

# Oulder Hill Community School and Language College

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105840
<b>Local authority</b>	Rochdale
<b>Inspection number</b>	336568
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 October 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Susan Wareing 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 category</b>	Community School
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,292
<b>Of which number on roll in the sixth form</b>	99
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Hillary Tyers
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs M Dudley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	November 2006
<b>School address</b>	Hudsons Walk Rochdale OL11 5EF
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 33 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, the headteacher of the special school located on the same site and groups of students. They observed the school's work and looked at the school's student tracking and performance data; improvement planning; records of student participation, behaviour, attendance and exclusion data; and 93 parental questionnaires, 182 student questionnaires and 55 staff questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the attainment and achievement of particular groups of students
- evidence of improvements in key aspects of the provision
- the overall quality of teaching and its impact on learning
- the impact of the school's specialist status on whole school improvement
- the effectiveness of leadership and management and its influence on the quality of educational provision and outcomes for students.

## Information about the school

Oulder Hill Community School and Language College is a larger than average-sized comprehensive school. The school is building increasingly close links with the special school located on the same campus. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is well above that found in most schools and has a larger than average proportion of students who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, while slightly lower than the national average, is increasing. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average. The school collaborates with three other local schools in order to widen provision for learners aged 14 to 19 across the town.

**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**

**2**

## Main findings

Oulder Hill Community School and Language College is a happy and improving school with several strengths. The school provides a satisfactory quality of education and satisfactory value for money. This is reflected in students' average attainment and satisfactory achievement, compared to their starting points, by the time they leave school. The school has had particular success in raising achievement in English and mathematics since the last inspection. Attainment in science and French has been significantly below average for the last two years, although unvalidated data held by the school points to some improvements this year. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and students who are in the care of the local authority achieve well in relation to their peers.

Since the previous inspection, there have been improvements in key areas, especially in the increased proportion of teaching judged to be good or better. The school has a very positive and supportive ethos. The staff share a strong commitment to the school and are overwhelmingly proud to belong to it. They are clear about the vision for the school and their responsibilities in securing further improvements. Most students enjoy school and feel that they learn well. In particular they feel extremely safe in and around school and know how to lead healthy lives.

Inspectors' judgments about the quality of teaching and learning closely match the school's own evaluation. Teaching and learning have improved steadily since the last inspection and are now predominantly good. However, in about one third of lessons seen during the inspection, teaching was no better than satisfactory. A main weakness is the variability within and across subjects in the regularity and detail of the assessment, marking and feedback to students. As a result students are not informed precisely enough of what they need to do in order to improve their work. Care, guidance and support for students are clear strengths of the school, especially valued by the more vulnerable students and those with particular needs. The school could do more to support the needs of gifted and talented students.

Students' behaviour is good. They make a good contribution to the community, for example, as members of the school council and charity fund-raising for the wider community. They are also involved in interviews for new staff appointments. Students are gaining a good range of workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being. Safeguarding is good and a strength of the

school. Recruitment and vetting procedures are secure and conform to recommendations, and policy documents are useful and accessible. The school's tangible ethos of mutual respect promotes equal opportunities and tackles discrimination very effectively.

The school has good capacity to secure and sustain further improvements. The headteacher has made astute appointments since the last inspection, to strengthen leadership and management skills at all levels and establish a culture of continuing improvement. This is beginning to have an impact on students' achievement but the school recognises that there is further work to be done. In particular the monitoring and evaluation of teaching does not yet focus sharply enough on the extent to which teaching meets the needs of the more able students. Senior leaders and governors share a strong sense of purpose and an accurate knowledge of the strengths of the school. They are clear about what needs to be embedded more widely and about what requires further improvement.

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Raise attainment by:
  - securely embedding good practice in assessment, marking and feedback to students, so that all know precisely how to improve their work in all subjects
  - focusing the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning on the development of a wider range of teaching and learning strategies to ensure the highest outcomes for the more able students.

