

Great Sankey High School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 111434 |
| Local Authority | Warrington |
| Inspection number | 354382 |
| Inspection dates | 4–5 May 2010 |
| Reporting inspector | Moira Fitzpatrick |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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|--|---|
| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 11–18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in the sixth form | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1838 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 289 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Cllr P Walker |
| Headteacher | Mr Alan Yates |
| Date of previous school inspection | 18 October 2006 |
| School address | Barrow Hall Lane Great Sankey Warrington WA5 3AA |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by six additional inspectors. They observed 39 lessons taught by 38 teachers and one trainee teacher. They held meetings with senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body, groups of students from all key stages in the school, representatives from local industry and business and the manager of the Royal Automobile Club (RAC) centre on site. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation relating to students' progress, attendance, behaviour, and exclusion records. They examined documents relating to safeguarding procedures and looked at the school's improvement plan. Inspectors also took into account the responses to questionnaires returned by 147 students, 115 staff and 645 parents and carers.

- the explanation for the rise in standards in English and how well any good practice is shared between departments
- the impact of curriculum development and improvements to teaching on students' enjoyment of learning
- the extent to which leadership and management at all levels are driving improvement and why outcomes for students are high.

Information about the school

The school is much larger than average. The majority of students are of White British heritage, with few pupils from minority ethnic groups, and few who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average, but the proportion of students who have a statement of special educational needs is above average. The school makes provision for students who are visually impaired. The school has held specialist status for engineering since 2003. It holds numerous awards including National Healthy Schools, Sportsmark, Artsmark Gold, Continuing Professional Development Centre for Music and the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust National Engineering Enterprise Hub.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school. It serves the needs of all groups of students exceptionally well. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive, feel very involved and, on the whole, are delighted with the provision for their children's education.

Excellent leadership and management at all levels drive the school forward at a rapid rate. The headteacher leads the school with flair, a clear vision and an unflinching determination to get the best for and from students. His considerable entrepreneurial skills lead to excellent partnerships and leading-edge provision for students. Staff and students are wholeheartedly supportive of his vision and reflect this in their commitment to improving the school.

Students' attainment is high and achievement is outstanding. Results in GCSE examinations are significantly above average, and have been on an upward trend since the previous inspection. Standards in English have risen sharply following changes in the subject leadership and the considerable innovative practice in the department. Students enjoy school immensely, because they have so many opportunities for success and to develop their special talents, in an exciting and very well-tailored curriculum. This is because the school's specialism continually brings new opportunities and dimensions which extend and enhance provision. Students are extremely well taught by teachers who have high ambitions for them, very good subject knowledge and an excellent understanding of what makes good learners. Teachers make excellent use of assessment information to set the correct level of challenge to make high, but manageable, demands on students. Students in the sixth form are very well challenged in most subjects, though there are variations in the quality of teaching, which lead to some uneven attainment between subjects. Students are exceptionally well supported by pastoral systems that mesh closely to capture and address any difficulties or special needs that students may have. Comprehensive and rigorous tracking of students' learning ensures that staff are quickly alerted to any signs of underachievement or slowing in progress. Remedial action is prompt and effective.

Students develop excellent social and personal skills. They behave extremely well and feel very safe. They respect themselves and others and have a real sense of community, as seen in their contribution in making lessons flow well, giving support to those who need it around the school, and making a very significant contribution to local, national and international communities through concerts, music and by fundraising. By the time they leave school, students are extremely well prepared as good citizens and have the confidence and skills to succeed in the future.

The school's rigorous and accurate monitoring and evaluation of its work combined with

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the unflagging support of governors and its many and excellent achievements since the previous inspection demonstrate its excellent capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of results in the sixth form by improving the consistency of teaching across all departments.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Students of all abilities and backgrounds, including those with special educational needs, make excellent progress from their starting points and their achievement is outstanding. Results in GCSE examinations are high, with the proportion of students achieving five or more A* to C grades, including English and mathematics in 2009 being significantly above average. There has been a steep trend of improvement since the previous inspection; specialist targets in science, mathematics and engineering have been exceeded each year since then. School data and inspection evidence indicate students are on course to match last year's examination results, reflecting excellent progress for this cohort of Year 11 students. Year 9 students make similar progress to attain standards above those expected for their age. In both key stages students of different abilities make similar progress and there are no significant differences in the achievement of any groups of students.

Students' achievement is outstanding because they enjoy learning and are confident of success. They relish lessons where they are set challenging tasks and are allowed to work independently to complete them. They work hard to succeed, often stretching beyond the teachers' expectations for their learning. They respect themselves and others because they know their opinions are valued by the school. They make a huge contribution to developing the school and to creating a strong sense of community and belonging. Corridors and classrooms are safe, friendly places where students contribute to the pleasant atmosphere with their excellent behaviour and supportive attitudes.

