



Hilbre High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105102
LEA Wirral
Inspection number 277296
Inspection dates 8 February 2006 to 9 February 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Michael Blaylock HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Frankby Road
School category	Community		West Kirby
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Wirral, Cheshire CH48 6EQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0151 625 5996
Number on roll	1023	Fax number	0151 625 3697
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Janis Casey
Date of previous inspection	4 December 2000	Headteacher	Miss Jan Levenson

Age group 11 to 18	Inspection dates 8 February 2006 - 9 February 2006	Inspection number 277296
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Hilbre High School is an average sized co-educational school for pupils aged 11 to 18, rebuilt under the private finance initiative (PFI). From September 2006 the school will be designated a specialist Humanities College. It has a city learning centre on site and is situated on the Wirral peninsula. The area is relatively affluent, but with pockets of social deprivation. A greater proportion of pupils than usual is eligible for a free school meal. Pupils' attainment on entry is average, although there are fewer high attaining pupils because of the Wirral selective system. The sixth form is smaller than usual, but growing.

There are more boys than girls, particularly in Year 9. There are few pupils from minority ethnic families and very few pupils for whom English is an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than the national average although the proportion with a statement for educational need is higher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Hilbre High School is a good and improving school. The overall effectiveness of the school in its provision of education and care is good for pupils aged 11 to 16 and satisfactory in the sixth form. Achievement and standards are good with recent improvements and an improving trend. It is tribute to the outstanding leadership and management of the school that improvements have been made in the context of extreme difficulties resulting from the prolonged building programme that has already taken five years, with issues still to be resolved.

The personal development and well-being of learners is good with some outstanding features, such as pupils' attendance and safety. Behaviour is good in lessons although movement around the school could be more orderly. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Assessment is good overall although there is inconsistent practice. The majority of pupils want to learn and they enjoy their school. The school's curriculum is satisfactory with appropriate developments in hand to better meet the needs of all learners. The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. This is reflected in the positive attitudes of the vast majority of learners and the relationships of mutual respect between staff and pupils.

The school has fully addressed the issues arising from the previous inspection and clearly shows the capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Sixth form provision is adequate overall. Students' achievements and standards are satisfactory. The majority of students make satisfactory progress and attain the standards expected of them. Overall standards are below the national average, reflecting the lower attainment profile of the student cohort in the sixth form. Teaching and learning are good. The restricted range of curriculum courses does not fully meet the needs of all students. Students' progress is well monitored. They are also very well supported through the excellent care, guidance and support the school provides. Leadership and management are good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the curriculum in order to increase vocational opportunities for 14 to 19 year old learners.
- Establish consistent practice in the use of assessment for learning both in classroom teaching and in marking.
- Continue to work on: raising standards; improving pupil behaviour around the school; increasing differentiation in learning; promoting awareness of multicultural issues; and raising the achievement of boys.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Learners' achievement and standards are good in the main school and satisfactory in the sixth form. The proportion of higher attaining pupils entering the school is low although the average level of attainment of pupils on entry is in line with the national average. The use of assessment data and associated individual target setting are proving effective in raising standards.

The progress that 11 to 14 year old pupils make has improved over the last three years and is now in line with national expectation having previously been significantly below. This represents good improvement such that pupils now achieve standards which are satisfactory. This has been achieved through raising standards in the core subjects of English and mathematics.

Recent GCSE results show that pupils make good progress. There is a rising trend with over half of all pupils achieving five or more grades A* to C last year, the best ever results for the school. Pupils did exceptionally well in drama and significantly better in geography and in art and design. Overall girls perform better than boys. Significant recent underachievement in mathematics has been identified by the school through its own monitoring and focused support by the school and local authority is raising standards.

In the sixth form standards attained in the 2004 advanced level GCEs were below average. Results in 2005 indicate similar standards. However, students make satisfactory progress from the lower than average levels of attainment on entry to the sixth form.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of learners are good, with some outstanding elements. The personal, social and health education programme, together with citizenship, and a rich programme of out of school activities contribute to the learners' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Local culture is well met through many educational visits and visitors to the school. However, the school could do more to prepare their young people for living in a multicultural society. Spirituality has improved since the last inspection with clear times of the day set aside for reflection.

The majority of pupils like coming to school as shown by their outstanding attendance. They feel safe and free from bullying and relationships are strong. Behaviour in lessons is good, although movement between lessons at breaks and at lunchtimes could be more sensible and orderly.

The school council provides many opportunities for pupils and students to discuss issues of concern, for example, introducing water bottles and lockers. The elected head boy and girl add a special dimension to the school council and create a very positive voice for it. There is a strong commitment to organising fundraising events.

Students in the sixth form enjoy school. Through the Hilbre Volunteers Bureau they make very positive contributions both to the school and the local community.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers show good subject knowledge, they use clear learning objectives, have high expectations and in many lessons use teaching strategies that are tailored to learners' needs. The good information and communication technology (ICT) resources are well used by staff, particularly to engage pupils at the start of lessons and to review learning. Teachers know their pupils well and are confident in their classroom management. They make good use of the assessment data to inform planning.

