

# Woolton High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104739
<b>Local Authority</b>	Liverpool
<b>Inspection number</b>	355624
<b>Inspection dates</b>	22–23 September 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Terry McKenzie

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.  
The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	13–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	48
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr P Eyre
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr M.E Christian
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 September 2007
<b>School address</b>	Woolton Hill Road Liverpool Merseyside L25 6JA
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 2338650
<b>Fax number</b>	0151 4284737
<b>Email address</b>	m.christian@wooltonhigh.liverpool.sch.uk

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<b>Age group</b>	13–16
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**Boarding provision****Social care Unique Reference Number****Social care inspector**

Julia Toller

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## Introduction

This integrated inspection of the school and residential provision was carried out by one additional inspector and two inspectors of social care. The inspectors visited five lessons, school gatherings, and activities in boarding. Five teachers were observed and discussions held with members of the governing body, students, senior staff and teachers. Inspectors looked at the boarding school's work, scrutinised policies, improvement plans, teachers' records and examined the one parents' and carers' questionnaire returned.

- The effectiveness of education and boarding on social outcomes for students.
- The impact of absence on students' learning and well-being.
- The impact of the curriculum, including through boarding, on promoting future economic well-being and developing students' academic skills.
- The role of leaders in making changes and improvements.
- The effectiveness of managers in providing appropriate safeguarding and care for the students.

## Information about the school

Woolton is a day and residential school for students aged 13 to 16 years. It caters for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. More than 20% experience additional barriers to learning such as autistic spectrum conditions and all have a statement of special educational needs. Currently, seven students are accommodated in the boarding facility for either two or four nights each week during term time.

Woolton provides extended services that include parental support and family learning, targeted mental health support (TaMHS), a homework club and some extended day activities operated through the boarding facility. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is in line with the national average. Eleven students are looked after by the local authority and the proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is much higher than the national average. Woolton has maintained Healthy Schools Status since 2007.

Since the last inspection, the school and boarding facility have relocated to the new purpose-built accommodation that they now occupy.

**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?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

### Main findings

Woolton High provides a good standard of education for its students. Care, guidance and support are outstanding. The boarding provision is good and almost all national minimum standards are met. Most students have previously experienced great disruption to their education. Many previously failed to attend school. Consequently, students arrive with much lower than average attainment. Most make good progress academically and begin to catch up with their peers. By the time they leave most gain GCSEs and other qualifications. Although attainment remains low it improves rapidly. Some students make outstanding progress. Students make remarkable gains in social skills and demonstrate very high standards of behaviour. They form positive relationships with each other and with staff and this contributes to them feeling safe at school. The extent to which students adopt healthy lifestyles is outstanding because they engage very readily in sporting activities and enjoy the healthy meals provided. During lessons, in the extended day and through boarding students are encouraged to work and play cooperatively. Here they demonstrate outstanding social and moral standards and gain knowledge about right and wrong. Students gain satisfactory skills for moving on to the next stages of their lives. Whilst attendance is low overall, nevertheless for the large majority of students it improves rapidly and significantly once they arrive at the school.

Teaching is good and the use of assessment is improving rapidly. However, this information is not yet held in ways that enable it to be easily analysed. The curriculum is good and serves most groups of students well. The school recognises that it does not yet provide the range of vocational opportunities to increase students' motivation further, particularly for those who have previously failed to attend regularly and have a record of persistent absenteeism. Students appreciate the outstanding support and guidance they receive from the school whilst the outstanding partnerships with TaMHS and other agencies help students maintain their welfare and health, thus helping them to continue with their education. The headteacher has a good vision for Woolton High School's continuing success and development, having already taken the school through many successful changes. For example, the whole boarding school recently moved to new premises. Self-evaluation procedures are effective and managers have a good overview of the school and boarding facility. Improvement planning is detailed and ensures that quality is maintained and enhanced. For example, more curriculum choices have been provided and safeguarding is regularly reviewed. These improvements and plans indicate good capacity to improve further. Members of the governing body are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Its effectiveness is satisfactory because it mainly supports the senior managers well and undertakes most

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responsibilities with care. However, the governing body does not always challenge the school robustly enough in relation to its targets, for example, those that are concerned with reducing the amount of persistent absence.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2012 implement strategies to improve attendance to at least 80%, by:
  - providing a wider range of vocational and training opportunities for students
  - ensuring that the governing body challenges school leaders to achieve this target.
- By September 2011 improve the school's understanding of students' progress by implementing systems that encourage better analysis of assessments.
- The school must ensure that it meets the National Minimum Standards for boarding which have not been met.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**2**

