

North Chadderton School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105737
Local Authority	Oldham
Inspection number	287319
Inspection dates	25–26 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Brian Sharples HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1511
6th form	172
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr L Hindle
Headteacher	Mrs B Howse
Date of previous school inspection	12 February 2001
School address	Chadderton Hall Road Chadderton Oldham Lancashire OL9 0BN
Telephone number	0161 624 9939
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average sized school which operates on a split site arrangement, with Years 7 and 8 based in a lower school approximately one mile from the main site. Students are generally drawn from areas which have low levels of social and economic deprivation. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals and the percentage with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are below national averages. The percentages of students from minority ethnic backgrounds or whose first language is not English are well below the national averages but are increasing.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school with several good features. Upon entering the school a visitor experiences a high level of orderliness and student politeness. Eight months ago the school appointed a new headteacher who has been a major driving force in bringing about some rapid change and improvements. New systems and ways of working have been introduced, and staff and senior leaders feel empowered and motivated to move the school forward. In some cases it is too early to see an immediate impact, but the improvement in standards and progress made by students since September 2006 has been marked.

In 2005–06 standards of attainment and progress by students dipped and were unsatisfactory by the end of Year 11. This was a concern for all interested parties including the local authority. Since that time, through the efforts of staff and the senior leadership team (SLT), this situation has greatly improved to a point where both progress and standards are satisfactory overall. However, given the students' levels of ability on entry and the context of the school, this is not yet good enough. The school knows that students could do better still. Overall performance in the sixth form is satisfactory.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with some good or outstanding practice where teachers engage fully and challenge learners strongly. Some teachers do not always make the best use of student assessment data sufficiently well when planning lessons. Equally, the planning to meet students' individual needs, the setting of homework and quality of teachers' marking is inconsistent across the school. The school recognises the need to share the good practice that does exist to raise the expectations and performance of all teachers.

The care, guidance and support provided for students are good. It is effective because staff know students well and a climate of trust enables students to accept support when it is needed. Good tracking systems provide detailed analysis of students' progress and intervention strategies are provided for those in need of additional support. Students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. Behaviour around the school is generally good, with pockets of poorer behaviour in some lessons. Attendance rates are satisfactory. Most students speak favourably of their time at school and say they feel safe. The school works well to promote students' well-being and the support it gives to vulnerable students is often good. Students' personal development is enhanced by an extensive range of business and enterprise opportunities provided through its specialist status. A wide range of sporting activities and partnerships across the community are additional strengths. The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is satisfactory. The school's specialist status, in Business and Enterprise Education, is contributing to raising standards by its growing impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning.

The overall leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The leadership provided by the headteacher and SLT is good. The governing body is carrying out its duties to a satisfactory standard, but is not yet fully involved in whole school evaluation and development planning processes. Subject leaders are developing their roles, but the quality of their work is not yet of a consistently high standard across the school. The school's self-evaluation and school improvement plan show that it knows its strengths and weaknesses well. Given the progress made since the appointment of the new headteacher and the qualities and mix of personnel among the senior leadership, the capacity to improve further is good.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. The head of sixth form provides strong leadership and has a clear vision for future improvement. Recently revised policies and practices are having a positive impact on recruitment and retention of students and are beginning to impact on raising standards. Students who completed advanced level courses in 2006 achieved in line with similar students in other schools or colleges. Overall rates of attendance are satisfactory.

The school provides a wide range of subjects at advanced level and expands the curriculum in line with the demands of students. However, there is only limited provision of vocational courses, but these are readily available via neighbouring colleges. The opportunities for enrichment via after-school clubs, sporting activities, music, drama and cultural visits are extensive.

