

# Holly Lodge Girls College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104688
<b>Local Authority</b>	Liverpool
<b>Inspection number</b>	324091
<b>Inspection dates</b>	24–25 June 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Sue Harrison 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>	Girls
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	1274
Sixth form	150
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Peter Killeen
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Julia Tinsley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 March 2006
<b>School address</b>	Queen's Drive West Derby Liverpool Merseyside L13 0AE
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 2283772
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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

Holly Lodge is a larger than average school serving several inner city areas of Liverpool. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is in line with the national average. Most students are White British. Approximately one tenth of students are from minority ethnic groups, the largest of which is Yemeni. Of these, 87 are at an early stage of learning English. The school has been a specialist arts college since 2001 and has gained a number of awards, most recently the Inclusion Quality Mark. The school houses a city-wide student support centre for Key Stage 3 students and a Key Stage 4 behaviour support centre. It provides community access for adult learning courses. Its sixth form provision is delivered in partnership with four other schools and the local college. Between 2006 and 2008 the school experienced a period of staffing instability in some departments but this has now stabilised.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school, which provides a pleasant and tranquil environment for learning based on a spirit of inclusion and high expectations.

Students enter the school with below average attainment and they reach standards that are broadly average overall and above average in the school's specialist subjects. This represents good progress against their starting points. Students thoroughly enjoy the opportunities presented by the school, they feel safe and well cared for and their personal development is excellent. The school is a calm, welcoming place. The campus is well looked after by staff and students and the school is full of displays of students' work. There is a culture of respect between staff and students and behaviour is good. Most parents are very positive about the school.

Most lessons are good because teachers plan work meticulously to engage the interest of learners and help them make good progress. They use information and communication technology (ICT) imaginatively and effectively to enhance their lessons and they are skilful at checking the level of understanding within the class. The curriculum is outstanding in the way it meets students' interests and needs. There is a dynamic approach to planning the curriculum, with constant attention given to changes that would benefit students. The school is particularly strong in terms of enrichment activities which the students greatly appreciate and which foster excellent community cohesion. Pastoral support and career guidance are very good; however, academic guidance is satisfactory and therefore not as strong.

Leadership and management are good. The school is rigorous in evaluating its own strengths and weaknesses. Senior managers set challenging targets and closely monitor action plans to address issues. Attendance has improved since the last inspection: in particular there has been a significant reduction in the proportion of students who are persistent absentees. There has been improvement in examination results in the core subjects of English and mathematics; until recently the rate of progress was slower than planned due to staffing issues but there has been significant improvement in these subjects in the current year. Training for middle managers is beginning to improve subject leaders' use of data to monitor learner progress but this is not yet used consistently well across all departments. The school's specialist status is managed extremely well to bring about improvement across the whole curriculum.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 2

The sixth form provides well for its students. Standards are close to average and rising as a result of a range of initiatives that are successfully promoting improvement. Students do particularly well in the creative courses introduced as part of the school's specialist arts college status and in courses leading to alternative accreditation at the end of Year 12, including vocational and Level 2 qualifications. Achievement is good in relation to students' overall below average starting points. Students gain confidence in themselves and their capabilities as a result of the school's provision of good guidance, care and support. The great majority of students complete their courses as a result of the guidance they receive to make appropriate choices and the support in place to help them overcome any difficulties during their course. This is particularly important for those students who find the step up from GCSE very challenging. Students also benefit from good teaching, as well as a curriculum that is exceptionally well

matched to their needs and aspirations. A wide range of enrichment activities contribute much to students' personal development. Students say that the sixth form staff are good at helping them explore possibilities to prepare them for the next stage of their lives or education. The success of this approach can be seen in the fact that last year an exceptionally low number of students were not in education, employment or training after leaving the school.

Students' personal development is outstanding. They become mature young people with a well developed view of the world as a result of the school's excellent promotion of community cohesion, and they are prepared to make a difference. They have a voice in the school and are able to point to improvements that they have been involved with. Sixth form students contribute well to the community of the school and in support of its wider responsibilities as a specialist college.

Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. A close watch is kept on the quality of provision and changes are evaluated carefully to ensure that they are effective in supporting the drive for improvement. The school recognizes that, although some teaching in the sixth form is very demanding, there are times when teachers miss opportunities to stretch students' thinking by adjusting their questions to students' answers.

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

- Further improve standards in the non-specialist subjects.
- Ensure that subject leaders use data on student progress effectively so that best practice is consistent across all departments.
- Ensure academic guidance for students is as strong as pastoral support.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Students enter the school with lower than average prior attainment. The standard of their work is satisfactory overall and good in some subjects, notably in the school's specialist areas. This represents good progress against their starting points.

Standards are rising. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE A\* to C grades including English and mathematics, or equivalent, has improved gradually in recent years and evidence during the inspection indicated a faster rate of improvement taking place in 2008/09. This is due to a range of strategies put in place that are now having substantial impact as staffing has stabilised. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE A\* to C grades in any subject, or equivalent, rose to above the national average in 2008. A higher than average proportion of students gains a qualification in a modern foreign language. Examination results have been poor in a minority of subjects, including some science courses. Changes to the curriculum are having a dramatic impact in science, with students making good progress in lessons. Vulnerable students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and young people in care, achieve well at the school.

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

### **Grade: 1**

Students' spiritual, moral and social development are excellent and clearly evidenced in the strong spirit of tolerance and respect for others which permeates the school. Attendance has improved and is currently in line with the national average, which reflects students' enthusiasm and enjoyment of life in school. There has been a dramatic drop in the number of persistent

absentees in recent years. The vast majority of students demonstrate mature and cooperative behaviour in class and around the building. They are responsive to the school's rewards and sanctions systems. Students benefit from a welcoming, supportive atmosphere where bullying is rare, effectively dealt with and issues such as healthy living and care for others are of paramount importance. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are exceptionally well integrated and the special talents or interests of all students are well developed. Students feel extremely safe around the school; they confidently share concerns with their teachers or other adults at the school and act as mentors to help each other where appropriate. They welcome the chances they are offered to express their views about school and they take up numerous opportunities to assume responsibilities and serve the school, as well as the local and international community. Students' creativity and confidence reflect the school's specialism. They acquire the entrepreneurial and cooperative skills they will need in the workplace.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching and learning is good and contributes to students' enjoyment and achievement. Across the school, teachers plan well with detailed consideration for students' varied needs and capabilities. Students benefit from frequent opportunities to work independently to clarify their thinking and collaboratively to learn from others. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use ICT very effectively to enliven lessons. Students respond well to the high expectations of teachers, the challenging tasks they are set and the praise and encouragement they receive. Overall pupils behave well and are keen to participate in discussions. Most students are aware of their target grades and the levels at which they are working. In some lessons peer evaluation and self-evaluation is used to very good effect to assess what has been understood. In the less successful lessons, the pace of learning is slow and behaviour deteriorates because teaching does not enthuse or challenge. Teachers mark work regularly and generally give students indicators of how they can improve further. The school has introduced academic review sessions at lunchtime for all students, but there is inconsistency in how well these are working.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum is outstanding, particularly the excellent contribution it makes to students' personal development and well-being. The school's enrichment programme is exemplary at fostering individual talent and helping students to understand and appreciate the wider community. This is achieved through external speakers and visits, as well as activities within the school. Staff are energetic and innovative at finding ways for students to participate in the community and develop their talents, confidence and skills, for example via the school's significant involvement in Liverpool's City of Culture events and through links with other countries.

The dynamic curriculum is carefully monitored and reviewed to ensure it meets the changing needs and aspirations of all students to help them succeed. The school's specialist status has had a dramatic impact on the school, driving improvements in teaching and learning, extending the range of courses and developing extensive links with organizations and agencies to support the curriculum. There is an excellent range of courses within art and design. In addition,

experience gained from introducing vocational courses in this area is then well used to develop the curriculum in other departments. Numerous school awards endorse the highly inclusive nature of the curriculum as well as the excellent focus on the promotion of equality and diversity.

