



# Upton Hall School FCJ

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 105115  
**Local Authority** Wirral  
**Inspection number** 287129  
**Inspection dates** 3–4 October 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Patrick Geraghty HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Upton
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Wirral
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18		Merseyside CH49 6LJ
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Girls	<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 6777696
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	908	<b>Fax number</b>	0151 6776868
<b>Number on roll (6th form)</b>	220		
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Dr James Keaton
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Patricia Young
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 February 2001		

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<b>Age group</b>	<b>Inspection dates</b>	<b>Inspection number</b>
11–18	3–4 October 2006	287129

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Upton Hall School is under the Trusteeship of the Society of the Faithful Companions of Jesus and was established in 1849. The school recruits students from a wide geographical area within the Wirral peninsula and from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. The majority of the students enter the school in Year 7 having achieved standards well above the national average. The proportion of students with statements of special educational need is well below the national average, as is the proportion of students eligible for free school meals. The school has been granted specialist school status in technology and languages.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 1**

This is an outstanding school. Standards achieved throughout the school are excellent and well above national averages. Students show a joyful enthusiasm for learning and strive to achieve consistently high standards. The leadership of the school is inspiring and is the driving force that has established a culture where all seek to contribute and develop.

The school campus has undergone an extensive building programme and offers a peaceful yet stimulating environment, with vibrant displays of student art and textile work in the corridors and recreational spaces. Within this happy and harmonious environment, the school helps students to develop into well rounded individuals, equipping them with skills and attitudes required for successful future achievement. The school excels in encouraging the development of confident, independent young women who are able to meet the demands of life in the 21st Century.

There is a broad and rich curriculum which is enhanced by a wide range of external partnerships and community links. An outstanding feature of the school is the way in which it has used its specialist school status to improve teaching and learning, and to raise the profile of technology and the breadth of its links with industry and the wider community. Outstanding extra-curricular provision further enriches opportunities for students to pursue and develop their interests through accomplished work in the performing arts, sport and school clubs.

The care, guidance and support provided for students are excellent and great attention is paid to students' personal development and well-being. There is a strong ethos of internationalism that leads to a wide variety of activities and exchanges that effectively raise students' horizons. For example, Mandarin is taught in Years 7, 8 and 9. The commitment to the Catholic ethos is outstanding and celebrated in a culture of tolerance and mutual respect. The Catholic mission fully informs and directs the life of the school to form a welcoming community, inclusive of all, and respectful of different cultures and faiths.

The headteacher and staff share a self-critical approach to their work and review performance effectively and regularly. The school acknowledges the need to improve the academic progress of a minority of students in the sixth form and to develop intervention strategies to improve further the quality of teaching. The school has a proven record of improvement and a clear capacity to improve further.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

The GCE A-level results in 2006 showed high standards and continued the pattern of continuous improvement over the last five years. Over half the students achieved the higher grades. While achievement is good, the school recognises that the progress of a minority of students does not match their attainment at GCSE. Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. There is good monitoring of student progress and attendance.

Links with other schools are developing the range of curriculum options available. Sixth formers are fully integrated into school life and take on a range of responsibilities that provide positive role models for the whole school. Leadership and management are good and there is a clear focus on improvement strategies. Students speak highly of the sixth form and the many and challenging opportunities they are offered.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that pupils in Year 12 and 13 who are underperforming are helped to make better progress.
- Improve intervention strategies to raise further the quality of teaching.

## **Achievement and standards**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Students enter the school in Year 7 having achieved standards significantly above the national average. Progress from Year 7 to 9 is excellent. Students make progress well above average in English, science and mathematics. External examinations demonstrate that students have made excellent progress by the end of Year 9 and standards are well above the national average. By the end of Year 11 students have continued to make excellent progress. In 2005 the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSEs at grade C or above, including English and mathematics, was 98%. The achievement of grades A\* and A is well above the national average. Students achieve high standards in the sixth form with GCE AS levels well above the national average and A level just above. Over half the sixth form achieve grades A or B at GCE A level. The school recognises that a significant minority of pupils make slower progress in the sixth form than would be expected from their GCSE results. The small number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well and make good progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The personal development of students is outstanding and strongly supports their ability to achieve high standards. High rates of attendance reflect students' enjoyment and enthusiasm for school. Students behave extremely well and respect one another and staff. They are fully appreciative of the extensive range of extra-curricular activities made available to them such as in sports, music, drama and trips abroad. Opportunities to interact with the community and develop teamwork skills make a significant contribution to their social development, self-confidence and motivation.