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

### **Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

<b>3</b>
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The trend in students' attainment over the last three years has been uneven, but there have been significant gains and attainment is now average overall. Within this generally adequate picture, the school has achieved notable successes, especially in the proportion of students achieving good GCSE grades including English and mathematics. These have been significantly above average in two of the last three years. Students of all abilities have exceeded their predicted grades in English and mathematics. Value-added information for the last three years indicates that students' progress was significantly below average. The schools' own assessment information shows that students are now making better progress. In more than half of lessons seen during the inspection, students were making good progress.

Students enjoy the many opportunities that the school provides for them to take responsibility; for example, as Year 11 student leaders, Year 10 peer mentors, and through the School Environmental Group. Since the last inspection the school has made strenuous efforts to improve attendance so that it is now above average. The inclusive nature of the school is evident in the fact that the vast majority of

students leave school with at least one GCSE pass. All students leave school with a qualification in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Most students also gain a qualification in information and communication technology and in a modern language. Almost all students move on to employment, further education or training on leaving the school.

Since the last inspection the school has implemented a very coherent and effective system to manage behaviour, and behaviour is now good in lessons and around the school, despite very occasional lapses of students' social skills in dealing with adults.

The school has made strenuous efforts to improve attendance so that it is now above average. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school is a diverse and harmonious community in which students work together very well and take an active interest in people from different backgrounds and cultures. They have good opportunities to reflect on different faiths, for example, through a recent assembly on Diwali. Through the school's increasingly close relationship with the neighbouring special school, students encounter as part of their normal school routine young people with widely different abilities, for example, young wheelchair sports champions. Students have a well developed understanding of right and wrong and, when given the opportunity, are well able to debate moral issues, for example, the arguments for and against cloning in a science lesson.

*These are the grades for pupils'/children's outcomes*

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

## How effective is the provision?

Teaching and learning have improved steadily since the last inspection. Approximately 65% of lessons seen during the inspection by inspectors were good or better. These lessons are characterised by their stimulating pace and teachers' good subject knowledge. Very skilled questioning shows the impact of recent professional development initiatives and deepens students' thinking. However, in the lessons that were no better than satisfactory there was too much direction and

talk by the teachers and insufficient challenge for the more able students. The school has a very robust system of tracking and target-setting that provides teachers with a wide range of information about students' progress. The extent to which teachers use this varies in and between subjects. Not all students receive sufficiently detailed and regular feedback on their learning.

The curriculum is of good quality. It provides a wide range of courses, often in collaboration with other local providers, and is increasingly well tailored to meet students' individual needs and aspirations. As a specialist language college the school provides opportunities for students to learn a wide range of languages, including two at Key Stage 3. With the introduction of more appropriate language courses, 86% of students now leave school with a language qualification. Care, guidance and support are a very strong aspect of the school's work. The high quality, personalised support provided by the school in partnership with a wide range of outside agencies contributes much to students' very positive attitudes, relationships and behaviour. One student's comment is typical of many received by inspectors: 'My school makes me feel good about myself. I feel comfortable here.'

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

The impact of leadership and management is good. The senior leadership team has been extended and strengthened by new appointments in key areas, for example, to reinvigorate the development of the school's specialist language status. Its impact can now be seen in the improvements in information and communication technology provision across the curriculum and in the development of community links; for example, with partner primary schools and the provision of adult language learning for the local community. The school's developing partnership with the special school located on the same campus contributes much to community cohesion and to students' preparation for their future lives. The two schools engage in an impressive range of activities together. The headteacher and senior leaders are committed to a wider distribution of responsibility, leading to increased accountability and this is raising student's attainment. Senior leaders take decisive actions to tackle underperformance. For example, new curriculum arrangements have created extra staffing and smaller classes and this has led to significant improvement; for example, in English and mathematics. The school is aware that there is more work to be done at middle leadership level to ensure that improvements in achievement and teaching extend to all subjects.

Governors understand and carry out their statutory responsibilities well. They have good knowledge of the school and its staff and are well informed about the school's strengths and about what needs to be improved. Governors support the school in taking difficult decisions and provide a robust challenge when necessary. Through its

accurate system of self-evaluation the school knows itself well. The school's contribution to community cohesion is a clear strength. The school is very aware of its particular ethnic, religious and socio-economic context and supports a wide range of activities at the level of the school, the local community, for example through a project involving primary schools on a local housing estate and, internationally, through a link with a school in Ecuador.

