to ensure a good capacity to bring about further improvements. An extensive building programme and the development of resources are managed well. The school gives good value for money.

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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	2

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/or disabilities make progress	2

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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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

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

Inspection of Woodhey High School, Bury, BL0 9QZ

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team into your school recently. We thoroughly enjoyed our two days at your school. We particularly enjoyed our lively discussions with so many of you about your work, interests and how much you enjoy and give to the school. We would also like to congratulate you on your outstanding behaviour and on your contribution to the inclusive and harmonious ethos of your school. Your school is now making good progress. The school is well led. The headteacher, senior staff, staff and governors are working hard because they want you to do the very best you can.

Most importantly, your achievement and examination results continue to improve. Your school has undergone much change in the last 12 months. This has led to improvements to teaching and learning, curriculum and management that have impacted on your progress. Our observations show that you are now making good progress. You enjoy many of your lessons, particularly when you know that you are improving and learning. There is much good and some outstanding teaching in the school and in these lessons you respond well to teachers' high expectations. Your curriculum options are now good. You enjoy a wide range of extra-curricular activities. The teachers and support staff care for you and give you good guidance.

We have asked your school to.

- Ensure greater consistency in marking so that you all know what you need to do to improve.
- Make sure that all lessons provide challenging opportunities for you to stretch your learning and work independently.

We are sure that you will keep up your strong enthusiasm for learning and will make even better progress in the future.

All the inspection team wish you well for your future education and careers.