



# Carnforth High School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 119748  
**LEA** Lancashire  
**Inspection number** 280650  
**Inspection dates** 15 February 2006 to 16 February 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Mr Jim Bennetts

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Kellet Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Carnforth
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16		Lancashire, LA5 9LS
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01524 732424
<b>Number on roll</b>	560	<b>Fax number</b>	01524 720167
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Mike Dudfield
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	1 November 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Paul Legon

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 16	<b>Inspection dates</b> 15 February 2006 - 16 February 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 280650
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

Carnforth High School has 560 pupils; numbers have fallen from 629 at the time of the last inspection. About a third of the pupils come from the small town of Carnforth, others come from surrounding villages and parts of Lancaster and Morecambe. The great majority of pupils are white British. There are selective and church schools in Lancaster and this affects the intake; some pupils from the locality attend schools in Cumbria. As the school has spare capacity, it is expected by the local authority to accept pupils who have been excluded or had difficulties at other schools. The school has a strong commitment to do its best for such pupils. One in twenty pupils has a statement of special educational need, double the national proportion. The ability range of pupils joining the school is similar to that found nationally, but there are usually fewer very able pupils. The proportion of pupils living in disadvantaged circumstances is about the same as that in most schools. The school has specialist status for science.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Inspectors judge this to be a good school, though the school rated its own effectiveness as only satisfactory. The inspectors' view takes account of: the recent steady improvement in standards, with the progress made by Year 11 pupils in 2005 ranking in the top 25% nationally; the pupils' mainly positive outlook and behaviour; and the generally good quality of all aspects of the school's provision. Boys and girls of all abilities do well. Several small but decisive factors contributed to the successful 2005 results: effective pastoral care with robust monitoring of attitudes and encouragement to try hard; a sharp focus on examination preparation and coursework completion; a well conceived curriculum; and generally good teaching. Though pupils' ability range varies from year to year, and general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) results vary accordingly, good progress is generally being maintained.

Whilst the teaching has many strengths, some could be better. There is evidence of good marking and use of assessment to set targets and focus teaching, but this could be more tightly managed. Behaviour management in the school is effective and the school has had a good deal of success in supporting reluctant learners through difficult times in their adolescence. This is highly commendable, but occasionally such pupils' behaviour has been a burden and has unfairly affected the school's reputation. The school is mindful of the need to keep a proper balance between the needs of such pupils and the needs of others. The school's good track record of improvement gives ample confidence in its capacity for further improvement. The school gives good value for money and is well managed.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the quality of teaching further by:
- improving marking
- making better use of assessment in planning lessons and guiding pupils' learning
- sharing good practice in setting a brisk pace and making expectations suitably challenging.
- Set clear benchmarks for assessing levels of behaviour that are unacceptable and take appropriate action.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Inspectors consider achievement and standards to be good, though the school judged them as only satisfactory. Results at GCSE in 2005 showed strong improvement, with pass rates rising steadily since 2003. Current standards seen in pupils' work show that good progress is generally being maintained.

Pupils joining the school in Year 7 have reached standards similar to those found nationally, though there are usually fewer more able pupils reaching higher standards. GCSE results in 2005 showed above average progress in relation to pupils' starting

points. On this basis, the school was in the top quarter of all schools in the country. Outcomes exceeded expectations. Some 62% of pupils achieved five or more passes at grade C or above. All considered, boys and girls across the ability range did equally well, in contrast to the national picture where girls have a considerable lead over boys. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also achieved well. The school has a good curriculum in the years leading to GCSE and, for about 1 in 20 pupils, a pass in general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) information and communication technology (ICT) was a contributory factor in achieving five good GCSE equivalents. English and mathematics were quite strong at GCSE, though markedly weaker in the 2005 national tests at age 14. Science has been consistently strong at age 14 for several years.

Exceptional pastoral support and effective intervention strategies were important elements in the successful GCSE outcomes of 2005; for example, in ensuring thorough completion of coursework. There is variation from year to year in the range of ability of pupils joining the school and targets for 2006 are appropriately lower than those for 2005.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The personal development of pupils is good. Evidence supplied by the school is well supported by the majority of parents' and pupils' views.

Assemblies support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well and include themes on working together and the environment. Charity work encourages pupils to appreciate the needs of the wider community. In art, pupils are inspired by examples of well known artists, and an appreciation of former pupils' impressive work in physical education is used to stimulate improvement in GCSE coursework. Health lessons give proper consideration to social and moral issues associated with the misuse of alcohol and drugs.

