

The Swinton High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105983
Local Authority	Salford
Inspection number	287384
Inspection dates	21–22 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Jim Kidd

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	982
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J Davies
Headteacher	Mr J Biddlestone
Date of previous school inspection	January 2003
School address	Sefton Road Swinton Salford M27 6JU
Telephone number	0161 7946215
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average-sized increasingly popular school has been a specialist college for the performing arts since September 2004 and serves an area of significant social disadvantage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. Most pupils are of White British heritage but there are a few from minority ethnic groups, half of whom have English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average and 10 pupils have a statement of special educational need. The school is due for an amalgamation with another school as part of the Building Schools for the Future programme.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Students make an outstanding contribution to the local community and to all areas of school life. Performing arts status has a profound effect on students' self-esteem and on the academic standards they reach. Indeed, this is a good and rapidly improving school. It fosters excellent partnerships with other schools for the benefit of pupils yet to begin their secondary education and for those entering the world of work or opting for further education.

Students' attainment on entry to the school is improving, but remains below average. Good and sometimes outstanding teaching and the development of a good curriculum which is more relevant to students' needs have led to a significant improvement in standards since the last inspection. Attainment is now broadly average when students leave in Year 11. The school is rightly proud of its students' GCSE results in 2006, which exceeded their expectations and demonstrated that achievement is good across the school. Attainment in Key Stage 3 is improving steadily, but is not as high as it should be in English, mathematics and science. In addition, standards in mathematics in Key Stage 4 do not match those in English and science. More able students are not consistently challenged in subjects across the curriculum and so do not always reach the standards of which they are capable.

Students speak positively of the impressive care and support they receive and they have the highest regard for their teachers, mentors and teaching assistants. Parents agree and comment, 'Our children came into Year 7 frightened and unsure but, because there are many teachers here who are a credit to their profession, they have blossomed into confident young men and women.' Students' behave well and their attendance continues to improve. The student forum is highly regarded by its constituents and members make well-founded suggestions about how the school may be improved further. Older students help younger ones and prefects willingly give up their time for duty at break and lunchtime. Students in Year 8 are particularly grateful for the humour of Barney Bear and look forward to him visiting assembly to hand out prizes and certificates!

Students take the lead in a wide range of cultural activities. Both the school and the local community benefit from a variety of dramatic and musical productions. The well-designed curriculum, also, opens students' eyes to the many opportunities available to them after the end of formal education. The increasing number of vocational options in Key Stage 4 and the extensive careers advice that students receive make them more and more aware of the possibilities for employment or more advanced study.

The overriding focus of the school's leadership, to raise standards even further and to give all students the maximum opportunity to succeed, is shared by both the teaching and non-teaching staff. All adults are committed to play their part in ensuring that improvement is maintained. The monitoring of whole-school performance is regular and is completed well and as a matter of routine. There is

good practice in departmental self-review but it is not applied consistently well by all subject leaders, with the result that students' progress is uneven.

The improvement in standards and achievement brought about by strong leadership demonstrates that The Swinton High School has good capacity to improve further. It provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in English, mathematics and science in Key Stage 3 and in mathematics in Key Stage 4.
- Provide consistent challenge for more able students so that they reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Build on the existing good practice in monitoring and evaluation to ensure consistency in management across all subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From below average levels of prior attainment on entry to the school, students achieve well to reach broadly average standards by the time they leave in Year 11. Good teaching, a more relevant curriculum and the positive effects on learners' self-esteem of specialist arts status have led to a marked improvement in standards since the previous inspection. Attainment in Key Stage 3, although improving, should be higher in English, mathematics and science. Students make more rapid progress in Key Stage 4 and the 2006 GCSE results were by far the best in the school's history. Attainment in mathematics in both key stages continues to be a cause for concern, but standards in drama, performing arts, information and communication technology (ICT) and art are well above the national average. Inspection evidence and school data confirm this consistently improving trend.

Against the national picture there is no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls, but more able students do not consistently reach National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades of which they are capable. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also those identified as vulnerable make the same progress as others because of the sensitive and very effective support they receive from their teachers and teaching assistants. Students with English as an additional language also receive good support and achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students value their own cultural heritage and their work with people from other backgrounds in musical and other performances gives them a good understanding of the diverse cultures in Britain. Relationships are characterised by mutual respect so that almost

all lessons are conducted in a harmonious atmosphere. This reflects positive attitudes, good behaviour and enjoyment of learning. These factors continue to have a major influence on improving attendance rates to around that seen nationally. Students feel safe and the few incidents of bullying or racial harassment are dealt with speedily and effectively. Older students make a positive contribution to the life of the school by volunteering to take on leadership roles in the care and supervision of younger students. The student forum is very active, promotes the importance of healthy eating and regular exercise and makes perceptive comments about students' rights and duties in school. As they say, 'We must all take responsibility for our own improvement. There is only so much our teachers can do!' Students' good social development is enhanced by their participation in a rich range of extra-curricular activities, inside school and in the wider community. Preparation for students' future economic well-being is satisfactory and is supported effectively by their well above average standards in ICT. It is reinforced by the impressive personal, social and vocational education course (PSVE), which includes very good careers guidance, well developed work-related learning modules and a comprehensive work experience programme.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good and a significant proportion is outstanding. The school's teaching and learning forum has developed a well thought out strategy for rewarding students' positive behaviour and their engagement in learning. Teachers build on good relationships to manage their classes well and, as a result, students generally conduct themselves maturely in class and are more than willing to make contributions to discussion. For example, in an excellent Year 7 PSVE class students expressed their views on how to resolve conflict with a skill and level of sensitivity which belied their years. Similarly, less able students in a Year 8 French lesson responded warmly to the enthusiasm of their teacher and surprised themselves at how quickly they could assimilate new vocabulary. Students make good progress because there is mutual respect between adults and youngsters and learning takes place in a calm atmosphere. On occasions, however, teachers direct activities too much and opportunities are missed to develop independent learning skills. In these lessons teachers do not challenge higher-attaining students sufficiently to make them think more deeply about the subject matter.

