



Golborne High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106525
Local Authority Wigan
Inspection number 287536
Inspection dates 28–29 November 2006
Reporting inspector Jane Austin HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Lowton Road
School category	Community		Golborne, Warrington
Age range of pupils	11–16		Cheshire WA3 3EL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01942 726842
Number on roll (school)	811	Fax number	01942 273176
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr N Holt
		Headteacher	Mr David Lythgoe
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	28–29 November 2006	287536

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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

This average sized school serves an area of socio-economic disadvantage. Almost all the pupils are of White British heritage and only two have a mother tongue other than English. The percentage with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly above average. The proportion entitled to free school meals is broadly average. The headteacher took up post in May 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Golborne High School provides its pupils with a good education. Overall, pupils including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, achieve well. From below average attainment on entry the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE in 2006 was in line with the national average. However, this positive picture is tempered by the below average figure for those gaining five or more higher level GCSE passes including English and mathematics. This year's Key Stage 3 national test results were broadly in line with national averages. Pupils made satisfactory progress from starting points that were in line with those expected for their age.

Good pastoral care is an integral part of the school's ethos. The school cares well for all its pupils, working effectively with a range of agencies to provide suitable support for the most vulnerable. Pupils receive good guidance both at times when key choices for the future are being made and also in the regular setting and charting of progress towards academic and personal targets. However, time in tutorial periods is not well used for guidance or to promote pupils' personal development. Parents say that there are good relationships between staff and pupils: their children feel happy, safe and enjoy school. This is borne out by the large proportion of pupils who participate enthusiastically in the broad range of extra-curricular activities available. In contrast, attendance is below average, partly because too many pupils take family holidays during term time.

The recently introduced house system is proving popular with pupils, who are rapidly developing strong loyalties to their particular houses. They are keen to gain house points and exchange these for rewards at the 'points shop'. This is having a positive impact on behaviour which is good overall. The U-turn unit is effective in supporting disaffected pupils and those whose behaviour is challenging. As a consequence of this and other measures such as the on call system, there has been a marked reduction in the number of exclusions this year. The school and house councils provide good opportunities for pupils to experience democracy in action and to contribute to the school community. Careful consideration is given by senior staff to the views and requests of the school council.

Teaching and learning are good. The recent focus on improving the quality and consistency of classroom practice is proving effective. Overall, the curriculum is satisfactory. The school is developing a range of suitable vocational options at Key Stage 4. Good provision is made for gifted and talented pupils.

The headteacher provides resolute, clear-sighted leadership of the school. He has formed a strong, committed senior team and together they are leading the school successfully through a challenging programme of improvement. This is firmly based on effective self-evaluation and an accurate identification of the school's strengths and areas for development. As a consequence, the school's capacity to improve is good. Satisfactory progress has been made recently in dealing with the issues raised by the last inspection. Middle leaders, well supported through targeted training, are

playing an effective part in managing improvements and monitoring progress in their subjects. However, practice is not consistent in all areas. Governance is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics at Key Stage 4.
- Improve levels of attendance to at least in line with the national average.
- Make better use of tutorial time.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good overall. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with broadly average standards of attainment, although this has not always been so. Attainment on entry has improved over recent years but remains variable and the range of ability is wide. At the end of Key Stage 3, standards in the core subjects are broadly in line with national averages. This reflects satisfactory achievement. In 2006, aspirational targets were exceeded in mathematics and equalled in science. Results of the Key Stage 3 national tests between 2003 and 2006 have risen in science from 57% to 74% and in mathematics from 71% to 81% but have not improved as sharply in English, increasing from 63% to 66%.

In 2006, the proportion of pupils obtaining five or more A* to C grade passes at GCSE increased to 58%, in line with the national average. Given their starting points, this represents good achievement for all pupils including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Girls outperformed boys by a greater margin than found nationally. In addition, the headline figure masks considerable variations in performance between subjects. Rightly, the school recognises raising attainment in mathematics at Key Stage 4 as a central priority. Underachievement in the subject means that too few pupils gained five or more higher level GCSE passes including English and mathematics. The good tracking of pupils' progress supports their good achievement. This is more effective at Key Stage 4, where the good procedures are firmly embedded, than at Key Stage 3 where further development is planned.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. They develop a clear sense of right and wrong through, for instance, assemblies and the personal, social, health and citizenship programme. Pupils develop well socially as a result of increasing opportunities to take responsibility. They enjoy their roles as school councillors, buddies, prefects and as junior sports leaders. Behaviour is good. The U-turn unit provides good support in areas such as self-esteem and anger management, for pupils struggling to cope in mainstream lessons. The wide range of extra-curricular activities has a high take-up and, in conjunction with work in the curriculum in areas such as art, music and drama, ensures good cultural development. Spiritual development is promoted well in some

subjects, such as art and drama, with their emphasis upon creativity and exploration of beliefs. However, wider spirituality is not yet promoted consistently across the curriculum.

