

# West Lancashire Community High School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	131258
<b>Local authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	381324
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 November 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Hilary Ward

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>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<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>	95
<b>Of which number on roll in the sixth form</b>	36
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ian Price
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sue Reynolds
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	17 October 2008
<b>School address</b>	School Lane Chapel House Skelmersdale WN8 8EH
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Thirteen lessons were observed taught by ten teachers. Meetings were held with senior and middle managers, members of the governing body and groups of students. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation relating to safeguarding, school improvement planning, the analysis of students' progress, curriculum information and the school's specialist status. Questionnaire returns from students, staff and from 36 parents and carers were analysed.

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

- How well teachers are using assessment for learning to ensure individual students are making the maximum possible progress in every lesson.
- How effectively the curriculum has been developed to meet the changing needs of the student population.
- How well students are prepared for the next stage in their lives.
- The impact of the school's specialist status on school improvement.

## Information about the school

Since its last inspection, the number of students at West Lancashire Community High School has increased by about 50% and additional staff have been appointed, many of whom are new to the school. This includes members of the senior management team. The range of students' special educational needs and/or disabilities has become more diverse and students often have complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including autism spectrum conditions, severe and profound learning difficulties, and complex speech and communication problems. New admissions are sometimes of older students who may have had difficult experiences in their previous settings. The school admits additional students to its sixth form. All students have a statement of special educational needs. A very small number of students are looked after by the local authority. Almost half are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is above the national average. Almost all students are of White British heritage.

The school has specialist status in communication and interaction and holds a number of awards including Healthy School and Extended Services status and Investors in People.

**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?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

West Lancashire Community High is a good school. It cares exceptionally well for its students. Due to significant changes to the range of special educational needs and/or disabilities the school caters for, and the increase in numbers of students and staff, there has been a need to develop new practices. This has been most notably successful in the specialist provision made for students in the specialist base for autism spectrum conditions.

Aspects of the school's work are outstanding, including the arrangements for safeguarding students and the extensive partnerships with other education providers which significantly improve learning opportunities for students. The relationships which the school has developed with external agencies provide a crucial link between them, the students and their parents and carers. Together with the exceptional care, guidance and support provided by staff in the school, this ensures students' welfare is managed extremely effectively. The school is outstanding in supporting students to adopt healthy lifestyles through many subjects of the curriculum. It provides plenty of opportunity for students to make an outstanding contribution to the school community by taking responsibility in a variety of ways through the school council, eco-council and by being prefects.

Students work hard and demonstrate enjoyment in lessons. Different groups are taught well and students make good or sometimes better progress from their starting points. However, progress can be uneven for different subjects and at different stages, but the school is monitoring this well to identify and address reasons why progress is not more even. The quality of teaching is good overall but the use teachers make of assessment information to ensure that every student is challenged to make the best progress they can in all lessons is satisfactory. The curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced. However, the school is aware of the changing needs of the student groups and has begun a review of the curriculum which has already been successfully completed for students in the autism base.

Leadership, management and governance are good. Several members of the governing body are only recently appointed to their posts but are already reviewing the information provided to them and asking challenging questions. The very experienced headteacher leads a newly formed senior management team with fresh ideas and aspirations for the school's future development and, as such, the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

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

- Improve the rate of students' progress in all lessons by consistently assessing prior learning in order to:
  - set learning outcomes which are specific to individual students
  - increase the level of challenge, particularly for more-able students to ensure all make maximum progress in each lesson, especially by limiting the use of work sheets
  - involve students in understanding their next steps.
  
