

Cansfield High Specialist Language College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106521
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	377418
Inspection dates	14–15 February 2012
Lead 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	988
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eric Foster Alderman
Headteacher	Michael Southworth
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2008
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Introduction

Inspection team

Joan Davis
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Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 34 lessons, taught by 33 teachers. In addition, inspectors listened to students reading, visited an assembly and observed the behaviour of students at break and during lunchtime. Meetings were held with two groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school development plan, the school's own monitoring records regarding the quality of teaching and information on pupils' current attainment and progress. The inspection team also considered an analysis of 81 parental and carers' questionnaires and others completed by students and staff.

Information about the school

Cansfield High is an average-sized school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is well below the national average, as is the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average. The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress. The school has specialist status for languages and is also a Training School. The school has won a number of awards, including the International 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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- Cansfield High is a good school. At the heart of its work are the achievement and well-being of every student. Staff and students show respect for one another and there is a tangible sense of pride and ambition throughout the school. Students’ attainment has improved year on year and is now in line with the national average. However, a smaller-than-average proportion of students gain the best grades in public examinations. Students make good progress as they move up through the school. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make similarly good progress to their peers in the school. Therefore, achievement is good overall.
- Teaching is good overall. There has been a concerted, unrelenting and effective drive to improve the quality of provision. The school has been successful in improving the overall quality of marking since the previous inspection. However, teachers do not always use to best effect the wealth of assessment information available when planning lessons. As a result, some lessons are not correctly pitched and therefore they are sometimes insufficiently challenging, particularly for more-able students. The school recognises this as an area for development. Policies for the promotion of literacy and numeracy are underdeveloped and inconsistency of practice in this respect is evident across the school.
- The school is clear and unequivocal in its approach to promoting excellent behaviour and, as a result, this area of the school’s work is outstanding. Behaviour management systems are applied consistently across the school and students have every confidence that any rare incidences of poor behaviour are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Consequently, students feel safe in school, respect diversity and say there is very little bullying of any description.
- At the time of the previous inspection the headteacher’s inspirational leadership of the school was recognised, and this remains the case. He demonstrates ambition for every child in the school to succeed and is passionate in his conviction that education can transform the life chances of the students in his care. He has successfully communicated this vision, which is shared by all

members of the school community. The school has a good capacity for further improvement as it has successfully, for the most part, addressed the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Nevertheless, the school recognises that there remain key areas for development in order that students' achievement may be improved still further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of students gaining the best grades in public examinations by ensuring that existing good and outstanding practice in teaching is effectively disseminated, so that:
 - all teachers plan lessons that are sufficiently challenging and thereby meet the needs and abilities of all students
 - all teachers plan lessons that develop students' literacy and numeracy skills more effectively across the curriculum.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

All parents and carers who completed a questionnaire feel that their child is making good progress at the school and inspectors' findings confirm this view. There has been a rising trend in attainment in the three years prior to this inspection. Improvements are particularly discernible in science, where performance is significantly above the national average for most groups of students. Students who took public examinations in 2011 entered the school with prior attainment that was significantly below the national average. Nevertheless, performance in most key measures was in line with the national average because students had made good progress as they moved up through the school. The profile of students is changing and the prior attainment of students currently in the school is significantly above the national average for most year groups. Learning and progress, as observed in lessons during the inspection, were good, and scrutiny of data provided by the school confirmed that students are making increasingly good progress.

At the previous inspection attainment in mathematics was identified as an area for improvement. The school has demonstrated considerable determination to overcome the legacy of underachievement in this subject. As a result, the proportion of students gaining a good grade in mathematics has risen sharply and in 2011 was broadly in line with the national average. Furthermore, clear evidence was presented during the inspection to demonstrate that current attainment in mathematics is improving further. However, although attainment in 2011 improved, a lower-than-average proportion of students made expected progress in mathematics. The school recognised this and there has been a sustained and uncompromising drive to improve provision in this subject. Consequently, learning and progress in mathematics are improving securely and quickly. In mathematics lessons, observed during the inspection, students made good progress overall.

Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress. Students who are known to be eligible for free school meals make similar progress to this group nationally but marginally weaker progress than that of their peers in the school. The school has addressed this and is effectively closing this gap, as an increasingly smaller proportion of these students are now underachieving. Boys have, in the past, made weaker progress than girls in mathematics. The school has been successful in narrowing the gap between these groups of students, and the achievement of boys in mathematics is now on a par with that of girls.

Quality of teaching

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers feel that their child is taught well in the school. Inspectors found that the quality of teaching has improved over time and is good, with some examples of outstanding practice.

In the best lessons teachers bring the learning alive by planning lessons carefully to address the interests, abilities and needs of their students. They design lessons incorporating a range of exciting activities that stimulate students' imagination. For example, in one outstanding Year 7 Spanish lesson students had ample opportunity to improve their speaking skills while learning new vocabulary on the topic of sports. They had immense fun miming actions and had to think quickly in a game to 'Beat the teacher'. Students spoke confidently and with enthusiasm in the foreign language, sustaining concentration throughout the lesson.