Pupils receive good guidance on healthy lifestyles and an increasing number choose healthy food options. A very high proportion of pupils participate in sporting activities. The majority of pupils enjoy coming to school and achieve well. Nonetheless, attendance is persistently below average. Positive measures are taken to promote attendance, but there is no consistent checking on the first day of absence. Pupils make a good contribution to the community, for example, through performing arts activities. Preparation for life after school is satisfactory. There is a developing programme for enterprise education, although this is not fully integrated into the curriculum.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good and ranges from satisfactory to outstanding. Teaching is more consistently effective in Years 10 and 11. There are well tailored programmes for staff development. In addition, systems to monitor and evaluate learning provide teachers with helpful feedback on how to improve. This has brought about more consistency in the quality of teaching and learning.

Lessons are now generally well structured with a clear start, middle and ending phase. A variety of activities is used to engage and sustain pupils' interest and work is well matched to the needs of different groups. The pace is brisk. Relationships between staff and pupils are good so pupils are well behaved and make good progress. There is much good practice to assist learning, such as in peer and self-assessment and the setting of targets. However, this is not yet fully consistent. Rightly, the school has identified the need to disseminate good marking approaches that give specific guidance on how to improve. In less effective lessons learning objectives are not reviewed well and the pace and challenge of work is less rigorous. Staff do not always use approaches which ensure a high degree of pupil participation.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Curriculum provision is satisfactory and improving. The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is broad and balanced. It complies with statutory requirements and provides good opportunities for all pupils to develop good literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills.

Pupils receive good guidance when choosing subjects to study at Key Stage 4. The option scheme contains a combination of academic and vocational courses, with a particular emphasis on the school's proposed specialism in the arts and technology. Good links with the local further education college gives pupils access to a variety of vocational Level 1 courses in salon services, motor vehicle maintenance and engineering.

However, opportunities to study Level 2 vocational courses are limited and, as a result, some pupils are less well prepared for progression to post-16 vocational courses.

Good provision is made to enrich the curriculum for gifted and talented pupils, but arrangements for checking that the needs of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are met are less well established.

The wide range of extra-curricular activities is much valued by pupils and their parents.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

There is a whole-school commitment to pastoral care and, as a consequence, the care, guidance and support for pupils are good. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are clearly identified and all staff have received appropriate training.

Good links with partner primary schools and a well structured induction programme means that pupils feel safe, secure and confident from the day they start school. Pupils say that the school has a strong sense of community and that the move to a house system has promoted closer links between pupils of all ages. They feel well cared for and valued because the school encourages them to express their ideas and listens to what they have to say, a view supported by many parents. However, the school does not make good use of the time allocated to the morning tutorial session.

Termly reports to parents and an annual review day for all pupils, means they and their parents are well-informed about the progress they are making.

A good programme of careers education and strong links with further education providers ensure that pupils are well-informed of future education and career pathways.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher leads the school well, giving a clear sense of direction and setting high expectations for all. He has injected a sense of urgency and determination into improving provision and raising standards. He has embarked successfully on a wide ranging agenda for improvement, firmly rooted in an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for development. In tackling these significant changes, the headteacher is well supported by a very able and committed team of senior leaders who work together effectively. Their responsibilities are clearly delineated and well matched to their strengths and interests.

The headteacher has established an appropriate structure of accountability, effectively managed through regular meetings between senior and middle leaders. A well considered programme of professional development has been put in place to support middle leaders in the development of the skills required to discharge their duties fully. Heads of department take appropriate responsibility for performance in their subjects, although there are some inconsistencies in practice.

Staff have responded positively to the headteacher's challenging programme of improvements. The impact is apparent in rising standards, accurate setting of targets, effective tracking of pupils' performance, the good quality of teaching, and the increased involvement of pupils in their own learning.

Governors are committed and fully supportive of the school. The governing body knows the school's strengths and priorities and provides a satisfactory level of challenge to the senior leaders. The school gives good value for money.

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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?	2
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 standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	4
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	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?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	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.

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	3
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you know some inspectors visited your school recently. We would like to thank you for making us feel welcome and for talking to us about your experiences. We are pleased to report that Golborne High School is a good school and would like to tell you our main findings.

You show positive attitudes to your schoolwork and by the time you leave school the vast majority of you achieve well and have passes in external exams on which to build the next stage of your education. Teaching is good. You enjoy your lessons and you appreciate the opportunities provided for you to continue your interests outside normal school hours. Your school tries hard to cater for as many of your interests as possible and to encourage you to take a full part in school life. Your behaviour is good. You told us that you feel safe in school and that staff are approachable, caring and helpful. We agree. You told us that you feel a sense of community in being part of Golborne High School.

The headteacher and senior staff work very well to improve the school, whilst your teachers and other staff combine to make a good team that is moving the school forward. We are asking you to work with them to improve the school even further.

We think that more of you should pass the GCSE exams with at least five A* to C grades that include English and mathematics. You need to keep working hard to achieve this, especially in mathematics. Some of you also need to make much more effort to improve your attendance. Making more positive use of tutorial time should encourage everyone to come to school and be on time.

Thank you for helping us with the inspection. We hope you will carry on enjoying your learning and helping those who work with you to continue their efforts to make Golborne High an even better school.