There are very good relationships between students and teachers. Students benefit from good care and support and receive effective guidance when choosing their courses and during their time in the sixth form. They are very positive about the support they receive. Students are set challenging targets based on previous results and are regularly told how well they are doing. The school recognises that the use of data to identify strengths and weaknesses needs further development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise further standards and rates of progress across the school.
- Ensure the quality of teaching and learning is at least good. In particular improve the use of assessment, homework, the match of students' work to their abilities and the degree of challenge in lessons.
- Ensure that the quality of leadership and management by all subject leaders is of a consistently high standard.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students enter the school in Year 7 with standards that are slightly above the national average. In recent years students in Year 9 have attained standards broadly in line with national averages. Equally, the proportion of students gaining five or more good GCSE grades A* to C has been broadly in line with national averages. However, over the last two years the rates of student progress have fallen and in 2006 there was a marked decline, and progress was unsatisfactory. Since summer 2006 the situation is now significantly improved. Students in all year groups are on course to meet the 2007 challenging targets and overall progress is satisfactory.

In recent years boys have performed less well than girls. There is strong evidence that intervention strategies are working and that the gap between boys and girls is narrowing. There is also evidence of greater challenges being set for the most able students and that they are achieving in line with expectations. At sixth form level, students make satisfactory progress. The results for 2006 were broadly in line with national expectations, although there was some variation in achievement across subject areas.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Personal development and well-being are satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. The majority of students have positive attitudes to school although a minority do not participate as fully as they could in lessons. Relationships between students and staff are good. Attendance is broadly average and improving. Students feel safe, secure and cared for. The majority of students are cooperative, collaborate well and behave appropriately around school, but there are pockets of weaker behaviour in some classes which impede learning.

Students' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is satisfactory although moral and social developments are the stronger aspects. Students generally have a clear sense of the difference between right and wrong, and are open-minded and considerate. The recent linking of this school with a school in a multicultural area is benefiting students' appreciation of cultural diversity. Students take an active part in school life as council members. This develops their social responsibility and initiative. They learn about the benefits of leading a healthy lifestyle and participate in a wide range of sporting activities. There have been significant improvements in healthy eating options available at lunchtimes. Support in this area is good. The school's focus on business and enterprise skills helps students to understand the importance of teamwork and enterprise to equip them well for adult life. Sixth form students take their additional responsibilities seriously. For example, they help out at school functions and assist during induction events for new students. Sixth form students have good opportunities for collaborative working and become well rounded adults with good social and personal skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, and improving. Strong features are teachers' good subject knowledge and their positive working relationships with the students. There are examples of good and outstanding practice where work is well planned to meet the needs of the different abilities of students. Students are challenged and fully engaged in the lessons. Equally, teachers have high expectations and use questioning effectively so that all students participate in the lesson. Students enjoy these lessons where they are actively involved in a variety of activities. In some lessons, however, there is an over reliance on teacher-led activities and work is not matched to the full range of learners' needs, leading to students' becoming passive. As a result, the rate of progress slows and the most able are not challenged sufficiently. The use of information and communication technology as a tool for learning is limited. Opportunities to promote the development of literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum are also sometimes overlooked. The school is aware of these variations and has initiated a range of strategies and implemented a cycle of rigorous monitoring and review to bring about improvement in this area.

There is some inconsistency in the quality and the use of assessment to help students understand how to improve and reach their targets. The setting of homework to enhance learning is not

consistent or regular across the school. There is also an inconsistency in the frequency and quality of marking which does not always help students to understand how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school offers a satisfactory curriculum which provides appropriate opportunities for all students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It broadly meets statutory requirements, however, the demands for curriculum time at Key Stage 4 has squeezed the allocation for physical education to less than that expected nationally. The school is aware of this matter and is considering ways to provide additional time for it. The curriculum in the sixth form satisfactorily meets existing demands for advanced level academic courses. An ongoing review of vocational opportunities for students in the 14 to 19 age group is looking to further improve the provision and offer courses which meet the full range of students' needs. The school's specialist status, in Business and Enterprise Education, is contributing to raising standards, as well as developing the quality of teaching and learning and extending opportunities for enriched learning experiences, especially through links in the local and wider community. It is particularly apparent in students' learning and practise of teamwork skills that contribute to their future economic well-being. Enrichment and extra-curricular opportunities are strengths of the curriculum which contribute very positively to students' personal development and achievement. Facilities and resources in the upper school are not adequately matched by those at the lower school site. Provision for the gifted and talented students is good and the progress they are currently showing matches their potential.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school provides good quality care, support and guidance for students of all ages. Arrangements to ensure health and safety are in place and procedures for child protection are well established and understood by staff. The staff know their students well and encourage them to be healthy and to keep safe. Academic, social and emotional support provided by support assistants and learning mentors is well managed and effective in promoting the well-being of students. Parents are regularly informed about their children's progress and like the 'postcards home' celebrating particular achievements.

