

Rainford High Technology College

Higher Lane, Rainford, St Helens, WA11 8NY

Inspection dates 18–19 September 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Teaching, particularly in Years 7 to 9 does not always enable students to extend their learning. Some students find learning tasks too difficult.
- Although students' achievement is good overall from their starting points the progress of some students slows because teachers do not consistently plan lessons to deepen their understanding.
- Recent improvements in teaching introduced by the interim executive headteacher have not had sufficient time to ensure consistently good progress across the school, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- The evaluation of the quality of teaching by subject leaders is limited.
- Plans for the future do not sufficiently identify clear timescales for when improvements will be achieved.
- Some subject leaders are new to their role and have had insufficient time to follow through their action plans for improvement.
- A comprehensive policy to develop literacy, mathematical and communication skills to a sophisticated and mature level for all students across the school has yet to be developed.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and managers together with the governing body have taken decisive action to improve the leadership of the school, and as a result improvements to teaching have impacted on achievement.
- The sixth form is good, with students making good progress as a result of good teaching and strong leadership.
- The majority of students feel safe, behave well in lessons and around the school, displaying positive attitudes to learning.
- A significant number of teachers plan activities in their lessons which enable students to become more involved and engaged in their learning.
- The evaluation of the quality of teaching by senior leaders is accurate and has improved since the last inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 52 lessons, of which three were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with five groups of students, the Chair and vice chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 74 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own data on current students' progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents related to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Nell Banfield, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Pamela Hemphill	Additional Inspector
Sheila Kaye	Additional Inspector
Paul Latham	Additional Inspector
Judith Straw	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a much larger than average sized secondary school and sixth form. The number of students has declined slightly in the last two years. The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below the national average. A lower than average proportion of students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students who have a statement of special educational needs, supported at school action or school action plus 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 the Sportsmark. A new school building is being built, it is expected to be completed by July 2013. A significant amount of temporary accommodation is being used to house students displaced by these works.
- The school exceeded the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The headteacher took up post two weeks before the beginning of the inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by:
 - ensuring that teachers plan lessons to identify clearly what all students have learnt and where they need further explanation or practice, increased pace or more challenging work
 - strengthening teachers' skills in questioning so that students think harder about their views and explanations
 - improving the skills of teachers to evaluate the success of planned activities in promoting learning, based on how effectively the students have learnt, rather than on how well they have completed a task
 - developing and refining teachers' use of individual student assessments and targets to match teaching to the needs of all students, especially boys, those in receipt of the pupil premium and those with special educational needs
 - ensuring that all lessons actively engage, interest and inspire students.
- Improve the leadership skills of subject leaders by:
 - ensuring that they develop coaching and support to improve teaching in their subject so that progress and attainment of all students increases further
 - improving teachers' use of assessment and individual student data to plan lessons that match the needs of all students
 - evaluating the quality of teaching in their subject in relation to improvements in students' progress.
- Develop the literacy, communication and mathematical skills of all students to a sophisticated and mature level across the school by:
 - agreeing whole-school policy and practice
 - ensuring that the school targets the full range of literacy needs in the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students enter the school with well above average attainment overall and the vast majority attain very high standards in most subjects compared with students nationally. The attainment of some boys, students supported by the pupil premium, disabled students and those with special educational needs is slightly lower than that of students nationally.
- From their individual starting points the vast majority of students make good progress. The progress of a minority of students is slower because there is insufficient support for developing their skills in literacy, communication and mathematics, and teaching is ineffectively planned or adjusted to meet their needs.
- Most students achieve well in lessons because they have positive attitudes to learning and are very keen to do well. The majority of students know that the efforts they make now will contribute to their success in the future.
- Students in Years 10 and 11 make very good progress in mathematics, with many exceeding the targets set for them, as a result of the good teaching in the department and the positive attitudes, and good skills and knowledge students bring to lessons.
- Students in Years 10 and 11 make good progress in English as a result of the high level of communication skills displayed in lessons and develop a very clear understanding of exactly what is required to succeed at the higher grades. They have regular opportunities to practise working at these levels in their lessons.
- The school has improved the accuracy of assessments and the regular collation of attainment data so that students' progress can be tracked closely.
- Students in the sixth form achieve well over time and sixth-form attainment has risen steadily by all measures since 2008. Students speak highly of the support and encouragement that they receive. This was evident in a science lesson where students were skilfully guided in a peer-marking session to identify the strengths and areas that could be improved, and where their understanding was regularly checked during the lesson so that they learned very effectively. Students are committed, ambitious and a credit to the school.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although the majority of the lessons seen during the inspection were good, teaching overall does not consistently support the progress of some students, even though achievement is good overall.
- Students in Years 7 to 9 make slightly slower progress because teaching is not always well-tailored to their ability levels, and tasks and activities are often planned at the same level for all students.
- Teaching in a number of lessons results in students being passive, with teachers explaining and describing teaching points. Opportunities are missed to engage students in activities that would deepen their understanding and engage their interest. In English, tasks are closely focused on recognising and naming language techniques and opportunities are lost to engage and inspire students in the impact of language in a range of texts.
- The use of assessment to set targets and monitor the progress of students has improved but the school has only recently begun to identify how those students who are not making sufficient progress can be supported to improve their progress.
- Teachers have begun to plan more activities that require students to assess each other's work and evaluate how it can be improved but students' understanding of the impact of the improvements they suggest remains limited and is developing slowly. For example, suggestions to increase the range of punctuation used is made without any explanation of the difference that additional punctuation would make.
- Students answer questions willingly and are keen to have their knowledge and understanding