Most students know their academic targets and are becoming increasingly aware of how they can improve their work. Marking is good overall, but the quality of teachers' feedback is inconsistent across all departments.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good overall and enables students to achieve well throughout the school. Activities are matched carefully to students' interests and abilities, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Students especially enjoy practical work. Drama activities promote speaking and listening so effectively that students gain in confidence and self-esteem. As a result they work very well with one another. Accredited qualifications allow all students to demonstrate their achievements in all areas of school life. A growing selection of vocational subjects meets different aspirations, offers choice and meets students' differing needs more closely. The PSVE programme is comprehensive and contributes much to students' personal development. Careers education and work-related learning are key elements of this programme and they give students a good understanding of opportunities open to them when they leave school. A major strength of the curriculum is the outstanding way the school uses partnerships with businesses and other institutions to complement careers advice.

A wide range of extra-curricular activities, including sport and the performing arts, broadens students' horizons. It leads them to make an outstanding contribution to the enrichment of people's lives both in school and within the local community.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Comments from students such as, 'Our teachers and teaching assistants are always willing to put themselves out to help us.' demonstrate the high levels of care and support they receive. These are further exemplified by the very good quality of support, particularly for those with learning or emotional problems. Students feel valued and say that there is always someone they can talk to if they have any worries or concerns. The Nurture, Retreat and Learning Support rooms ensure that vulnerable students and those at risk of disaffection are very well looked after and feel secure and many make good progress as a result. For example, two such students last year reached the higher GCSE grades in five of their subjects. Guidance for students about option choices, careers and opportunities in further education is thorough and effective. Systems for tracking students' progress and identifying underachievement are rigorous, but are relatively new and it is too early to evaluate their effect more fully. Nonetheless, academic guidance is good overall: students are increasingly aware of their targets and of their progress towards reaching them. Procedures for health and safety, child protection and risk assessments are in place and checks on the suitability of all adults to work in the school meet statutory requirements.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher's leadership is very good, with clear vision and a relentless pursuit of improved achievement and standards. He is well supported by a talented team of senior leaders. The strong and determined focus on driving up standards is an impressive feature that is reflected in the most recent GCSE results, which continue a firmly upward trend. However, although improving, the results in Key Stage 3 have not risen as quickly, but there are clear strategies in place to bring about improvement. Senior leaders monitor the quality of teaching and learning regularly and it is evaluated accurately. Self-review is a common feature throughout the school, but some subject areas are more advanced than others and students do not make consistent progress in all subjects as a result. The use of advanced skills teachers to provide coaching and the deployment of colleagues at all levels to provide peer review help to ensure that there is a continued focus on improving classroom practice. Specialist status has a noticeable impact in many areas and is leading the way in the raising of standards across the school. Governors are committed and fully supportive of the school. They provide a good level of challenge when holding senior leaders to account.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The <i>standards</i> ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make <i>progress</i> , taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

¹ Grade 1 – Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 – Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 – Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 – Exceptionally low.

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B



23 May 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of The Swinton High School, Salford, M27 6JU

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed our time with you and were impressed with the politeness and courtesy that you showed to us. We would now like to tell you the good points about your school.

The Swinton High School is a good school and is improving rapidly. Last year's examination results were the best that the school has ever had and, with your help, the school can attain even higher examination results in years to come. Your behaviour is generally good and most of you work hard to play your part in reaching high standards of work. Teaching is good and all staff in the school are determined to help you achieve your best. Your headteacher is supported very well by the leadership team and all teachers are working hard to ensure that you achieve your best. Adults look after you well and members of the student forum and other students do as much as they can to help younger students in school. You enjoy performing arts subjects and they have a major influence on your achievements in all areas of school life. The relationship that The Swinton High has with other schools and with the local community during dramatic and musical activities is excellent.

We have now asked your teachers to try hard to improve standards in English, mathematics and science in Key Stage 3 and to pay particular attention to mathematics in Key Stage 4. We think that some of you who are more able will benefit from extra work and new ways of learning. We know that your school is putting extra effort into helping those who are capable of more success and we have suggested that all teachers monitor the progress of their departments equally well.

You have a very important part to play too. Attendance has improved so much over the past few years and you should make sure that this continues. As your teachers tell you, regular attendance is vital if you are to do well in your studies.

Thank you once again for helping us during the inspection. We enjoyed watching you learn and we wish you well for the future.

Best wishes

Jim Kidd
Lead inspector