Achievement is good for all groups of students. Levels of attainment are low but improve rapidly from students' often exceptionally low starting points when joining the school. Students are keen to learn. They enjoy lessons and settle quickly to tasks, wasting little time when they undertake group or individual learning activities in class or as boarders. As a result, most make good gains in literacy and numeracy and in some lessons standards of attainment are close to national averages. These newly-acquired skills contribute to preparing students for moving on to next stages of their lives. Those who attend regularly are successful in accredited courses with some demonstrating rapid progress through Adult Literacy and Numeracy courses. Learning experiences together with extended day activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme contribute to students' outstanding social and moral development. Once they have started school attendance improves rapidly. Furthermore, there has been a recent general improvement in the attendance of some groups such as students in Year 9. By learning about the world of work through the curriculum and work experiences they enhance their prospects of moving on to education, training or employment. The promotion of their future economic well-being is satisfactory overall.

Behaviour is exemplary. Students are polite and welcoming to visitors and enjoy each other's company during breaktimes. They speak highly about their school. An example of an outstanding contribution to the school community was observed during a meeting of the school council when a delegate reminded his colleagues that the right to enjoy camping trips must be earned through appropriate behaviour. Students compete enthusiastically for places in school teams so that they can enjoy competitive sports played against others in the community. Their behaviour and outstanding contributions to tournaments have been recognised by awards to the school. Students acknowledge the changes that are brought about in their behaviour through, for example, proudly wearing their school uniform into the local community. They learn about other cultures and religions through the curriculum and students have impressive opportunities to

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undertake exchange visits abroad to learn at first hand how different people live. Students are keen to say that the school and boarding are safe. Bullying and harassment are almost non-existent, and when problems occur they trust the adult to help them resolve issues.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	4
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

### How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good overall, but is outstanding when teachers use assessments to challenge students individually with well-considered lesson targets. Teachers know students very well and tasks in all lessons are matched to students' abilities. Teaching assistants mostly guide students well and encourage them to work hard and complete tasks. Very good working relationships in classrooms help to ensure outstanding conduct and good engagement in lessons. Staff make good use of new technology in their teaching and students are confident in using laptops and computers to aid learning.

The curriculum has improved since the last inspection and now places strong emphasis on the acquisition of qualifications such as GCSE. Exciting changes are underway with the introduction of functional skills to ensure students apply their learning in literacy and

<sup>1</sup> 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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numeracy. Year 9 students follow courses based on the National Curriculum and some gain entry level qualifications that provide them with the confidence to move on to more advanced courses. However, the school has not yet made arrangements to offer a wide range of suitable vocational and training courses.

Arrangements for the care of students overlap very well with boarding. For example, opportunities are provided for students to talk to staff or make appointments with the TaMHS therapists. One of these was keen to point out to the inspectors the intensive levels of support that school and boarding staff provide to particularly vulnerable students or those who have encountered difficulties. This exemplary practice goes even further through outstanding partnerships with off-site agencies and others who successfully encourage some to maintain their attendance at school throughout times of extreme difficulty. Even when students are persistently absent throughout long periods of time every effort is made by the school to ascertain their whereabouts and the nature of their circumstances.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher and senior managers have greatly improved students' learning and progress since the last inspection. However, the centralised system for monitoring assessments has too many limitations for managers to be able to closely monitor students' progress, evaluate the effectiveness of different curriculum areas or compare the school's overall performance with that of other similar schools. Nevertheless, through knowing the school and boarding facility so well senior managers are able to appraise the work of Woolton High accurately and ensure that all have equal opportunities to succeed. Since the last inspection the curriculum has been improved through better use of accredited courses because most students are well suited to the academic course structure. Furthermore, under the management of the headteacher, the relocation to new premises has had a profound and positive effect on the learning environment. The senior team provide good leadership and management of teaching and learning.

Governance is satisfactory. The governing body is mainly effective in supporting the school and discharging duties but does not always challenge the school well enough in relation to its targets. It has been instrumental in helping the school to relocate and, recently, to appoint new staff. Its members are justly proud of the school and several

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regularly visit to undertake monitoring in classrooms and the boarding area. The appropriate allocation of resources by the leaders and managers leading to good outcomes for students evidences that the school provides good value for money.