The majority of pupils take a pride in their work and enjoy making a contribution to lessons. They enjoy lessons particularly when they are motivated and challenged in class. However, in some lessons boys are allowed to dominate discussions and occasionally disruptive behaviour by a small minority of pupils does inhibit progress. Teaching assistants are well informed and contribute to the preparation of lessons as well as supporting pupils in the classroom. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well identified and receive good support, particularly in developing literacy and numeracy skills.

The quality of teaching and learning is good in the sixth form. Students have good attitudes to their work, as a result of well planned teaching by subject specialists. Many groups are small in size which restricts the range of teaching methods that can be used.

Assessment processes are securely in place with pupils' progress being monitored well against their targets. However, the use of assessment to inform pupils how they can improve is inconsistent across different subjects. In the best practice pupils are encouraged and motivated by the teacher's informative comments but in some other lessons pupils make less progress due to a lack of clear guidance on what they have achieved and what they should do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. The 11 to 14 year old pupils are well served by the curriculum, with good provision for developing literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.

The current provision for 14 to 19 year olds does meet the needs of most higher-attaining pupils but vocational opportunities are limited. The school has already taken some steps to address this, particularly through its use of single award science, applied GCSE syllabi and the revised curriculum to be offered to Year 10 pupils from September 2006.

The sixth form curriculum is satisfactory, and includes some collaboration with other local schools to extend the range of courses offered. Most courses lead to advanced level qualifications but these courses are too demanding for some students whose needs could be better met through alternative provision. The school is planning to offer more vocational courses.

Pupils make good use of the wide range of enrichment opportunities at lunchtime and after school. As part of the Duke of Edinburgh gold award pupils work at the Village of Hope orphanage as part of a trip to Morocco. Links between the orphanage and the school are very strong with fund raising events held by the school to support these children.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding throughout the school. Every young person is treated with respect and dignity; in this school every child matters. Staff know learners' circumstances well and involve parents and carers in efforts to enhance their learning. The regular contact with Year 7 parents in the 'drop in' centre is exemplary practice. Support is strong for vulnerable pupils and for those in public care, with close tracking of their progress both academically and socially.

Pupils feel that the school provides a safe and supportive environment for learning. They have a trusted adult to turn to should they feel vulnerable. Child protection requirements and health and safety procedures are rigorously adhered to and understood by all staff. Pupils' achievements are celebrated. At parents evenings there are sensitive arrangements for parents of pupils experiencing difficulties to see just one teacher for an overview of their child's progress, thus avoiding a bombardment of possibly negative comments from many staff. Parents approve of this system.

There are exemplary arrangements, appreciated by the pupils, for helping them settle into their new school and form friendship groups. Pupils start in the school a day early in the autumn term and work on team building exercises with the assistance of the 'Learning Game' initiative.

Older pupils receive good advice when choosing options and making career choices. They are very well advised of all their options when leaving Year 11. Students who do not progress from Year 12 to 13 are very effectively supported so that they make well informed decisions about their future. Students appreciate the excellent support they receive as they move through the sixth form.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are exemplary overall. The headteacher provides strong and determined leadership, passionately committed to seeing all pupils succeed. She is also concerned to develop leadership throughout the school. In addition to Investor

In People (IIP) status the school has met the IIP leadership and management standards. In the sixth form leadership and management are good with an emphasis placed on monitoring progress and promoting students' well-being.

The leadership team, consisting of the headteacher, one deputy, three assistant headteacher's and a business manager, share the headteacher's vision and commitment to the school. Self-evaluation is accurate and securely established as part of the school's drive for continual improvement. Restructuring for the new teaching and learning responsibilities has been managed well with openness and sensitivity. Staffing is good with no recruitment or retention issues and a significant number of newly qualified teachers. Teachers are empowered and given opportunity for development through taking on responsibilities. Recent professional development has included using ICT, and assessment data, and also encourages teachers to pursue their own personal development.

The governing body is well established and operates effectively in providing good support to the school. Work with local schools has been strengthened through the leadership incentive grant collaboration. There is good support and intervention through the local authority, for example, in completing the self-evaluation form and in providing support for raising standards in mathematics.

The school's resources and accommodation are good, although some teething problems still exist with the new accommodation. There have been good developments in ICT with laptops for all teachers and data projectors in all classrooms. The school is in a healthy financial position and provides good value for money.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	
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 are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

I am writing to let you know what we found when we inspected your school.

We found that Hilbre is a good school that has improved and is continuing to improve. You told us that you enjoyed your life in school and we can understand why. The way in which the school is led and managed is excellent. Your headteacher, other teachers, mentors and staff in the school know you very well and want to help you do the very best that you can. The teaching is good and the school is a very healthy and safe place to be. Most of you do well at the school and achieve the standards that you should; this is because your attendance is very good and you make the most of what the school is offering.

The main things that your school could do to continue to improve are:

- provide a better balance of courses for you to study, including work related opportunities, from Year 10 onwards
- for your teachers to use assessment more consistently in lessons and in marking your work to help you improve
- help some of you to behave in a more sensible and orderly fashion whilst moving around the school; and finally
- continue to raise standards particularly for the boys and in the sixth form.

The school is already aware of most of these issues and is working on them.

Thank you for welcoming us into your school and for talking to us so openly and honestly. Special thanks to the school council members who waited an extra fifteen minutes before they could eat lunch to talk about the council to one of the inspectors.