

Hilbre High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105102
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	377177
Inspection dates	9–10 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Joan Davis 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
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,052
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	134
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Janis Casey
Headteacher	Jan Levenson
Date of previous school inspection	14 January 2009
School address	Frankby Road West Kirby Wirral CH48 6EQ
Telephone number	0151 6255996
Fax number	0151 6253697
Email address	schooloffice@hilbre.wirral.sch.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Teaching and learning were observed in 30 lessons and 29 teachers were seen. The inspection team examined the school's self-evaluation of its work, students' work and data on their current performance, minutes of meetings, the school development plan and policies. Inspectors also considered an analysis of 116 parents' and carers' questionnaires as well as those from students.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The effectiveness of the school's actions to address underperformance in the sixth form, as identified at the previous inspection.
- The effectiveness of the school's actions to raise attainment and tackle underperformance, particularly in mathematics.
- The impact of the school's actions to narrow the gap between the performance, learning and progress of some groups of students with that of their peers.

Information about the school

Hilbre High School is of average size. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with the national average, although the proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is twice the national average. The school has resourced provision on site for students with moderate learning difficulties and for students on the autistic spectrum. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is below the national average, as is the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language. There are collaborative arrangements with two local sixth forms for post-16 provision. The school has specialist status for humanities and has won many awards, including the International Award, the Cultural Diversity Quality Standard Gold Award and the Investors in People Award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school? 3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement 3

Main findings

Hilbre High is a satisfactory school, although many features of the school's work are good and some are outstanding. After a dip in performance in 2010, there has been improvement in some key measures and attainment is now average. Learning and progress are satisfactory overall, although students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Students' achievement is therefore satisfactory.

The school provides a warm and caring environment in which all students are valued. The care, guidance and support they receive are good and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Procedures for safeguarding are good and all students who returned a questionnaire say that they feel safe in school. Students make a good contribution to the school and the wider community. Attendance is average and students are punctual to lessons. Behaviour is good. Students are courteous, welcoming and friendly. They say that there is very little bullying and when it occurs it is dealt with effectively.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Students work productively in lessons and relationships between students and teachers are good. For the most part, teachers use information and communication technology effectively to support learning.

The use of assessment to support learning is satisfactory and the school recognises that this is an area for development. Practice is inconsistent and teachers do not always use the wealth of assessment information available in order to plan activities in lessons that are correctly pitched to meet the needs and abilities of students. In addition, students do not always receive clear advice on how to improve their work.

The curriculum is good and improving. Partnerships contribute highly effectively to improving outcomes for students, and the effectiveness of the school's work in this regard is outstanding. The impact of the humanities' specialism on the school and the wider community has been extremely beneficial, providing a wide range of enriching opportunities that raise aspiration and improve practice both in the school and beyond. As one parent commented, 'The opportunities at Hilbre are amazing!'

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher is determined in her drive to secure improvements in outcomes for students. She has effectively

communicated this vision which is shared by all members of the school community. Good progress has been made in tackling some areas of underperformance, such as English and mathematics. Self-evaluation is broadly accurate. Improved procedures for encouraging a climate of accountability at all levels are developing and now need to be embedded more formally in development plans. Initiatives to secure improvements in some areas, such as teaching, have been slow to take effect and have not yet resulted in consistent practice across the school. Progress in tackling the area for improvement identified at the previous inspection has been steady. Therefore, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory. The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money is satisfactory. The school's contribution to community cohesion is outstanding, as is the effectiveness with which the school promotes equal opportunities and tackles discrimination.

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory. Students appreciate the good care, guidance and support they receive and speak highly of the recently established collaboration with two other local sixth forms, saying that they now have 'the best of both worlds'.

Up to 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment by:
 - improving the quality of teaching, thereby securing consistently good practice
 - ensuring that all teachers use assessment information in order to plan lessons that include activities that meet the needs and abilities of all learners
 - sharing best practice in assessment and establishing a whole-school approach so that all students receive clear advice as to how to improve their work.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Students enter the school with prior attainment that is average. Performance in public examinations has been broadly in line with the national average but dipped significantly in some key indicators in 2010. Performance in mathematics has been variable in the past and in 2010, had a particularly detrimental impact on attainment overall. This has been tackled effectively and attainment in this subject is now in line with the national average. As a result, overall attainment improved in 2011 and is average overall. Learning and progress in lessons observed during the inspection were satisfactory for most groups of students. Students make good progress in English and learning and progress for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities were also good. Students' achievement is satisfactory overall.

