

Range High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104953
Local Authority	Sefton
Inspection number	331411
Inspection dates	5–6 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Jane Jones HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1274
Sixth form	287
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs S Owen
Headteacher	Mrs M Miller
Date of previous school inspection	23–24 November 2005
School address	Stapleton Road Formby Liverpool, Merseyside L37 2YN
Telephone number	01704 879315
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three Additional Inspectors. The inspectors visited 26 lessons and two assemblies, and held meetings with the headteacher, senior and middle managers, two governors and three groups of students. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documents including analyses of examination results, records of monitoring, evaluation and review, improvement plans, some policies, minutes of the governing body's meetings, information on provision for students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and case studies that illustrated how the school works in partnership with parents and other agencies to support the most vulnerable students. Questionnaires were completed by parents, by students and by staff – 288, 1176 and 48 respectively.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- students' progress in Key Stages 3 and 4, and their attainment and progress in the sixth form
- students' enjoyment of and personal development through their educational experiences in and out of the classroom, and how well these equip them for the future and enable them to play their part in the community
- how effectively teachers use assessment in lessons and in promoting the academic progress of students of all ages and abilities
- the effectiveness of management systems for monitoring, evaluation and review and links with strategic planning
- the curriculum in the main school and sixth form and the school's work with other educational partners.

Information about the school

Range High School has grown over the last three years, in part due to the growth of the sixth form, but it also admitted some students from a local school that was closing. In general, few students join the school at times other than in Year 7. Most students enter the school having reached high standards in national tests at primary school. This is a designated school for students who have physical disabilities, some of whom have extensive learning needs. The profile of students' attainment as they embark on advanced-level studies is lower overall than is typical of sixth form students nationally.

Range High School is a specialist school for mathematics and computing. It collaborates with another secondary school and a college of further education in providing a broad range of courses in the sixth form and, more recently, extending vocational choices at Key Stage 4. The school holds a number of awards including Artsmark and Healthy Schools, Sefton Local Authority's Sport School of the Year, and it recently achieved International School status. The financial management standard was achieved in 2006 and, during the inspection, the school was informed it had achieved the Governor Mark.

Further information about the school

	School's figures	School's figures compared with other schools
School size	1274	Above average
Free school meals	2%	Well below average
Proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	16%	Below average
Proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups	2%	Well below average
Proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language	1%	Well below average
Proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	2%	Average

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school, not just because students attain high standards in tests and examinations, but because of the rich experiences provided for students through their studies, the house system, and a diverse range of other activities, all of which result in mature, caring, confident young people who enjoy their education and are well equipped for the next stage of their lives. The upward trend in GCSE results and the successful way in which excellent leadership and management have sustained other achievements show that the school has outstanding capacity to improve.

The curriculum for students in Key Stages 3 and 4 is outstanding; it continues to evolve and has at its heart the aim to give every student opportunities to fulfil his/her potential. The sixth-form curriculum is broad but the students' examination results are not as uniformly good as they are in the main school. Leaders, including governors, give an excellent steer to the school's work. Much of the teaching is good and some is outstanding. There is scope to use the best practice to improve the consistency of the teaching.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the involvement of middle managers in identifying and sharing the best practice in teaching and learning.
- Build on the current sixth-form provision, including through partnerships, to enable all students to have access to courses that meet their individual needs and aspirations, and ensure academic guidance prior to and during sixth-form study secures high levels of success.

How well does the school meet the needs of individuals and different groups of pupils?

1

Students' achievement is outstanding: they enjoy learning and make good progress over the five years of Key Stages 3 and 4 to attain high standards in all their subjects. Students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities attain very well,

as do those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. In the last two years, nearly all Year 11 students passed 5+ GCSEs, and over 80% attained 5+ A* to C grades, including English and mathematics.

Students feel happy and safe at school: the vast majority of parents say the same. Students' behaviour is excellent and they are sensible, even when letting off steam at break and lunch times. Students report that bullying is infrequent and dealt with effectively. They enjoy taking responsibility and their actions show they care and have consideration for others, demonstrating good awareness of the circumstances and cultures of others whose lives are different from theirs. They have a mature sense of social and moral responsibility and show a well developed understanding of people whose lives and cultures are different from their own. Through their roles on the governing body and school/year councils, students contribute effectively to the leadership of the school. Attendance is close to 95% and lateness is rare.

Students often work industriously in lessons and are keen to do well. In the best lessons, their excitement and interest in learning is tangible. Throughout their schooling, they develop important skills that will stand them in good stead in their future lives. Almost all progress at age 16 into sixth-form study, further education, training or employment.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	1
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	1
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	1
Pupils' attendance and punctuality	1
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

The quality of the school's work

Much of the teaching is of high quality and this enables students to make good progress from their starting points. There are many strengths to the teaching, but also some areas of inconsistency. Good classroom relationships result in no time being wasted. Teachers' good subject knowledge underpins their explanations and questions although not all give enough opportunity for students to articulate their

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

thinking. The best lessons are vibrant: these teachers are skilled in deepening and extending students' knowledge and understanding and provide important opportunities for developing skills such as team work and independent study. In the satisfactory lessons, teachers tended to talk for lengthy periods and did not check carefully on the progress of individual students.

