

# Rainford High Technology College

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104826
<b>Local Authority</b>	St. Helens
<b>Inspection number</b>	355637
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 March 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	John Coleman HMI

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1591
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	229
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr John Bromilow
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Ruth Halsall
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	30 April 2008
<b>School address</b>	Higher Lane Rainford, St Helens Merseyside WA11 8NY
<b>Telephone number</b>	01744 885914
<b>Fax number</b>	01744 884642
<b>Email address</b>	hls@rainford.org.uk

---

<b>Age group</b>	11–18
<b>Inspection dates</b>	9–10 March 2011
<b>Inspection number</b>	355637

---

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 assesses 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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

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

Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester  
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 4234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2011

## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 51 lessons taught by 50 different teachers. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, senior staff and groups of students. Telephone discussions took place with the Chair of the Governing Body and representatives of two of the school's partnerships. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of school documentation including data showing students' attainment and progress, policies, the minutes of meetings of the governing body, reports from the School Improvement Partner, safeguarding records and students' work. Questionnaires were scrutinised from a sample of students, staff and from 450 parents and carers.

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

- Does the quality of teaching consistently enable students to make good progress in lessons across all subjects?
- Are school leaders' plans for improvement resulting in a better curriculum and improved use of assessment information?
- Are there any differences in the progress made by different groups of students?
- Do the school's specialist subjects make an effective impact on the performance of other subjects?

## Information about the school

This is a much larger-than-average-sized high school and sixth form. It is situated on the edge of a residential area adjoining open farmland. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. A lower-than-average proportion of students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average; the proportion of students who have a statement of special educational needs is below average.

The school has specialist status in technology. It has been granted a number of nationally recognised awards including Investors in People and Sportsmark. A new school building is being built on the existing site and is expected to be completed by January 2013. A significant amount of temporary accommodation is being used to house parts of the school displaced by these works.

**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

This is a satisfactory school with a good sixth form. Since the last inspection the school's leaders have sustained the high standards which students attain. Some improvements have been achieved to the quality of teaching, the use of assessment information and to the curriculum, especially in Key Stage 4. Much of the improvement is relatively recent and varies across different subjects. Consequently, the school's capacity to improve is satisfactory.

Due to effective performance management, leaders have successfully ensured that all teaching and learning in the school is at least satisfactory. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is improving. Systems to monitor lessons are organised well and are carried out regularly by senior leaders and heads of departments. As a result senior leaders have a reasonably accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching. However, their evaluation of the overall quality of teaching and learning is over-generous because there is insufficient focus during lesson observations on the progress in learning made by students. Until recently, leaders did not correlate their judgements on the quality of teaching with the data which measures students' attainment and progress.

The data which the school compiles, showing the attainment and progress of students, is significantly improved. The outcomes of regular school assessments provide leaders with clear information about how well students are progressing towards the targets set for their attainment. The analysis and evaluation of the data is at an early stage of development as this is only the second year in which the data system has been securely operating. The use of assessment information by teachers is variable. In the best lessons teachers take full account of students' starting points to provide well-matched tasks which challenge all groups of students. This practice is, however, inconsistent, and in some lessons all students are set tasks with the same level of expectation, with the result that work is too easy for some and too difficult for others and progress slows. The use of assessment techniques during lessons to check on students' progress is also variable.

Following the last inspection, leaders reviewed the school's curriculum and acted to ensure that a greater range of externally accredited courses were available to students. The Key Stage 4 curriculum now offers more vocational options such as construction, hairdressing and car mechanics. This is welcomed and appreciated by students. The first indications of students' progress in these courses are good with 100% pass rates in modular interim assessments.

The variable performance of different subjects and the pace of improvement to areas targeted by the school's leaders are due to a lack of a whole-school improvement strategy and rigour in leaders' action planning. Whole-school development plans are not sharp enough and do not have measurable success criteria which can be used at regular intervals to check on how well improvements are progressing. Individual subjects are

**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

largely autonomous in their self-evaluation and action planning. Additionally, plans to improve the quality of teaching rely largely on improving individual staff rather than identifying areas for everyone to improve. This is partly because there is no senior leader with designated responsibility for improving the quality of teaching and learning. Also, the policy for teaching and learning does not provide staff with an up-to-date clear steer of the features of good practice expected in lessons. Students' achievement in the school's specialism, technology, is good, due to good quality teaching and learning. Not enough use is made of this to impact on and help improve other subjects.