- Continue the review of the curriculum to ensure it engages all student groups and fully meets the changing needs of the students being admitted to the school.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2
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Students' attainment on entry varies considerably according to the level and complexity of their learning difficulties and the time of their admission to the school. However, the complex and severe nature of students' learning difficulties and disabilities means that it is unlikely that overall their attainment will ever rise above low. By Year 11, all students have made good and some have made outstanding progress due to the good teaching and excellent guidance and support they receive. Aspects of the curriculum match the interests of some groups of students better than others and this can also have an effect on progress. For example, in information and communication technology lessons (ICT), girls appear to prefer the more creative and informal work offered at Key Stage 3, whereas boys seem to prefer the more structured approach offered at Key Stage 4. The school is aware of this and is looking at ways to modify the curriculum to match students' needs and interests more precisely. The range of courses on offer has increased to try and ensure that all students are able to obtain external awards. All Year 11 students are given the opportunity of a work placement. The majority choose to continue their education in the school's post-16 department.

During their time in the warm and welcoming school community, students improve significantly in their attitudes to learning and in their personal development. They behave well during lessons and the very large majority of students say they feel adults keep them safe in school, and their parents and carers agree with them. Attendance is broadly average and the school has developed highly effective transition procedures to improve the attendance of new students who may have been out of school for some time before admission.

Students develop a sense of right and wrong and successfully increase their knowledge and understanding of themselves and how to work collaboratively with their peers. They have a less clear understanding of other cultures despite activities and events to raise awareness. They develop an outstanding knowledge of healthy lifestyles through their involvement in a wide range of physical activities and by learning how to make nutritious meals. Students make an outstanding contribution to the life of the school and wider community and take their responsibilities very

seriously; for example, members of the eco-council turn lights off almost before everyone has left the room. Recently a group of students put together a presentation on sexual health, which was delivered at County Hall, and designed a related logo for mugs, which were sold to raise funds.

The school places a priority on developing students' basic skills and their social and communication interactions and this contributes positively to their future economic well-being.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	*
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<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>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</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>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good and sometimes it is outstanding. Teachers know their students very well and treat them with respect. Any incidents of poor behaviour are managed well with minimum disruption for other students. Teachers are supported in their work by some well-trained and skilful teaching assistants. In lessons where the quality of teaching is outstanding, students are encouraged to work independently with the minimum necessary support and are provided with excellent resources, such as electronic notebooks. Teachers do not consistently set precise learning outcomes, which are specific to what they want individuals to learn in lessons, nor do they share these with students. This means that teachers are not always able to assess students' progress effectively enough in order to more precisely determine their next steps in learning. Occasionally, there is an over-reliance on work sheets which do not always provide enough challenge to the most able or give opportunities for extended writing to those for whom it is appropriate. In the best lessons, teaching is relevant and exciting and the activities make learning thoroughly enjoyable.

The curriculum provides students with many memorable and enjoyable experiences, including extended school activities, such as days out in activity centres, residential visits and holiday clubs. An emphasis on separate subject teaching can sometimes reduce opportunities for cross-curricular work. Through excellent partnerships, the school provides enrichment opportunities with, for example sports specialists offering

<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

a broader range of physical activities. All Year 11 students attend the local college weekly to extend their curriculum and begin to prepare them for their next move after school. The school has developed an action plan as part of its specialist status to focus on promoting communication throughout the curriculum. A total communication approach ensures all students' communication needs are exceptionally well met through the use of objects of reference, sign and symbols.

Care, guidance and support for students are outstanding and promote students' well-being highly effectively. Excellent links with external agencies, such as the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), speech and language therapy and the multi-agency transition group, ensure holistic support for students and their families. Support and advice are provided to families, including through workshops on particular topics. High quality preparation work ensures successful admission of new students and opportunities are provided for students to access different subjects in mainstream schools where appropriate. The excellent guidance students are given about the options possible to them ensures they are very well prepared to make decisions about the next stage in their lives.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

Recent changes to the senior management team and to the governing body have been managed well. New post holders have adapted to their roles quickly and with energy and enthusiasm. There have been recent changes to the way data are analysed, and then presented in an accessible format, which is securing more rigorous information about students' progress. The governing body is highly supportive. New members are asking questions about the information they receive to ensure they understand it and thus effectively challenge the senior team. The governing body plays a full role in ensuring that regulations relating to safeguarding children are met and safeguarding procedures are outstanding. The headteacher is a highly experienced and a well trained lead on child protection and all checks, risk assessments and staff training contribute very effectively to ensuring students are kept safe. Subject leaders take responsibility for curriculum planning and resources, and monitor their subjects very well.

