

Norden High School and Sports College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119717
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	339514
Inspection dates	1–2 July 2010
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 of pupils on the school roll	696
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Geoff Knowles
Headteacher	Mr Robert Flood
Date of previous school inspection	6 June 2007
School address	Stourton Street Rishton Blackburn BB1 4ED
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors spent the majority of their time visiting 31 lessons with 31 teachers observed. They held meetings with staff, groups of students and governors. Documentation was scrutinised including: information related to the tracking of the academic and personal progress of students; detailed analysis of students' attainment and progress; the school's development planning; self-evaluation of the school and subjects; records of recent classroom monitoring; minutes from meetings of the governing body; and evidence to demonstrate how the school supports students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. Inspectors also examined evaluations undertaken by the school to ensure that it meets statutory requirements with regard to safeguarding. In addition, 181 questionnaires from parents and carers were scrutinised along with questionnaires returned by a representative sample of staff and students.

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

- students' attainment and progress to determine the effectiveness of strategies used to improve outcomes
- whether teaching and learning are sufficiently challenging to promote better outcomes for students
- the impact of curriculum development on increasing engagement and improving students' outcomes
- the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation by leaders and managers at all levels to drive improvement.

Information about the school

Norden High School and Sports College is a smaller than average-sized secondary school situated in Rishton, near Blackburn. The percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average although the proportion of those with a statement of special educational needs is just below. The percentage known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. About 14% of students are of minority ethnic background, and these are mainly of Pakistani heritage. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools quality mark for drugs awareness and physical education. It also holds Healthy Schools status and has achieved the Sportsmark Silver award. The school has been a specialist sports college since 2004.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a satisfactory and improving school. Ambitious and empathetic leadership by the headteacher has promoted and embedded a culture of sustained improvement. Examination results at Key Stage 4 have improved steadily since the last inspection and are continuing to accelerate further. Central to this improvement is the development of a curriculum that better reflects the needs of all students and high-quality data systems that inform well-targeted improvement strategies. Students are benefiting from the closer monitoring that ensures they make better progress. Standards in English and mathematics have risen. The level of students' work examined by inspectors was at least satisfactory and some was good. Most recent tests and modular results indicate further improvements in performance across a wide range of subjects. The school recognises the need to raise standards further at Key Stage 4. In the main, satisfactory and good teaching are the norm, although there is still too little outstanding. There remain some inconsistencies in teaching practice such as in the quality of marking and insufficient sharing of good practice.

Students enjoy school and their behaviour in lessons and around the site are good. Attendance is satisfactory and punctuality good. The curriculum now better matches students' needs. The sports specialism makes a positive contribution to curriculum enrichment through many extra-curricular programmes. Care, guidance and support are good with a strong focus on those whose circumstances make them most vulnerable and at risk of not achieving to their potential. There is effective leadership by the headteacher. Self-evaluation is accurate and the school is aware of where further improvements need to be made. Equality of opportunity for all is promoted satisfactorily. The school provides satisfactory value for money and, given year-on-year improvement in attainment, a good capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To raise attainment at Key Stage 4 so that the proportion of students gaining five GCSEs A* to C grades including English and mathematics is above the national average by 2012.
- Further increase the proportion of outstanding and good teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - best practice in teaching is shared across departments
 - there is a greater focus on independent and group learning skills
 - marking in all subjects gives a clear indication to students of what they need to

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do to improve

- all students understand their targets, the ways in which to achieve them and how to aspire beyond them.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

When students join the school in Year 7 their standards are below average. For many, low-literacy levels present a barrier to learning. From 2007 to 2009 the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE A* to C grades increased from 34% to 55%. The proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE A* to C grades including English and mathematics over a similar period increased by 11%. Targeted intervention strategies, especially around the GCSE D/C borderline, are having a positive impact. Coursework already marked, examinations already taken and robust school projections indicate that the percentage of students gaining five GCSE A* to C grades, both excluding and including English and mathematics, will increase significantly in 2010. Results in subjects where examinations and coursework have already been marked and moderated, such as information and communication technology (ICT) and BTEC in sports and science, demonstrates high attainment and some significant improvement. However, the school acknowledges the need to sustain and accelerate improvements at Key Stage 4 in English and mathematics to match and exceed national averages. The current quality of work in students' books and engagement in lessons observed during the inspection was at least satisfactory. However, there are inconsistencies in the quality of marking to inform students of their current attainment and ways to progress further. Students identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to their peers.