Well established systems to monitor progress and set targets successfully contribute to student confidence and self-esteem. Students are beginning to evaluate their own progress. They are aware of their target levels and know what they must do to improve. Students have the opportunity to discuss their options and career choices with teachers and careers advisors at key stages during their time at school. As a result, they are able to make well informed decisions about participating in education or applying for training after leaving school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Leadership and management across the school are satisfactory with some good features. There has been some significant and rapid improvement since the arrival of the new headteacher in September 2006. She has been the key driving force. The SLT and the majority of staff feel empowered and motivated to address the main agenda of raising standards and achievement across the school. These factors are the main reason why students' progress and attainment have risen over the last eight months. The headteacher and SLT have been significant in bringing about changes and improvements to the school. Some of the new systems and procedures are already proving effective, but they need more time to become embedded before they impact fully on outcomes.

The school improvement plan is of good quality and effectively addresses the issues for moving the school forward, and is shared with all those concerned. All subject areas have produced an action plan, although the quality of these plans is not yet of a consistently high standard. The SLT has introduced some good systems for quality assuring all aspects of the school's work. There are regular reports to governors, and the school improvement plan is reviewed half yearly. The newly introduced two-year cycle of subject reviews effectively monitors the work of subject areas and is starting to empower subject leaders in the role of quality assurance. The quality of subject leadership is developing, but is still variable across the school. The school has recently completed a whole school self-evaluation which involved consultation with all staff and governors. The final report shows that the key partners know well the main strengths and weaknesses across the school.

The SLT ensure that all safeguarding procedures are in place and followed correctly. Responses from parents through the inspection questionnaire show that the majority of them generally feel positive about the school. However, a significant minority are concerned with behaviour and the levels of communication between school and parents. The governing body has established sound procedures to ensure that their duties and responsibilities are adequately covered. They are rigorous in challenging the headteacher at governor meetings and will make difficult decisions when required. There are aspects of governance which are not as strong as others, for example, governors' involvement in school self-evaluation. The long-standing issues surrounding the split-site provision remain unresolved and a matter of major concern for parents and the school. This arrangement has potential serious implications for the health and safety of travelling staff and students and at times affects the punctuality of arrival times between sites.

The SLT has put into place a significant number of new working procedures and strategies for improvement. A period of consolidation and embedding is now needed before the full impact can be seen. The school presently offers satisfactory value for money. Given the progress made to date there is good capacity for further improvement.

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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?	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
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	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	3
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?	2	2

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
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

Inspection of North Chadderton School, Oldham, OL9 0BN

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to talk with you about your work and to listen to your views about the school. We have decided that North Chadderton School is a satisfactory and improving school with some good aspects. We also recognise that a significant number of you and your parents, along with the teachers and governors are pleased with the changes and progress made since last September.

What we liked most about your school.

- The good leadership provided by the senior leaders of the school.
- The keenness and the belief by staff that the school can improve further.
- The way that the leadership of the school know the school's strengths and areas for improvement.
- The care, guidance and support available for you.
- The way you feel safe around school and know who to go to in times of trouble.
- The general good behaviour and politeness around the school. However, this could be better in some lessons!
- The way you are being encouraged to lead healthy lives through the food you eat and the physical activities available.

What we have asked your school to do now.

- We want to see you making better progress and an improvement in examination results across all year groups.
- We want all staff to make sure that the quality of teaching and learning across the school is consistently at least good.
- We want teachers to make sure that things like marking your work, setting homework, assessing your progress, setting targets and planning to your needs are always done to the same high standard.

The inspection team hope you are pleased with the things we have said about your school and are proud of what you, your staff, governors and parents have achieved so far. We found our two days in the school to be an enjoyable experience.