



William Howard School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112439
LEA Cumbria
Inspection number 278933
Inspection dates 21 March 2006 to 22 March 2006
Reporting inspector Mrs Mary Sewell

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Longtown Road
School category	Foundation		Brampton
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Cumbria CA8 1AR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01697 745700
Number on roll	1487	Fax number	01697 741096
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Peter Halpin
Date of previous inspection	1 November 2000	Headteacher	Mr Clive Bush

Age group 11 to 18	Inspection dates 21 March 2006 - 22 March 2006	Inspection number 278933
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

William Howard School is an above-average-sized 11-18 school with 1487 students on roll, 285 of them in the sixth form. The school is situated in the small town of Brampton in Cumbria and takes students from a large rural area. It has had specialist science status since 2004, with a special focus on the environment. William Howard is also a Leading Edge school. There is a very small proportion of students from minority ethnic groups and fewer whose first language is not English. The pupils begin school with above average attainment. There are fewer students than average with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or who are eligible for free school meals.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school which gives good value for money. This judgement matches the school's own accurate view of its effectiveness. It provides a good education for all its students and deserves its designation as a Leading Edge school. The students' enthusiasm for learning, combined with good teaching, helps them to achieve well and reach consistently high standards.

The school's leadership and management are good overall. Senior staff know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. The newly appointed year managers are highly effective in forging links between home and school. However, the effectiveness of the middle managers' implementation of the school's policies and procedures is inconsistent. The care, guidance and support provided for students and the attention paid to their personal development and well-being are good. However, the number of exclusions is high. The curriculum meets the needs of all students well and has recently improved the provision for work-related and vocational education.

An outstanding feature of the school's work is its extensive links with other providers. Local secondary schools are offered training in the analysis of data, and primary schools benefit from subject master classes.

The school has a good record of improvement since the last inspection and has the capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form provides a good quality of education and students achieve well. Students are positive, mature and confident, their attitudes to study are good and most of them complete the courses they begin. Teaching is good, students make good progress and standards are above average. The quality of care and guidance is very good. Students are well supported in their learning and in planning for their future education and employment. The curriculum offers a broad range of traditional subjects together with some vocational courses. Statutory requirements are not met in full because students are not taught religious education and there is no daily act of collective worship. The curriculum is enhanced by very good opportunities for enrichment and personal development. Links with higher education are very good. Leadership and management of the sixth form are highly effective and ensure that there is clear direction and close monitoring.

What the school should do to improve further

The school should:

- improve the consistency of the implementation of school policies and procedures by middle managers
- reduce the number of exclusions by the consistent application of the school's new behaviour management policy.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good overall. Students make good progress in Key Stage 3 from an above average starting point. The results of the 2005 national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were well above average overall. They were well above average in mathematics and science and above average in English (after re-marking). The higher-attaining students tend to do less well in English than in mathematics or science. In 2005, very challenging specialist school targets were met in science but not in mathematics or English.

Students continue to make the same good progress in Key Stage 4 as in the previous key stage. GCSE results are well above average for both boys and girls and significantly more students achieve A* or A grades than nationally. The science results are exceptionally high. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well and few students leave school without a qualification. Girls outperform boys, generally. Lower-attaining boys make slower progress than other pupils, but are identified and receive additional support.

Achievement in the sixth form is good. Students maintain their good progress and achieve standards which are consistently above national averages. Students make outstanding progress in design and technology. Boys and girls achieve equally well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good throughout the school. Students enjoy school and show positive attitudes towards it. Although behaviour seen during the inspection was good, the record shows that it is only satisfactory overall, and some parents and staff are concerned about disruption by a minority of students. Previous strategies for dealing with misbehaviour are reflected in the high number of exclusions. A new approach to managing behaviour, including participation in a national personal development project, is already creating an improved ethos. Nevertheless, behaviour of some students and exclusions remain issues for the school.