Partnership arrangements with other schools and providers have led to the wide breadth of curriculum for older students. This successfully promotes enjoyment and achievement, including for more vulnerable or disaffected young people.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Good care, guidance and support reflect the school's strongly inclusive ethos. Positive, respectful and good-humoured relationships create a purposeful, supportive ambience. Pastoral support is particularly good. Staff identify and respond well to the needs of vulnerable students, giving strong support to them and their families. Thoughtful induction processes help new students to settle well into this large school. At appropriate times, students get effective advice about courses and career paths they might choose. Students at risk of disaffection receive well-tailored support and guidance, which keeps them engaged and is gradually minimising the number of exclusions. The expertise of many external agencies is used to beneficial effect. The school meets current government requirements for safeguarding. Policies and procedures for health, safety and child protection are subject to regular reviews and are familiar to all staff. There are regular inspections of the school premises and risk assessments for all activities.

Academic guidance is satisfactory and improving; the school recognises this is an area for further development. Assessment, record keeping and review of students' progress have improved since the last inspection. Teachers are acquiring increasingly well evidenced knowledge of students' achievements and needs, as well as an accurate picture of their potential. Progress days enable parents and carers to discuss students' targets. Where individual progress is inadequate, the school has put in place increasingly effective actions to improve performance. Staff use merits and commendations to recognise effort, and appropriate sanctions where students' involvement is less consistent.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good because there is an effective focus on improving learning within the context of maintaining a very inclusive ethos in the school. A major strength of the leadership team is the success of actions taken to ensure that the overall quality of lessons is good and that the curriculum is meeting students' needs exceptionally well.

Self-evaluation is honest and effective. Inspectors found many examples of improvement following action taken by the school on issues they had identified. Targets set for departments are challenging and the progress made towards meeting them is monitored rigorously by the senior team. Training is in place to develop the skills of middle managers, for example to sharpen the use of student progress data, but this has not yet had sufficient impact in all areas.

The impact of measures to bring about improvements has been hampered in some departments by staff changes in the years following the previous inspection. The situation is now stable and the pace of improvement has increased noticeably in 2008/09, for example in English and mathematics.

The school provides good value for money. Resources are very well used to create a pleasant and stimulating environment. The school has used its specialism very effectively to improve teaching and develop the curriculum. It also contributes significantly to the exemplary promotion of community cohesion, which leads to very positive interaction between different groups in the school and the students' understanding of their local communities and the culture of other countries. Equality of opportunity permeates all aspects of school life.

Governors support the school well and provide an effective level of challenge to the leadership team. There is good capacity for further improvement at the school.



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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?	2	2
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	2	2

## Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
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	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	1	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	3	
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	2	

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2	2
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?	2	2

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	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	2
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	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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**

As you are aware, we recently inspected your school and I am writing to tell you about our findings. Thank you for helping us to find our way around and telling us your views. We agree with what many of you told us: Holly Lodge is a good school. It is a very friendly and welcoming place and we were impressed by the facilities in the school and how you help to look after them. Most students clearly enjoy the excellent range of opportunities the school offers. It was good to see how well you get on together and your understanding of the needs of other people. We saw good teaching and learning in many lessons and good standards in some of the work you produce, especially in the school's specialist subjects. Examination results are improving and we think you make good progress in most of your subjects. You told us how much help and support you get in school and that it feels a safe environment. We agree that pastoral support is very good. We think the headteacher and other staff have a good understanding of what the school does well and what can make it even better. In particular, we have asked the headteacher to work with you and the staff to:

- further improve standards in the non-specialist subjects
- ensure your progress is monitored carefully in all departments
- make sure you get enough guidance to know how you can achieve your highest possible level.

It was a pleasure meeting students at the school. May I take this opportunity to wish you all the best for the future.