The school promotes equality of opportunity very well. It goes to great lengths to include all students in all aspects of school life and makes arrangements for individual students to meet their particular needs and interests. The school promotes community cohesion well. Local links are well established which create opportunities for students to develop independence skills, for example by making use of the local shops to buy food and prepare meals. The school communicates very effectively with parents and carers, taking care to keep them informed about issues which affect their children in school and responding to requests for advice and support in

managing their child at home. A range of highly effective partnerships enhance student welfare and improve learning opportunities. For example, the headteacher chairs the Special Needs Group 14–19 in West Lancashire which facilitates the sharing of expertise and facilities and creates inclusion opportunities for students. The achievement of the school's specialist status is contributing to the development of new facilities and to extending the already excellent partnerships still further. There are plans for a new sixth-form base and a bid has been made for a horticulture unit as part of foundation learning.

*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	2
<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>1</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>1</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>2</b>

## Sixth form

Provision in the post-16 department is good and there are strong links with the local college, which students attend every week. The curriculum is highly relevant to the students' needs and growing maturity. The units of accreditation they follow enable them to progress over their one, two or three year courses to higher levels of challenge to achieve Entry Level awards, certificates and diplomas. Opportunities for work-related learning and the development of functional skills are strengths, as are the opportunities to develop independence skills, such as independent travel. Students may participate in tasters of vocational subjects at college and the school organises a work experience placement for all post-16 students each year, so that they are well informed to make decisions about their future. The majority of students choose to continue their education at a college when they leave. The wide range of experiences they have been given enable them to have a clear idea of what they want to do when they leave the sixth form. Leadership of the sixth form is good and staff have succeeded in creating an environment where students can move on from school safely and with their welfare needs continuing to be extremely well met.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth Form</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	2
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

Just over a third of parents and carers returned questionnaires. The vast majority were very positive but a few expressed concerns and these comments usually related to the changing nature of the student population and the challenge this presents. The headteacher and governing body are aware of this and address concerns as they arise. The inspection found that behavioural incidents are generally managed and monitored well. Several parents and carers added glowing comments such as, 'This school has been more than helpful in providing my son with a very high standard of care and support' and 'This school is excellent in every way, a real gem and I wouldn't want my son anywhere else.'

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at West Lancashire Community 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 36 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 95 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	23	64	12	33	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	24	67	10	28	1	3	1	3
The school informs me about my child's progress	16	44	17	47	2	6	1	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	16	44	15	42	4	11	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	19	53	15	42	2	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	47	13	36	3	8	1	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	16	44	15	42	4	11	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	44	17	47	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	61	11	31	3	8	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	58	10	28	1	3	2	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	42	15	42	4	11	2	6
The school is led and managed effectively	22	61	10	28	3	8	1	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	22	61	11	31	2	6	1	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 is 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](http://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"><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.**



25 November 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of West Lancashire Community High School, Skelmersdale,  
WN8 8EH**

Thank you for welcoming the inspectors into your school this week.

We enjoyed meeting you and watching some of your preparations for your production of 'Grease' and hope this goes well. Thank you for sharing your views about your school. Yours is a good school. These are some of the things we found.

- The staff care for you exceptionally well and make sure you get the help you need.
- You are given lots of opportunities to try different work placements and subjects when you get older because the school has developed some excellent links with the college and with work placements.
- You know a great deal about how to lead healthy lives and the school gives you lots of opportunity to take on responsible roles.

We have asked the school to think about a few things to improve the progress in your learning. These are:

- to ensure you know exactly what you are expected to learn in each lesson and discuss with you how to move on to the next stage
- to review the curriculum and involve you in deciding the topics you want to learn about
- to make sure that you all have just the right work to challenge you, especially those of you who find learning easier than most.

Thank you again for showing us your work and for talking with us.

Yours sincerely  
Hilary Ward  
Lead inspector

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