Students feel safe in the school. They trust staff and feel they are listened to when problems arise. Behaviour is good and sometimes exemplary. For example, in a fire evacuation during the inspection, students behaved very sensibly and assembled in an orderly fashion, cooperating well with their teachers and each other. Students have a good appreciation of the need to adopt healthy lifestyles. Healthy options are available in the canteen and there is a higher than average take-up of school meals. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities and participation rates are high. Students assume responsibilities willingly and the school listens and acts upon their concerns, for example in improving supervision in parts of the school by installing closed-circuit television (CCTV). Students' attendance is average, although the school has worked highly effectively in reducing the level of persistent absenteeism which is now below the national average. The development of workplace skills is satisfactory.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. There is a comprehensive programme to ensure that students benefit from a wide range of local, national and international initiatives in this respect. Students are encouraged to look beyond their immediate environment and reflect upon social issues. For example, in one outstanding Year 7 English lesson observed during the inspection, students were analysing the use of persuasive language in a speech by Martin Luther King. Students therefore had the opportunity to contemplate and discuss the negative impact of racism on society. The school's specialism contributes highly effectively by providing many opportunities for students to deepen their cultural awareness through involvement in theatre visits and dramatic productions.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers display good subject knowledge and plan activities that match the needs, abilities and interests of their students. These lessons are characterised by a brisk pace, skilful use of

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

questioning and high expectations. However, there is inconsistency of practice across the school. Sometimes, too much talk on the part of the teacher leads to a lack of opportunity for students to work collaboratively and independently. Students are often passive and sometimes appear to lack engagement in their learning.

The use of assessment to support learning is satisfactory. Good practice exists, for example in science, but this is not embedded across the curriculum and, therefore, there is inconsistency. Teachers do not always use assessment information in order to tailor the work to students' individual needs, therefore, some lessons lack sufficient challenge or, in some instances, support.

The curriculum is good and improving strongly. There is now a wide range of traditional subjects and a variety of vocational courses. The curriculum is carefully matched to the interests and abilities of students and is having an increasingly positive impact on improving outcomes. Extra-curricular provision is a strength of the school and students have the opportunity to participate in a wide range of visits both locally and further afield, for example to Madrid, South Africa and China.

The effectiveness of care, guidance and support is good. Transition arrangements are well planned and strong relationships with local primary schools ensure that students feel well supported, enabling them to settle quickly into secondary school; as one parent commented: 'Each of my children found transition from primary school very straightforward and stress-free...they are all happy here.'

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Leadership and management are good. There is a clear vision, communicated effectively by the headteacher, for the further development of the school. Planning for improvement is aspirational, ambitious and addresses key priorities. The school has now established systems to encourage a culture of accountability at all levels, but these are in the initial stages of development.

The leadership and management of teaching and learning are good overall and effective procedures are in place to share good practice. The school has provided extensive training and support in order to improve the quality of provision and there is some evidence that it has been successful in doing so. For example, the school has prioritised improving the quality of teaching in English and mathematics. As a result, outcomes for students in these subjects are improving.

The governing body is capable and very supportive. Governors are becoming increasingly confident in holding the school to account. They ensure that safeguarding procedures are consistently implemented and of good quality. The

effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers is good. The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being is outstanding. The school has productive links with a wide range of partners; for example, links with the local authority have helped to secure and sustain improvements in mathematics.