Up to 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.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
  - providing training in the summer term 2011 for all teachers in the use of assessment techniques during lessons
  - ensuring all lessons are planned taking full account of the range of attainment of students in the class
  - immediately raising teachers' expectations of how much students should learn in each lesson
  - providing regular opportunities for teachers to observe the best practice in the school
  - strengthening leadership for teaching and learning by ensuring there is a member of the senior leadership team with specific responsibility for this area
  - devising and implementing a whole-school plan by the beginning of April to improve the quality of teaching and learning which sets measurable targets for end-of-term evaluations.
- Increase the pace of school improvement by:
  - improving the rigour and sharpness of whole-school improvement planning
  - ensuring consistency between departments by implementing plans for improvement across the whole school so that there is a shared understanding of what is required
  - making better use of the good practice in the school, including the sixth form, by identifying key strengths, disseminating these to all departments and rigorously monitoring the impact
  - involving all staff in an immediate review of the school's policy for teaching and learning.

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

**3**

Overall, students enter the school with significantly above average levels of attainment. They make satisfactory progress and reach high standards by the end of Year 11. The percentage of students achieving the highest grades (A\*/A) in GCSE examinations is significantly higher than average in a large majority of subjects. Over the last three years

**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

boys have made less progress than girls. Similarly, students with special educational needs and/or disabilities have progressed more slowly than other groups of students. In the current academic year these gaps are closing due to the successful impact of leaders' actions to provide better support and intervention. In lessons seen by inspectors, students' progress was satisfactory and improving. It varies between subjects and key stages. For example, in the sixth form, progress is good due to good and effective teaching. In Key Stage 3 and 4 it is satisfactory overall. During the inspection some outstanding progress was made by students during some lessons in technology, physical education and in the sixth form. In English and mathematics, data shows that students' progress over the last three years is below that expected nationally. Progress seen in English and mathematics lessons during the inspection was mostly satisfactory and school data shows students are making satisfactory progress throughout this year.

Students say they enjoy school and feel safe. Rates of students' attendance are high. In lessons and around the school, students' behaviour is good. Students are welcoming to visitors: they are courteous and polite. A wide range of opportunities are offered to students to engage in sporting activities and participation rates are good. This encourages healthy lifestyles successfully. However, one third of student questionnaires and a significant number of parent and carer questionnaires raised concerns about the lack of healthy options at lunchtime. They also contained some worries about smoking on the school site. Students gain good skills to equip them for future study or employment and the overwhelming majority successfully move straight into either work or further education. The school ensures that students learn about and appreciate a range of faiths and beliefs through opportunities in the curriculum including visits to places of worship. There are several international links which educate students about other cultures. There are limited opportunities for students to learn about the ethnic and cultural diversity of Britain.

**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

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

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

## How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching and learning ranges from satisfactory to outstanding. In the sixth form it is consistently good. In the main school it is satisfactory, though stronger in Key Stage 4 where the curriculum provides a more embedded set of courses and experiences. In lessons seen during the inspection, students show good attitudes to learning, relationships between staff and students are good, teachers have a secure understanding of their subject knowledge and students readily engage in the activities provided. Teachers plan lessons with learning intentions for the tasks to be undertaken by students. In the weaker lessons these are often too broad and take insufficient notice of the different prior attainment of groups of students. As a result some students say the work is too easy and their pace of learning is too slow. The targets set for most students are suitably challenging but, until recently, the expectations for the lowest-attaining students have been too low. Changes this year to the curriculum provision and class structure for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is bringing about much improved rates of learning which are now similar to all other groups of students.

The curriculum in Key Stage 4 has improved and provides a well-matched range of courses and opportunities for students. The school offers an academic pathway, and a mixed vocational pathway for those students more suited to practical subjects with ongoing assessment. The school is developing the curriculum for Key Stage 3. For example, Year 9 has additional GCSE courses including an optional business studies

**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

course. The impact of the specialism in technology across the curriculum is good in improving students' outcomes but this has not been used in a wider sense across all departments. The school has a good range of sporting activities on offer which are enjoyed and appreciated by students.

The school provides effective systems for the transitional move which students make from their feeder primary schools. This includes a summer school for the more vulnerable Year 6 students. The quality of information and guidance to help students make the best choices is good. For example, students spoke about how much they liked the option booklet in Year 9, to explain their Key Stage 4 pathways. A wide range of support programmes are in place to support different groups of students including 'make it happen' which provides good links with a local gym and sports centre for students to engage in boxing and gymnastics. Learning mentors, year managers and form tutors liaise well with support staff such as the on-site police officer and the school nurse. A range of external agencies provide effective support to students in challenging circumstances.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

Since the last inspection senior leaders and governors have successfully managed the initial development of the new school building. Finances are used well and safeguarding arrangements are good including effective risk assessments of the school site and rigorous vetting of all staff.