Students' make an excellent contribution to the wider community through extensive fundraising for numerous national and international charitable causes, for example, their annual fundraising for a partner school in South Africa. In the local community they are well known for their musical concerts and sporting activities, and more recently for leading a community healthy eating project, called 'Pass it On'. In all aspects, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Students know the importance of and adopt healthy lifestyles, they say they feel very safe and secure in school and have many adults to whom they would turn for help if it was needed. Their enjoyment of school and all that it offers is reflected in their excellent attendance which, along with their many other high achievements, prepares them extremely well for the future.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is well planned, focused on what students need to learn next and provides plenty of opportunity for students to develop as independent learners. Very good subject knowledge and a sharp understanding of progression through the curriculum enable teachers to provide excellent support for students to continually improve their work. The use of assessment information is excellent and is an area which is under constant review and improvement. Developments in assessment in Key Stage 3 are accelerating learning as students become adept at evaluating their own and other's learning and pinpoint what they need to do to move to the next level of success. Teachers have high expectations of students, which together with excellent relationships drives a brisk pace of learning in lessons. Students say most lessons are fun and there is certainly evidence of a buzz of enthusiasm in classrooms. While teaching assistants are deployed extremely well in some lessons, there are inconsistencies. Sometimes their skills are not used fully, so this valuable resource is not always having the impact it could on students' learning.

The school's specialism and related curriculum innovation are at the forefront of the school's considerable success in raising student achievement. Students in Key Stage 4 are offered a vast array of academic and vocational pathways, which offer many routes to a successful future. The school's excellent partnerships through its engineering specialism have produced outstanding opportunities for students. Partnership with the

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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RAC has resulted in an automotive apprentice scheme on the school site, which also provides opportunities for students in local partner schools. A cross-curricular approach to learning has been successfully adopted in Year 7 and is being extended into Years 8 and 9. Teachers and students display considerable enthusiasm for this approach to learning. Excellent links are made, allowing students to transfer and apply skills across subjects. This provision is having a powerful impact on students' ability to adapt and synthesise in creative ways. One project used inspiration from visual arts to compose songs which were then translated and sung in a different language. A very high proportion of students enjoy the extensive range of enrichment opportunities that are on offer.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding and this provision is key to the positive, welcoming atmosphere in the school. Its success is based in a set of flexible systems which have the welfare and progress of every student at heart and are well implemented by staff at all levels. The work of form tutors ensures that all students, are known, encouraged and supported to get the best from the extensive curricular and extra-curricular opportunities. This support ensures that students thrive and enjoy school. High quality, well-thought-out and individualised additional support for students who need it is fundamental to the school's inclusive ethos. Excellent links with external agencies ensure that these students receive all that they need to take their place alongside peers in accessing all that is on offer, in making a contribution and in enjoying the same successes in school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

| | |
|--|----------|
| The quality of teaching | 1 |
| Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning | 1 |
| The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships | 1 |
| The effectiveness of care, guidance and support | 1 |

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers at all levels demonstrate the ambition, expertise and determination to raise standards and improve the quality of provision continuously. Since the previous inspection there has been a massive increase in the involvement of staff, students and parents in contributing to and leading school improvement. This has been key to the rapid rise in standards and students' achievement, as well as fuelling significant improvement to existing outstanding provision. Teaching has improved significantly because the school has developed a collegiate ethos where professional dialogue and exchanging good practice are the norm. This provides a vibrant, challenging environment where staff are continually looking for opportunities to learn from each other to improve.

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Well-planned and rigorous monitoring gives the school an accurate picture of its strengths and where improvement is needed so that priorities are appropriate and well supported at all levels. The excellent development of the curriculum and partnerships with business and neighbouring schools is an example of the impact of the school's ability to innovate successfully. The engineering specialism and its problem solving focus are central to these initiatives.

Governors make a good contribution to the school's work. Long-standing governors have made an excellent contribution to its strategic development and they have ensured that new governors are well inducted and trained for the role. Governors ensure that safeguarding procedures are well met and that students' well-being is a priority for the school. They also ensure that equal opportunity is extremely well promoted in this highly inclusive school. Community cohesion is outstanding. The school knows and meets its own community's needs and aspirations very well. It has an excellent understanding of national and international communities through its numerous links which provide excellent opportunities for students to understand and contribute to community development.