Students' moral, social and cultural development is good but spiritual awareness is only satisfactory. Students understand the importance of healthy lifestyles, healthy eating and the benefits of physical exercise. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools Award. Students say that they feel safe in school and that bullying is rare. Valuable contributions are made to the local community through the school band, fundraising and working with the elderly. Students are prepared well for later life through good careers guidance and work-related activities. The school forum has been effective in influencing decision-making about some important matters such as the recent appointment of the new headteacher. Attendance is above average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school and occasionally outstanding. Relationships among students and staff are usually positive and co-operative and create a favourable learning atmosphere. Lessons which are well planned involve and engage students effectively, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well in most classrooms and enhances learning. Students respond enthusiastically to their teachers' high expectations. Most work is well matched to the needs and abilities of students, but in some lessons not enough attention is given to individual needs. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good, and especially so in the sixth form. When teaching is outstanding, the teachers have the highest expectations of their students and extend their learning rapidly through highly challenging and interesting work. Lessons which are no better than satisfactory are less stimulating so that the pace is slower and the work is less challenging. The quality of marking is inconsistent across departments. However, students know their targets and what to do to reach them.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum for its students, which meets statutory requirements apart from religious education and the act of collective worship in the sixth form. Recent changes have broadened the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 to provide more vocational and work-related learning opportunities, particularly for lower attaining students. These opportunities reflect local employment circumstances well. Improvements have not been in place long enough to have a significant effect on standards but the results of the school's own monitoring indicate that behaviour and attitudes to learning are beginning to improve. Plans are well in hand to build on this success by developing the vocational courses, particularly in the sixth form.

The personal development course is taught well by specialist teachers. Healthy lifestyles are encouraged by the promotion of healthy eating and participation in sports. Good use is made of other professionals to advise on health issues. Curriculum links with a partner school in Tanzania are contributing to students' understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity.

Opportunities made available through specialist science school status are being used well to broaden curriculum choice in Years 10 and 11 and enhance continuity of learning with feeder primary schools. The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities, with particular strengths in sport, music and drama, which are much appreciated by students. Students are well supported and advised in making choices at the end of Years 9, 11 and 13.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good care, guidance and support for all its students. Child protection arrangements are in place and understood by all staff. Health and safety requirements are adhered to and risk assessments are carried out where appropriate. There is a strong pastoral system and a good network of support, which includes the excellent use of other professionals. For example, several volunteers from the local community have recently been trained as mentors. There are good links with feeder primary schools and students joining the school are well supported. The school is committed to full inclusion. A strong learning support department provides well for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Overall, assessment is good. Students receive good guidance at important stages in their school career, especially in meeting their academic targets and choosing appropriate courses.

Parents are kept well informed of their children's progress through reports and the parents' forum. However, some parents of pupils in Year 7 are concerned that they do not receive information on their children's progress early enough in the academic year.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The new headteacher has moved swiftly to establish a senior leadership team, who all have a clear focus on improving learning. The planning for whole-school development is detailed and meets the needs of individual students.

As a result of rigorous self-evaluation, senior leaders have a thorough knowledge of the school; however this is not always the case at middle management level. Effective reviews of examination performance result in immediate action being taken to remedy underachievement. Subject managers are generally well informed and are becoming increasingly effective in checking on the performance of their areas. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of the middle managers' implementation of the school's policies and procedures is inconsistent.

Governance is satisfactory. The governing body has experienced recent changes. Governors provide committed and enthusiastic support for the school and have recently become more confident as critical partners. Statutory requirements are in place, apart from those relating to religious education and collective worship in the sixth form. Staffing, accommodation and resources are managed well. The school has passed through a period of financial stringency but, owing to prudent financial management, it is now solvent and gives good value for money. The school has made good recent improvements and has maintained high standards since the previous inspection. The views of both parents and pupils are taken into account, and the school is well placed to improve further.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	3	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

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The School Council

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23 March 2006

Dear Students

Thank you for the welcome you gave to the inspectors and for the valuable contribution you made to the inspection. We were impressed with your positive attitudes and the sensible way you voice your opinions. I am writing to let you know what we have said about your school in our report. There are many good points.

Your school is a good school. We were particularly impressed with the way in which your school helps other schools in the area.

The new headteacher has a strong team of senior teachers who are helping him make changes, for example, to offer you more subject choices in Year 9 and improve the way in which inappropriate behaviour is dealt with.

The teaching is good, and helps you to make good progress.

When we spoke to your year representatives they told us you enjoy coming to school and most of you work hard to meet your targets.

You told us you feel safe in school and had good help and advice when you needed it. We were really pleased to hear a large proportion of you choose healthy food and take plenty of extra sport.

To improve further, the school needs to take the following action.

Some of the teachers who manage the work of the school need to implement school policies and procedures more effectively.

The teachers should make sure that you all understand the new behaviour policy and that you all work together to stop the silly behaviour which sometimes disrupts your learning.

You have every reason to be proud of your school and we hope that you continue to work hard and attend school regularly.

Mary Sewell
Lead inspector