Behaviour is good both in lessons and around the school and is reinforced through a 'praise and rewards' culture. Exclusions have been reduced substantially. Attendance has improved steadily. Students are eager to accept additional responsibilities. Students increasingly adopt healthy lifestyles and take advantage of a broad range of sports provision. The school has been proactive in installing water fountains and in removing vending machines that serve crisps, fizzy drinks and chocolates. Students feel that the school is a safe place. Where incidents of bullying occur they are dealt with quickly and effectively. A small minority of parents and carers, and some Year 7 and 8 students raised concerns about some bullying, although inspectors observed cordial and positive relationships around the school. Students are aware of how to stay safe and their knowledge of internet safety is appropriate. Students are increasingly keen to contribute to the wider communities through collections for charities, local community work and the links promoted by the sports specialism. Over the last few years, the school has reduced the number of those not in employment, education and training. Good and developing links have been established with local further education colleges and

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employers. Students' preparation for their future economic well-being is satisfactory. The school acknowledges the need to continue to further improve literacy and numeracy levels. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. While there is a significant amount of teaching that is good, there remains too much of uneven quality. In the better lessons, high-quality teaching ensures that pace is maintained and students make good progress. Students are actively involved in their learning and benefit from effective techniques used for questions and answers to promote their understanding and involvement. Teachers use praise and encouragement to promote high expectations. These qualities were best exemplified in two outstanding lessons in mathematics and history where exhilarating pace and a wide range of challenging activities promoted excellent involvement of students and enthusiastic and high-quality learning. In less effective lessons teachers dominate and provide few opportunities for students to explain or reflect on their learning. There is insufficient variety of tasks so learning

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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becomes passive and the rate of progress slows. In these lessons, teachers' expectations of students were not high and the range of planned activities was limited. ICT resources, including interactive whiteboards, were not used effectively in some lessons to promote good learning. Lesson plans identify different students' needs. However, it is not always evident in lessons how this is put into practice to meet the range of students' needs and abilities through the classroom activities or varied resources. Good practice is not sufficiently embedded across all areas. The standard of marking is variable. Feedback to students about how well they have done in their work does not always inform them about how to improve.

The curriculum provides for a broad range of experience to meet the needs of all students. Curriculum diversity and appropriateness has been a major factor in improving examination results. For Years 7 and 8 the introduction of 'think lessons' has laid the foundation for the development of better learning and thinking skills. The interaction of the junior sports leadership certificate has increased interest and participation in sport while providing opportunities to develop leadership, group and interpersonal skills. At Key Stage 4 the school provides a good blend of academic, vocational and work-related courses. The introduction of BTEC courses has provided valued and successful pathways. Dedicated provision for disaffected students, combining work experience and school and college courses in basic skills, is having a positive impact on their attainment and progression opportunities. The sports specialism makes a strong contribution to a developing extra-curricular programme. However, a director of specialism has been appointed for September 2010 in acknowledgement that the profile of the sports college needs to be raised both within the school and local community. Good links have been established with further education colleges and employers.