Safeguarding procedures were scrutinised during the inspection and found to be good with all requirements for safe recruitment and training met. Leaders and managers place very great importance on the school's contribution to the community. The outstanding work undertaken to promote community cohesion is constantly reviewed and fully included in development planning. Students come to understand through living together in boarding, sporting events, extended day activities and international exchanges about maintaining good relations with others including people from different backgrounds and religions. Contacts are maintained with others to help students know more about the work of public services.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

**Boarding provision**

The quality of boarding is good. There are no outstanding recommendations from the school's previous inspection report and Woolton meets almost all of the National Minimum Standards. The promotion of equality and diversity is good because individual cultural and care needs of young people are identified. Good quality assurance systems include unannounced visits to the residence by members of the governing body. Since the last inspection, the school has improved the Statement of Purpose that is accessible to parents and carers and to the young people. It provides a clear account of the services provided by the school and residential accommodation. Leadership and management of boarding are good with staff meetings and smaller house meetings



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taking place on a regular basis. These help promote a consistent approach resulting in positive outcomes for young people. For example, their outstanding behaviours were demonstrated throughout the inspection. The residential houses provide warm, homely and comfortable accommodation. The young people benefit from having individual bedrooms with en suite facilities that promote privacy and dignity. Boarders are provided with healthy nutritious meals with a wide variety of choice and fresh fruit always available. Their outstanding healthy living is further demonstrated by a wide range of sports and outdoor activities, such as football, swimming and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

Staff have a good knowledge of the health care needs of young people but health care plans do not always hold all of the required information. Nevertheless, safe storage of medications with appropriate recording systems is maintained. Staff are trained to give medicines safely. This promotes the health, safety and well-being of young people. Boarding staff undertake training in safeguarding on a regular basis. Young people say they feel safe in residence and know who to go to if they need help. However, risk assessments are not always completed before young people are admitted to residence and this does not always minimise risks to young people and staff. Young people view being in residence as a positive choice. They say that they feel fully involved in the decisions about boarding. This encourages the positive behaviour and calm in the residences.

Residential and school staff work well together. There are clear reward systems in place and the young people achieve regular rewards for their successes. Similarly, when inappropriate behaviour is displayed young people are clear about the sanctions that they can receive from staff. Staff are trained in physical intervention upon appointment and this is updated annually but records of sanctions and physical interventions are not always fully maintained. Testing of fire safety equipment and robust health and safety checks of the premises are regularly undertaken. This helps to make the school and residence a safe place for young people to live.

Staff promote education and provide help with homework. Study facilities are available, including individual study space, learning materials and access to computers. Young people enjoy a wide range of activities, including access to school during evenings. Local facilities, such as the park and sports centre, are also used. Risk assessments are in place concerning the activities that young people enjoy such as football, using computers, swimming, cricket, painting and cooking. This ensures that potential risks to young people are minimised whilst allowing them to experience a range of new experiences.

Young peoples' views are sought through school forums, young people's meetings and key worker sessions. An example of a successful contribution through consultation was that young people, often being hungry at break time, are now provided with platters of fruit. This shows that the views of young people are sought and acted upon.

Regular planned supervision is provided to staff to ensure that their personal development is addressed. They are appropriately trained, skilled and competent within their roles. Staffing levels ensure that there are sufficient numbers of adults to meet the

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needs of boarders. Training records demonstrate that the local authority is committed to providing development for employees to aid their professional growth.

**National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care**

- Improve the recording of sanctions and physical interventions (breach of national minimum standards 10.9 & 10.14)
- Improve health care plans to contain all of the required information (breach of national minimum standard 14.6)
- Improve risk assessments undertaken for young people upon admission to residence (breach of national minimum standard 17.5)

*This is the grade for the boarding provision*

<b>The effectiveness of the boarding provision</b>	<b>2</b>
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**Views of parents and carers**

One parent or carer returned the questionnaire. This is a very low rate of return. This one return was very positive and was much in line with the findings of the inspectors. Other indicators show that parents and carers value the school and that communications between school and home are good. For example, three parents are members of the governing body and others attend daytime functions at the school such as coffee mornings and learning opportunities. The school's own surveys further indicate that most parents and carers are highly supportive of the work of the school and are appreciative of the changes that the school brings about in their children's education and behaviour.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Woolton 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 inspector received 1 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 48 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
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)	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



Dear Students

Thank you for making the inspectors so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you in school and in boarding. I was particularly impressed with the outstanding meeting of the school council.

Woolton is a good school and it provides you with very high standards of pastoral care and support. Staff work very hard to look after you. There are outstanding partnerships with support agencies and others. You are proud of your school and respond with outstanding behaviour and by engaging well in lessons. The inspectors noted that you adopt healthy lifestyles and are very keen to take part in sports. Your teachers produce good lessons with interesting activities. Most of you enjoy school and appreciate the opportunities to gain qualifications. The senior leaders are working hard to try to make Woolton even more successful. However, we found that a small, but significant minority of you do not attend regularly.

The inspectors feel that the school could be improved further. We would like the school to offer a wider range of interesting vocational courses and training. These courses might be particularly useful for those students who do not as yet attend regularly. We have asked the school's governing body to make sure it checks closely all the schools targets for improvement, especially those relating to attendance. A small number of regulations in boarding also need to be met.

We wish you all the best for the future and once again thank you for your help and interest in the inspection.

Yours sincerely,

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