The school acts very effectively to ensure that all members of the school community are equally valued. Vulnerable groups are monitored and supported with great care and professionalism and the school's ways of working with external agencies are very effective and used as examples of good practice within the local authority. The high quality of care, guidance, support and safeguarding provided by the school ensures that more vulnerable groups progress at least as well as their peers.

*These are the grades for the leadership and management*

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

## Sixth form

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory. It has some good features. The leadership and management of the sixth form are effective in accommodating students of varying abilities into the sixth form. Inspection evidence confirms the school's view that outcomes for sixth-form students are satisfactory. They generally make good progress from their starting points, but there is some variation between the performance of groups of students and subjects. Safeguarding is strong and the sixth form promotes equality well. Students make a good contribution to life in school and in the local community; for example, through links with a special school on the same site. Students are well prepared for the next phase of their lives and education. Examples include, through courses in financial literacy, university visits and a 'learning to learn' problem solving course.

Sixth-form provision is satisfactory. Targets for students are challenging and there is good care, guidance and support to ensure good attendance. Some teaching is good but not consistently so. Therefore its impact does not always result in good progress for all students.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth Form</b>	<b>3</b>
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

The response received to the questionnaire distributed to parents and carers before the inspection was low for the size of the school. The school provides a wide range of channels of communication with parents and carers and the vast majority of parents and carers who responded are overwhelmingly satisfied with their children's experience of the school. Their most frequent areas of concern are the extent to which the school helps their children to lead a healthy lifestyle, prepares them for the future and enables parents and carers to support their children's learning at home. Inspectors found no evidence to support these concerns.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Oulder Hill Community School and Language College 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 93 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,292 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	18	32	36	63	2	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	19	33	36	63	1	2	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	19	33	30	53	4	7	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	18	32	31	54	4	7	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	18	32	31	54	4	7	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	30	27	47	9	16	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	14	25	30	53	10	18	0	0
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)	16	28	26	46	9	16	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	14	25	35	61	7	12	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	37	27	47	7	12	2	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	25	30	53	4	7	4	7
The school is led and managed effectively	12	21	38	67	3	5	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	19	33	34	60	3	5	0	0

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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## 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>the following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.



16 October 2009

Dear Students

**Inspection of Oulder Hill Community School and Language College,  
Rochdale OL11 5EF**

Thank you for your helpful attitude towards me and my colleagues when we came to inspect your school. We learned a great deal from observing your lessons and talking to you.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory education. Teaching has improved since your school's last inspection and is now mainly good. In good lessons you appreciate how well your teachers know their subjects and the way they challenge you to think more carefully through the kinds of questions they ask you. This helps all of you to make good progress, including the most able of you. However some of your lessons are not as good and you do not get enough chances to work independently of your teachers and share your own ideas. You do not always get enough feedback on your work to know exactly how to improve it. During your time in the school, you make satisfactory progress and reach standards in line with national averages. In some subjects like English and mathematics you make good and sometimes very good progress but we think that you could do even better. Your progress in science and French has not been good enough, but we were pleased to see that results have begun to improve.

It was good to hear how safe you feel in school and to see that most of the time your behaviour is good. Your attendance has also improved. Most of you told us that you enjoy coming to school and this shows in your good contribution to school life and to the wider community. You are very well informed about healthy living and many of you take part in sports activities and choose healthy meals. The extent to which you lead healthy lifestyles is good.

You have a curriculum of good quality that is well matched to your needs and interests. Because you are in a specialist language college you have a wide range of languages to study and in Years 10 and 11 you have plenty of choice, including a range of practical-based courses alongside more traditional subjects. Staff care for you very well and give you good support and guidance. You are developing a range of skills for your future working life and your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also good. Senior staff and governors know the school's strengths and what more needs to be done and they are working together to make sure that further improvements take place

Your school has improved a lot since the last inspection. We think that your school can do even better. I have asked the school to:

- raise standards by making sure that:
  - all your teachers use the best ways of assessing your work so that you all know precisely how to improve your work in all your subjects
  - your teachers teach in a variety of different ways to help all of you, including the most able, to reach the highest grades of which you are capable.

**Yours sincerely,**

**Susan Wareing**

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

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