The school sets challenging targets for students' performance and monitors their progress against them on a regular basis, intervening to rectify any underachievement. Teachers' marking includes targets for students to aid improvement.

Students are very pleased with the breadth of choice of courses each has at Key Stage 4. Some students take GCSEs early, for instance, in mathematics where subsequent pathways are well thought through and all study information and communication technology. There is an impressive selection of extra-curricular activities, particularly sports, and these add considerably to students' enjoyment and personal development.

Support, guidance and care are excellent in all respects, and enable the students to make the most of all the school provides. Pastoral care and guidance are outstanding: staff show high levels of commitment to each student and their families, working closely with external agencies to support those in need or challenging circumstances.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	2
Effective assessment and academic guidance	2
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	1
Support, guidance and care	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's leadership successfully steers the school's development. Her steely determination to provide the best opportunities for each individual is coupled with a readiness to recognise and celebrate the diversity and success of students and staff alike. She is capably supported by senior and middle leaders, who have developed their roles in the three years since the last inspection. Robust procedures and systems ensure the highest standards of care for students and bring coherence to the work of managers. The school evaluates its performance accurately and has a good track record of bringing improvement through focused actions, for instance, accelerating the upward trend in results at GCSE in 2008. The school's capacity for further improvement is outstanding.

The school embraces many effective partnerships – with other local schools and colleges to add choice to the curriculum and with primary schools to strengthen teaching approaches and pupils' smooth transition. The school's specialism makes an

excellent contribution to students' outcomes, development and enjoyment, for instance, enriching the experiences of the most disabled students. All of this represents excellent value for money.

The governing body fulfils its responsibilities and plays a key leadership role, as do students through their contribution to the school and local communities. The school is proactive in promoting community cohesion, both within the school and beyond. It achieves this through business partnerships, sports and community groups including a club for autistic children and their families and initiatives developed through the Forthright group of nine local schools, such as the 'Formby Summit'.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Monitoring, evaluating and planning for improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	1
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	2
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	1
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	2
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	1
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	2
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

Students enjoy their time in the sixth form, attributing their part in the house system and opportunities for independent learning as key factors in their outstanding personal development and well-being. Students value the outstanding care and personal guidance that they receive. They make good progress in their A-level subjects, with around 40% gaining A or B grades, which is average. Almost all proceed to the university or employment of their choice. The picture is more uneven at AS level, where pass rates are not as high and there are dips in performance. Academic guidance and monitoring are not as strong as the very effective systems in the rest of the school but plans are in place to develop this work further.

The curriculum is good: the wide range of courses meets the needs of the vast majority well. Teaching is often good or better, particularly when students are required to apply their knowledge, research information to solve real-life problems or tackle searching examination questions.

Leadership and management roles are distributed effectively among a number of staff who take responsibility for different aspects of the sixth form. Collaboration with a local school preserves choice of subjects and ensures cost effectiveness.

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

The questionnaires reflected parents' and carers' very positive views of the school, expressing high levels of confidence in their child's safety and enjoyment of school. This matched students' own views in discussion with inspectors and as expressed in their questionnaires. Many parents expressed their appreciation of the staff in caring for their children and boosting their self-confidence. Particular praise was given for the mentoring systems and support for physically disabled students.

While the majority of parents and carers felt that the school kept them well informed about their child's progress and helped them support their learning, one in seven did not.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2006-7, 14% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2006-7, 46% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing for its pupils suitably. In 2006-7, 34% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2006-7, 6% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.

7 November 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Range High School, Formby, Liverpool, L37 2YN

I am writing to tell you about the findings of the inspection but, first of all, I would like to thank you for the friendly welcome you gave the team of inspectors. We enjoyed talking to you about your experiences and views of school life and the important part you play in it.

We think that yours is an outstanding school. We can see why you and your parents are proud of it! We think these are some of the best features of your school.

- You achieve high standards in tests and examinations at the end of Years 9 and 11. When you leave at 16 or 18, almost all of you enter the universities, colleges or jobs of your choice.
- Your behaviour is excellent. You are polite and caring about others and show good understanding of people whose lives and cultures are different from yours and the global issues everyone faces. You grow into responsible young people who contribute very well to the life of the school and the local community.
- You like the subjects that you study and the wide choice you have in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. You also enjoy the many lunchtime and after-school activities such as sports, drama, and music.
- Teachers are good at helping you understand your subjects and learn new facts and skills quickly. Some lessons are very exciting.
- The headteacher, helped by the staff and governors, leads the school very well. She has clear ideas about how it can become even better than it already is.

Here are a couple of things that the school could start on – you can help by giving your views.

- To involve teachers in identifying and sharing with each other the ingredients that make the best lessons.
- To develop the sixth form further so that all students can take courses well suited to their individual needs and aspirations, and make sure they receive the best academic guidance to help maximise their success.

It was very clear to us that there are many things about your school that you enjoy. I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Jane Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

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