Students are enabled to be fit and healthy both physically and mentally through numerous sports, physical education, healthy food in the canteen and lessons that address their emotional health. The school has been rewarded for its work with Healthy

School status. Students show commitment to making the 'world a better place' through participation in a range of school, local and international programmes. Students are expected to take responsibilities and they respond with enthusiasm through the very active school council, peer support groups and extensive opportunities for leadership roles in extra-curricular activities. As a community of faith, the school places a strong focus on students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, there is a need to raise further the cultural awareness of ethnic diversity in the United Kingdom.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Students enjoy learning. They rise to the teachers' high expectations of them and enjoy being challenged. Their behaviour in lessons is exemplary. Teachers are enthusiastic, motivating, engaging and have excellent subject knowledge. They make excellent use of interactive whiteboards to reinforce learning and to capture the students' interest. Lessons are well prepared, maintain a brisk pace, and provide a variety of activities to suit pupils' different styles of learning. The excellent use of group work and presentational formats, coupled with skilful questioning, elicits sustained enthusiasm, concentration, and excellent progress from the pupils. Marking is informative and students are also given opportunities to assess their own work and that of their peers and are well supported to develop independent study skills. The use of assessment data is becoming increasingly effective in enhancing performance, setting targets and tracking progress.

In some lessons, the good variety of activities and pace found at the beginning of the lessons was not sustained throughout and more challenge and demand was needed for the more able. There were also some missed opportunities for the development of oral skills. However, the school has not been complacent. Work continues to improve teaching and learning further, with opportunities for teachers to share effective practice formally and informally within and outside the school.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

The curriculum is outstanding. Apart from fulfilling statutory requirements it serves the particular needs of all of its students, including those in the sixth form, very well. As befits a school recently awarded language college status, it has taken the innovative step of broadening the range of foreign languages offered by providing a lesson of Mandarin to all students in Years 7 to 9. Sign language has also been introduced. Progress in information and communication technology has been outstanding since the last inspection and it is embedded in lessons across the curriculum.

The school has excellent links with primary schools. Fruitful partnerships are also evident in the sixth form. The school collaborates to mutual advantage with neighbouring schools, expanding the curriculum to include, for example, psychology and critical thinking.

Coinciding with its development as a technology college, initiatives throughout the school curriculum have enabled all students to develop effective vocational and work-related skills. Further enrichment is provided by an outstanding range of extra-curricular opportunities, including activities in sport, music, drama, technology and languages. The school has developed strong local and international links and this is supplemented by a rich array of visiting speakers and an impressive programme of national and international excursions.

These activities make a very valuable contribution to the academic achievement, personal development and enjoyment of all students, including those who are gifted and talented.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 1**

Excellent care, guidance and support ensure that students achieve well. Students greatly value the care and support they are given. They feel safe and are confident that there is always an adult to whom they can turn. A strong pastoral support team nurtures them outstandingly well. Academic support is focused effectively. Students' academic progress is closely tracked and they know how well they are doing, how well they should be doing and how to improve. Learning support mentors provide effective extra support for students. A parent's comment that 'My only regret is that I have no other female children to benefit from everything Upton has to offer' typified the views expressed in parent questionnaires. A very well planned induction programme helps Year 7 students integrate quickly and smoothly into the school. Sixth form students act as mentors in a well structured learning support programme. Students receive very good advice and guidance for higher education and their future careers. Child protection arrangements are reviewed and understood by all staff. Risk assessments are robust.

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 1**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The overall quality of leadership and management is outstanding. The school has an excellent headteacher. Her drive and vision are infectious. She is ably supported by her leadership team. Working as a team, staff have driven up standards and created the ethos which parents so appreciate and in which students thrive. Students and their success and development are at the centre of all school activity.

The school's leadership and management team knows the school very well. The school's work, at all levels, is thoroughly monitored so that the strategic plan is properly informed. Its self-evaluation is a comprehensive and accurate review that identifies strengths and areas for improvement. The focus on staff training helps drive the improvement agenda. The school's development plan is realistic and achievable. Performance management is well embedded in the school's systems. Targets are set and monitored systematically to aid improvement. Specialist School Trust membership has encouraged innovation and the dissemination of good practice. Newly qualified teachers benefit from the school's well organised induction programme.

The governors' contribution is powerful. They are the school's critical friends. They set challenging targets. The chair and the headteacher work together to achieve their shared desire to raise the school's profile still further. Finances are tightly and shrewdly managed. As a result, the school enjoys much improved facilities and provides very 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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

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

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
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	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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.

### Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team into your school recently. We thoroughly enjoyed our two days at your school. We particularly enjoyed talking to so many of you about your work, your interests and how much you enjoy and give to the school. We found that your school is outstanding.

What we liked most about it was:

- the excellent standards that you achieve
- how your teachers continue to challenge you through much outstanding and good teaching
- your excellent behaviour and enthusiasm for learning
- how your school works with the community to provide you with a broad and exciting curriculum
- the school's international links which encourage you to be more aware of our world
- your use of technology to promote your learning
- the care and guidance you receive to support your education and future ambitions
- your energetic and accomplished work in art, the performing arts and sports, in school clubs and with the community
- your contribution to creating a school community that is welcoming, inclusive of all and is respectful to different cultures and faiths.

With your help your school needs to:

- further improve progress of all students in the sixth form
- further improve teaching so that you can do even better.

We are sure that you will keep up your excellent behaviour and enthusiasm for learning and will make even better progress.

On behalf of the inspection team I wish you well for your future education.