The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion is outstanding. This permeates the life of the school and has contributed to the school achieving the Cultural Diversity Quality Standard Gold Award. The school's motto is 'Developing global citizens for the twenty first century' and this is central to its ethos. The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination is also outstanding ensuring that all have equal access to an appropriate curriculum and are able to succeed. The school has made substantial progress in narrowing the gaps in performance between different groups of students. Incidents of racism are rare and are dealt with effectively.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

The sixth form is highly inclusive, welcoming students with a broad range of prior attainment. Students make satisfactory progress during their time in the sixth form, given their starting points. However, there remains some variability in performance across subjects. Retention rates have been poor but are improving rapidly, because students now have the opportunity to enrol on courses that are better matched to their interests and abilities. Students' attendance is average overall and has improved since the introduction of more robust monitoring systems. The citizenship programme successfully enables students to develop an awareness of the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles and contributes well to their well-being. Students make a good contribution to the school and the wider community. Learning and progress, as seen in lessons observed during the inspection, are satisfactory overall.

The quality of teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory. In the best lessons, activities are intellectually challenging and clearly focused on improving performance. However, sometimes lessons are dominated by the teacher and students do not have

sufficient opportunity to learn independently. In some instances the assessment of students' progress in lessons lacks rigour and students do not always receive clear information as to how to improve their work. The curriculum has improved substantially as a result of collaborative arrangements with two local schools. Students now have the opportunity to choose from a wide range of both traditional and vocational subjects, providing appropriate progression routes for students lower down the school. Care, guidance and support are good and students receive helpful advice so that they can make informed choices about the next stage in their lives.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Improvements in sixth form provision have been slow to take effect and therefore outcomes for students remain satisfactory. Procedures to improve the monitoring and evaluation of provision and reduce variability in performance are now in place. However, these are at the early stages of development and therefore the impact of such initiatives is not clearly evident.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth Form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

There was a lower than average return to the Ofsted questionnaire. Parents and carers are very supportive of the school and most say that their children enjoy school and that it meets their children's needs. The very large majority of parents and carers feel that the school informs them well of their child's progress and that their child is making enough progress. Most parents and carers feel that the teaching is good at the school and that the school takes account of their suggestions and concerns. Several parents and carers speak particularly highly of the support provided for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most parents and carers feel that the school prepares their children well for their future and that the school keeps their child safe.

Most parents and carers feel that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour, although a very small minority expressed some concerns regarding this issue. Inspectors found behaviour to be good during the inspection and the school has appropriate systems in place to deal with poor behaviour when it occurs.

Most parents and carers expressed the opinion that the school is led and managed effectively and the very large majority are happy with their child's experience at Hilbre High School.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Hilbre High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 116 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,052 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	44	38	63	54	6	5	3	3
The school keeps my child safe	55	47	51	44	7	6	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	58	50	51	44	3	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	46	40	58	50	4	3	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	45	39	59	51	4	3	2	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	51	44	50	43	10	9	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	27	23	70	60	13	11	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	41	35	56	48	5	4	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	49	42	56	48	4	3	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	44	38	53	46	12	10	3	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	41	35	54	47	5	4	4	3
The school is led and managed effectively	62	53	40	34	6	5	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	62	53	41	35	6	5	4	3

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



11 November 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Hilbre High School, Wirral CH48 6EQ

We would like to thank you all for the warm welcome we received during our inspection of your school. We were impressed by your friendliness and your cooperative attitude. Your behaviour is good and you listen well to your teachers. We found that your school provides you with a satisfactory quality of education. Many of you enjoy the wide range of activities available and take an active part in the life of the school. You make a good contribution to your local community, supporting many charities to help people less fortunate than yourselves. You make satisfactory progress as you move up through the school and your attainment at the end of Year 11 and Year 13 is average overall.

Teaching is satisfactory. We found that you enjoyed lessons when you had the opportunity to work together and when the activities the teachers had planned were interesting and helped you to learn. The school cares for you well. You trust your teachers and know who to turn to if you have a problem.

We have identified a number of areas where we think your school should make improvements. We have asked the headteacher to make sure that you receive clear information on how to improve your work. We have also asked her to make sure that all teachers plan lessons as the best teachers do, that meet your individual needs and abilities, so that you can all make good or better progress. In our judgement, if the school takes these actions then this will help you to improve your examination results.

All of you can help in the further improvement of your school by attending school regularly, continuing to work hard and taking advantage of the many wonderful opportunities available to you. We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Joan Davis

Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.