These are the grades for leadership and management

| | |
|--|----------|
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 1 |
| Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning | 1 |
| The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers | 1 |
| The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being | 1 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination | 1 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion | 1 |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 1 |

Sixth form

This is a good and improving sixth form. In 2009, almost all students successfully completed their A level courses with close to half gaining passes at A or B grades. As a result, most students were able to successfully access their higher education or career ambitions. Current standards are above average and college data predicts continued improvement for 2010.

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The curriculum is outstanding, with a wide range of academic A level courses supplemented by an increasing number of vocational courses. Student numbers are increasing, and the college works hard to match students' needs and aspirations to suitable courses and accreditation. The attainment of students when they join the sixth form is broadly similar to the picture found nationally. Given their starting points, students generally achieve well in their examinations. Achievement is notably good in some subjects, but is less so in others. The quality of teaching and learning is good, and often outstanding, although inconsistencies in quality contribute to the unevenness in results and students' achievement.

Students have very positive attitudes to their studies and develop confidence in their ability to succeed. Excellent tracking arrangements regularly check on their performance and progress, and strong support is provided to keep them on course to success. Students appreciate the support they receive, and value highly their good relationships with staff. They willingly take on responsibility, by serving on the sixth form council, supporting younger students as mentors and organising fund raising activities for a range of charities. They are confident that their views matter and are given full consideration by the college. They take part in a wealth of additional activities which extend their learning, develop special talents and provide new interests. They gain in stature and maturity as they move through the sixth form and leave as confident, articulate and responsible young people who are well prepared for the future.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The college has taken decisive action to strengthen sixth form provision, which is having a positive impact on standards and recruitment. Well conceived plans are in place for further developments. Ambition and expectation are high for both students and staff. Both groups respond well to the challenges and morale is high.

These are the grades for the sixth form

| | |
|--|----------|
| Overall effectiveness of the sixth form | 2 |
| Taking into account: | |
| Outcomes for students in the sixth form | 2 |
| The quality of provision in the sixth form | 1 |
| Leadership and management of the sixth form | 1 |

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They are particularly pleased with the care and support their children receive. They also believe that teaching is good and that their children make good progress. A number of parents and carers supported the view expressed by one, 'the children appear to be given an outstanding education and chances to excel in their chosen fields'. A small minority of parents and carers have concerns that students are not well supported and that their concerns are not taken into account by the school. Inspectors found that care,

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support and guidance are outstanding and that links with parents and carers are excellent.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Great Sankey High School 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 645 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1838 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|----|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 182 | 28 | 418 | 65 | 32 | 5 | 4 | 1 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 211 | 33 | 405 | 63 | 18 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress | 234 | 36 | 375 | 58 | 29 | 4 | 3 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 241 | 37 | 368 | 57 | 28 | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 208 | 32 | 402 | 62 | 23 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 148 | 23 | 401 | 62 | 70 | 11 | 2 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 127 | 20 | 438 | 68 | 62 | 10 | 4 | 1 |
| 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) | 195 | 30 | 398 | 62 | 20 | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 172 | 27 | 432 | 67 | 30 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 166 | 26 | 397 | 62 | 46 | 7 | 12 | 2 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 120 | 19 | 412 | 64 | 64 | 10 | 4 | 1 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 210 | 33 | 386 | 60 | 25 | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 266 | 41 | 342 | 53 | 25 | 4 | 2 | 0 |

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.



6 May 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Great Sankey High School, Warrington, WA5 3AA

Please accept our thanks for the warm welcome you gave our team when we inspected your school recently. We are delighted to share with you that yours is an outstanding school. Many of you told us how much you appreciate the opportunities you have for success and enjoyment in developing new talents and interests. Here are the things that make your school stand out from the rest.

- You reach high standards and your achievement is excellent, because you work hard, the curriculum is exceptional in its variety and breadth of choice and the teaching you receive is of a very high quality. Achievement in the sixth form is good.
- You develop excellent personal qualities and social skills, and are very well prepared for the future. You make an excellent contribution to improving your own school and the lives of others in your local, national and international communities.
- Staff provide outstanding care, guidance and support for you. They know you extremely well as individuals and are quick to spot if you may need additional support or help.
- Your school is led and managed with ambition, skill and determination at all levels, so that it is constantly improving.
- Senior leaders develop excellent partnerships with industry and local business to enhance learning and employment opportunities for you.
- The school's partnership with your families is outstanding and makes them feel involved in your education and success.

There is one area where we think the school can get even better. We have asked senior leaders and governors to improve results in the sixth form by making sure that the quality of teaching is the same in all subjects.

Thank you again for such an exhilarating visit. All good wishes to you for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Moira Fitzpatrick

Lead Inspector

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