Monitoring systems are improving and ensure regular scrutiny of teaching and learning and students' progress. Effective staff restructuring has led to some departments making improved provision and the result is better outcomes for students in these subjects, for example, in English. This departmental improvement is variable across the school. The headteacher, supported by the senior leadership team, provide a clear steer to the school in some areas, such as developing curriculum options in Key Stage 4. Leaders' plans to improve other areas, such as the overall quality of teaching and learning, lack sufficient whole-school cohesion.

The governing body successfully ensures that all statutory responsibilities are met. There is a wide range of committees who are well informed through school leaders' reports and local authority guidance. An effective system for recruiting and retaining governors is in place, which results in the governing body maintaining a suitable spread of experience and expertise. The minutes of the meetings of the governing body show a suitable level of challenge and support regarding the school's work in most areas. Sufficient challenge has



**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

not been shown in relation to the school leaders' evaluation of the overall quality of teaching and learning or the amount of progress made by students in relation to this.

The school has a good range of partnerships with local schools, sports providers and through links to provide activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. There is a plan for community cohesion which is evaluated by leaders and this shows that work in the local community through the many links is effective. The school community provides well for students' social development. The school ensures that students have equal opportunities to participate in activities. There is no evidence of any discriminatory practice. Over time, the boys and lower attaining groups of students have made less progress than others, but the gap is closing due to the effective actions of school leaders.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</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>3</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>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Sixth form

From starting points which are similar to students in other sixth forms taking similar courses, students make good progress and reach standards which are above average. Improved procedures for tracking students' progress combined with good support and intervention mean that students in danger of falling behind are quickly helped to improve. The retention rates for students moving from Year 12 to Year 13 are above average and show the high level of students' satisfaction with their learning. There is some variation in the performance of different subjects. For example, at AS level, the attainment in all subjects is at or above the national average and there are strengths in the outcomes for mathematics and media studies. All applied GCE subjects attain above average levels of attainment. Progress measures for AS and A-level subjects are good and improving. These good outcomes are the result of teaching and learning which is of good quality. During this inspection, three-quarters of lessons seen were good or outstanding with the remainder being satisfactory. Pastoral support for students is very good and there are

**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

good relationships between students and staff. This good pastoral provision is much improved since the last inspection due to the effectiveness of leaders' plans for improvement.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

## Views of parents and carers

About one in five parents and carers responded to the inspection questionnaire. The great majority of responses are supportive of the school's work. The main concern of the respondents was regarding the school's lack of success in helping students to adopt healthy lifestyles. To some extent, inspectors agree and this feature is evaluated in the report. Some concerns are also raised about the school's efforts to help parents and carers support students' learning or the extent to which the school listens to suggestions. The inspection judges that the effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers is good.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Rainford High Technology 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 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 450 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1591 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	137	30	287	64	18	4	5	1
The school keeps my child safe	154	34	286	64	7	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	184	41	237	53	25	6	4	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	143	32	275	61	25	6	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	95	21	305	68	27	6	2	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	87	19	280	62	57	13	5	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	62	14	276	61	86	19	8	2
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)	113	25	278	62	35	8	2	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	114	25	289	64	28	6	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	111	25	259	58	40	9	13	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	69	15	275	61	53	12	6	1
The school is led and managed effectively	102	23	306	68	22	5	4	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	143	32	276	61	20	4	4	1

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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 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"><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.

**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 March 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of Rainford High Technology College, St Helens, WA11 8NY**

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team into your school when we visited you recently. We thoroughly enjoyed our time with you and would like to share with you what we found out about your school. We judged that Rainford High Technology College is a satisfactory school with a good sixth form. These are the main reasons why we judged the school to be satisfactory.

- The standards that you achieve by the end of Year 11 are high in almost all subjects taken at GCSE.
- The headteacher and senior staff are successfully improving the school though the pace of this should be quicker.
- The curriculum in Key Stage 4 offers students an improved range of options including vocational courses for those of you who are best suited to practical learning.
- Teaching is satisfactory and enables you to make satisfactory progress. In some subjects such as technology you make good progress.
- The school has good data tracking systems to monitor your attainment and progress. This is beginning to be used better so that what you are asked to do in lessons is challenging and interesting. There is more to be done so that this happens in all your lessons.

All schools need to develop and improve. We have asked that the quality of teaching and learning is improved so that all lessons provide you with work that is interesting and challenging for you. Also, we have asked that the school's leaders speed up all improvements they plan to make across the whole school.

Thank you once again for all your help. We wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

John Coleman

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](http://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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).**