verified and recognised. Teachers often accept the first answer given, although there are examples of probing questioning being used very effectively to challenge students' understanding. In a physics lesson this helped students to articulate the exact process within an electrical circuit and the reasons behind it.

- In the most effective lessons, students' interests and talents are harnessed to support creativity, as in an art lesson, where the teacher used information and communication technology to capture, manipulate and present images of Japanese street fashion to stimulate interest and imagination.
- Literacy, mathematical and communication skills lack systematic development across subjects, although mathematical skills were in evidence in one design and technology lesson where students used measurement and calculation to re-size a block pattern to fit them.
- Teaching and learning are good in the sixth form, as was the case at the last inspection. Students make good or excellent progress across the range of subjects. Leaders are aware of relative weaknesses in biology and are taking effective action to improve them.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students consistently display positive behaviour in lessons and around the school which supports their learning and good achievement effectively. They work well with others, are respectful of the ideas of others and share their own with confidence.
- Form time is used well by most teachers to support students. The school is planning a comprehensive personal development curriculum to be taught during form time.
- Students feel safe in lessons and around school; they demonstrate a high level of respect for adults and their peers.
- Students are clear that bullying is not tolerated and most students spoken to agree they could go to any member of staff for support if they or a friend were being bullied. There was a very small minority of pupils who had seen, or experienced, name calling, some of which had been racially based, and felt that there was no recourse to action to remedy this.
- The school could usefully use the planned personal development curriculum and form time to ensure that all understand the different forms of bullying and that procedures are strengthened so that pupils are confident in discussing any concerns with staff. Students are fully aware of how the internet and mobile telephones can be misused to bully and intimidate. This is raised during lessons in Year 7, in English and information and communication technology.
- Attendance is above average. Students are punctual to lessons and there are few students who are persistently absent, although more students known to be eligible for free school meals were persistently absent compared with all students across the school.
- Exclusions have reduced overall and a lower proportion than nationally was excluded from the school in the last academic year.
- The majority of parents who expressed their views through Parent View agreed that behaviour was generally good and their son or daughter was kept safe in school.
- The sixth form has a very effective pastoral system ensuring high quality support for individual students. Excellent careers advice is available. Students can easily obtain help and advice on personal matters. Students make a significant contribution to their own and the wider community through the Duke of Edinburgh Award, the school newspaper, lower-school mentoring, the school council and voluntary work.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher presented an extremely clear analysis of the school's current position to the governors and is fully aware that the self-evaluation of the school and the consequent development planning require improvement. There are clear plans for continuing the recent

improvements in teaching and learning and for strengthening the use of data and assessment to monitor students' progress. Self-evaluation identifies those students who are making slower progress than others and school leaders have implemented interventions needed to drive improvement and to monitor students' progress more rigorously. The school is well placed to improve as a result of the emerging impact of these initiatives.

- Disabled students and those with special educational needs plus those supported by the pupil premium achieve slightly less well than other pupils because their progress is not monitored rigorously using relevant and appropriate data.
 - School leaders are aware that students need to be clearer about the wider forms of bullying, such as homophobic bullying and of exploitation and potential abuse in relationships, and the new curriculum focuses on helping students limit any risk to themselves or others.
 - A very small proportion of staff completed the questionnaire; they expressed a unanimous appreciation for the recent clear vision and direction provided by the interim executive headteacher and new headteacher.
 - Strong and well-established subject leaders in technology and physical education, are successful in improving teaching and learning, whilst others, relatively new to their posts, have yet to identify clear steps to ensure consistently good teaching to maximise the progress students make.
 - The local authority has provided effective support to school leaders to help to secure improvement.
 - The sixth form has secure and consistent leadership based on highly effective teamwork which is central to its success. Excellent student progress tracking systems ensure that underachieving students, teachers and/or departments are quickly identified and supported through improvement. There are excellent links with a wide range of providers and a rich curriculum, well suited to students' needs. The capacity for the sixth form to become outstanding is evident.
 - **The governance of the school is good because:**
 - governors have taken clear and decisive steps to improve leadership and this has resulted in improved achievement and teaching.
 - the Chair and the vice-chair of the Governing Body are relatively recently appointed and have the experience and understanding needed to challenge rigorously and support the school effectively.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	104826
Local authority	St Helens
Inspection number	404959

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,433
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	191
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Simon Pierce
Headteacher	Mr Ian Young
Date of previous school inspection	9 March 2011
Telephone number	01744 885914
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