Most teachers plan activities that occupy students as soon as they enter the lesson. As a result, little time is wasted and students are immediately focused on learning. This good practice is evident across the school, leading to high levels of engagement in lessons. Students collaborate productively when given the opportunity to do so and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well in lessons. For example, in one outstanding Year 8 geography lesson students had the opportunity to reflect on the plight of people living in less favourable circumstances around the world. They were encouraged to contemplate how the situation could be improved through, for example, more ethical means of trading with other countries.

Students know their targets. Their work is regularly and thoroughly marked, for the most part, and therefore students have a clear idea of what they need to do to improve. However, sometimes teachers do not use assessment information to plan lessons and some activities lack sufficient challenge. Good practice in this respect is evident but is not consistent across the school. The school is correct in identifying this as an area for improvement, particularly given the changing profile of students' prior attainment.

Policies to promote literacy are more effective than those to promote numeracy, but both remain underdeveloped and practice across the school is inconsistent. Students in Years 7 and 8 appreciate the lessons they have that are devoted to reading. They particularly enjoy the quizzes that are organised by teachers to check their understanding of what they have read.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Most students say that they feel safe in the school and the vast majority of parents and carers echo this point of view. Students take responsibility for their own safety and understand the risks to which they may be exposed, both within the school and outside it. Students mix very well together socially at break times and at lunchtime. Attendance is above the national average and students are consistently punctual, both to school and to lessons. Racist incidents are rare and dealt with effectively. Incidents of bullying are exceptionally rare and students are happy to come to school, expressing confidence in their teachers. Students know that there is always someone to turn to should problems arise.

The overwhelming majority of parents and carers feel that there is a good standard of behaviour in the school, and this sentiment is shared by staff and students. Inspectors found students' behaviour to be at least good and in most instances exemplary. The school has clear, robust systems to manage poor behaviour when it occurs. The school has high expectations regarding behaviour and students know that misdemeanours will be dealt with speedily and effectively. As a result, the number of fixed-term exclusions has fallen dramatically over time and is now low. Students demonstrate a high level of respect for one another and their teachers. As a consequence, the school provides an orderly, welcoming environment, entirely conducive to learning.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has been relentless, galvanising all members of the school community in order to secure improvements in outcomes for students. He is ably supported by an equally passionate senior team who share his vision for the further development of Cansfield. The school now has an established track record of improvement and areas of former underperformance, such as mathematics, have been tackled robustly; therefore, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is good. Performance management and professional development have been used highly effectively, for example in driving improvements in the quality of teaching.

The school works productively with a range of partners. For example, a partnership with local schools and employers has led to the establishment of the Skills Centre, where students can gain expertise in a number of trades, thereby improving their prospects for employment.

The curriculum is good. It has been modified over time and is now appropriately adapted to the needs, abilities and interests of students. The languages specialism provides students with many opportunities to mix with their peers from a wide range of different cultures, and the school ensures that all students are able to participate, whatever their means. Students speak highly of the many enrichment activities on offer; for example, one student enthusiastically explained the impact of an event to promote careers in science: 'It was great to see how even I can become an engineer!'

The governing body benefits from an astute Chair who has a wealth of experience in public service. Its members demonstrate fierce loyalty to the school and are rigorous

in tackling underperformance. Procedures for safeguarding are effective and meet all statutory requirements. School leaders, in conjunction with the governing body, promote equality well and tackle discrimination effectively.

The school is effective in reaching out to parents and carers, who are overwhelmingly positive about their children's experience at Cansfield; as one parent commented: 'The school is at the centre of the community; it cares for, supports and educates every pupil...regardless of ability. All success is celebrated – it is a happy school'.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There are many opportunities to take part in cultural activities, such as visits to art galleries and museums. Students are encouraged to reflect on ethical and social issues through the curriculum and other events. For example, an extremely well-executed and moving assembly, observed during the inspection, raised students' awareness of the cruelty and injustice of racism.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



16 February 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Cansfield High Specialist Language College, Wigan WN4 9TP

We would like to thank you all for the warm and friendly welcome we received during our inspection of your school. We were impressed by your excellent behaviour and the good attitudes you show to one another. You seem to enjoy coming to school and know that you can confide in your teachers, should problems arise. We found that your school provides you with a good quality of education. You make good progress as you move up through the school and your attainment at the end of year 11 is in line with the national average.

Teaching is good in your school. In most of your lessons you receive helpful advice on how to improve your work. Most teachers deliver good lessons that are designed to help you to learn. Your attendance is better than the national average and you arrive on time to school and lessons.

We have identified a number of areas where we think your school should make improvements. We have asked the headteacher to make sure that good teachers share their expertise with others so that all lessons are as good as the best, with challenging activities that will help you to make even better progress. We have also asked the headteacher to make sure that your literacy and numeracy skills are developed across the curriculum.

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

Yours sincerely

Joan Davis
Her Majesty's Inspector

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