Care, guidance and support are good. Transition from primary school is well organised and effective so that when students join the school in Year 7 they feel that the support they receive is good. Good links with external agencies promote and support students' welfare, learning and progress. Internal support systems enhance learning opportunities for all students and especially those whose circumstances make them the most vulnerable. Well-considered, consistent and effective systems ensure that each student's progress, especially in Year 10 and 11, is followed carefully and, where necessary, well thought out intervention strategies are employed. Information, advice and guidance provided in Year 9 and 11 are valued by students. The school has established good links with local colleges and the Connexions service to give support to students. Support for students with special educational needs or/and disabilities is good.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

<p>The quality of teaching</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</p>	<p>2</p>

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The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2
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How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders set an ambitious vision for the school which is strongly linked to challenging targets in the school improvement plan. The headteacher provides strong and affirming leadership and is well supported by a talented senior management team. Leaders have high expectations of staff and students. Attainment in GCSEs has risen significantly since the last inspection, although in some cases is still below the national average. Remedial action, including significant staffing changes, to improve results in English have been successful and are embedded. The management of teaching has improved with greater professional development opportunities and the eradication of inadequate teaching. The development of data analysis and evaluation to inform and target intervention strategies is very strong at a senior level and is being embedded at a middle management level. Self-evaluation is well developed and accurate. There is good engagement with parents and carers. Their views are collected and analysed and are generally positive. However, the school acknowledges that more creative ways could be developed to increase the scope of parents' and carers' views, particularly from those reluctant to participate.

Members of the governing body help shape the direction of the school and recently have taken training to improve their analysis and rigour in scrutinising the school's performance. Statutory requirements are complied with; however, more could be done to assess the impact of policies and procedures. Analysis of community development and cohesion are insufficiently developed. Arrangements for the consultation of local stakeholders from the ethnic communities remain underdeveloped. Safeguarding is satisfactory. Partnerships are well developed in terms of curriculum and to support care and guidance for students. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory. The performance of different groups of students is similar, with attainment and progress generally satisfactory and improving. Financial management is sound and value for money satisfactory. Given accelerated improvement in attainment and students' progress, the quality of data analysis and the evolution of a more appropriate curriculum, capacity for further improvement is good.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2

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The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

Inspectors received 181 questionnaire responses from parents and carers. Analysis of responses indicates that the vast majority are happy with their children's experience at school and that appropriate steps are taken to ensure that their children are well prepared for the future. A small minority expressed concerns about bullying in relation to Years 7 and 8.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Norden High School and Sports College to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 181 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 696 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	58	32	109	60	11	6	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	69	38	104	57	4	2	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	72	40	98	54	8	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	71	39	96	53	5	3	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	64	35	105	58	7	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	49	27	107	59	16	9	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	44	24	116	64	12	7	4	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	51	28	98	54	13	7	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	55	30	105	58	11	6	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	55	30	105	58	11	6	4	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	37	20	113	62	10	6	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	66	36	99	55	5	3	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	80	44	87	48	7	4	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



5 July 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Norden High School and Sports College, Blackburn, BB1 4ED

Thank you for the friendly welcome that you gave my colleagues and me when we inspected your school this week. We would also like to commend you for your good behaviour and the way in which you contribute to making the school a pleasant place to work in. We were impressed by the positive relationships you have with each other and with your maturity. We would particularly like to thank those of you who spoke with us. The reason we came to your school was to find out what was going well and what could be improved. Here is what we found: yours is a satisfactory and improving school. You make satisfactory progress throughout your time at the school and it is good to see that this is improving year on year. Your GCSE results are improving. In the better lessons you respond well to the teachers' high expectations and you make good progress. Your curriculum options are good. You enjoy a wide range of extra activities. The teachers and support staff give you good care, guidance and support.

The leaders in your school worked with us to decide on some ways in which your provision could be better. We decided that to achieve this, the school should do the following.

Further improve the percentage of high-grade results in GCSE mathematics and English.

Further increase the proportion of outstanding and good teaching and learning by ensuring that:

- best practice in teaching is shared across departments
- there is a greater focus on independent and group learning skills
- marking in all subjects gives a clear indication to you of what you need to do to improve
- you all understand your targets, the ways in which you can achieve them and how you can aspire beyond them.

You can help your school to improve further by ensuring that everyone focuses on the pursuit of excellence and by trying hard in your studies so that you can achieve your full potential in life.

I wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr Patrick Geraghty

Her Majesty's Inspector

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