In lessons seen, the majority of pupils learned and behaved well and enjoyed school activities. Pupils had good relationships with staff and were cooperative and considerate of others. Inspectors saw behaviour on the corridors, in the playground and in the dining hall that was never less than satisfactory and generally good. Over 100 questionnaires were returned by parents: the majority agreed that behaviour is good, a quarter disagreed, some were unsure. Some parents took the trouble to explain how their children had been well supported in difficult times, a handful detailed concerns about oppressive behaviour. In discussions, pupils were usually positive about school and the strategies used to combat the few instances of poor behaviour; a few expressed anxieties about intimidation or unpleasantness. The rate of exclusions is not high: they have focused effectively on unacceptable behaviour. The great majority of pupils feel secure and safe. Year 10 and 11 pupils take responsibility for a buddying system, supporting younger pupils to reduce anxiety about possible bullying. Prefects take their responsibilities seriously and have a positive impact on behaviour.

Pupils have good opportunities to voice their opinions on a very active school council and have been fully involved in discussions on the new buildings. They enjoy a range

of enrichment activities and the healthy living opportunities promoted by the school. There is a satisfactory range of links with the wider community. Most pupils talk confidently. They use ICT effectively. Well organised work related activities assist planning for future employment.

Attendance levels have risen and are close to the national average, except in Year 11; truancy is reduced through effective daily checks.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good, though the school considered them only satisfactory. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching seen at the previous inspection has gone and current practices are improving standards. Good progress is being made in lessons because classrooms are orderly and relationships strong. Pupils usually work hard and behave, and the few instances of poor conduct are managed well. Teachers have good subject knowledge and their lesson planning is usually tailored to meet pupils' needs. Pupils learn best when actively engaged in varied and demanding tasks. Where lessons lack pace or challenge, or do not involve pupils actively, progress is less rapid and the teaching, although satisfactory, does not bring out the best in them. Though there is some good marking, it varies in its frequency and helpfulness. There is emerging effective practice in use of data and information on pupils' progress to set targets for pupils. However, at times pupils are not clear about how well they are doing and what they must do to improve.

Grade: 2

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good with many strong features. It meets statutory requirements. A good programme of personal, social and health education is in place, including sex education and drugs awareness. The delivery of citizenship is satisfactory. There have been improvements to the curriculum for Years 10 and 11 with the development of vocational provision and productive links with other institutions. The school recognises the need to extend this further and is working with a local college to provide skills-based courses to extend choice for pupils of average to above average attainment. ICT is taught across all years and a vocational course in Years 10 and 11 is very successful. There is good development of literacy and numeracy, though many pupils joining the school have weak skills. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities, and participation rates are high. The school's science college status has increased staffing in science and mathematics, thus allowing class sizes to be reduced. The separate teaching of boys and girls in science is well received by pupils and is promoting good achievement, particularly for boys. Pupils respond well to the opportunity to study three sciences.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that good care, guidance and support is offered to its pupils. There are good opportunities for more able pupils to aim higher; for example, with focused sessions for gifted pupils in mathematics, and access to three science GCSEs. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and guided. Monitoring identifies underachievement effectively and supports vulnerable pupils.

All staff know the procedures for child protection, first aid and safety, both in and out of school, so pupils can participate fully in activities and benefit from the local and wider community through work placements and visits. Pupils and external agencies are positive about the school's approach to welfare. Primary schools consider arrangements for transition into Year 7 to be very efficient and supportive.

The school has often been very generous in its patience and care for pupils who find it difficult to settle to schooling, some joining after failing to prosper elsewhere; it has been considerate over related attendance and attitude problems. There has been much success with this policy; many such pupils have 'turned over a new leaf'. The school recognises that such pupils can have a negative effect on the atmosphere in school but, in the main, a proper balance is maintained between these pupils' needs and the needs of the majority. Behaviour is very closely monitored. However, negative perceptions amongst parents and the wider community have sometimes been based on rumours of poor attitudes.

Academic and pastoral support generally guides and advises pupils well on their progress and behaviour. Health advice and other problems are resolved confidentially with independent support from outside agencies. Visiting business personnel and work experience opportunities assist all groups of learners with careers advice.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

Inspectors and the school agree that leadership and management are good. The senior leadership team has recently been re-shaped and strengthened. A number of small but important innovations have been implemented. 'Immersion days' have ensured completion of coursework and separate teaching groups for girls and boys in science have been successful in boosting pupils' engagement with the subject. Effective strategies, such as the use of TV cameras, have monitored and thereby improved behaviour. Since the last inspection, the school has made staunch efforts to ensure that more able pupils do as well as they should. The school has taken full advantage of innovations offered by the Leading Edge project and specialist school status. It has been assiduous in taking the views of parents and pupils into consideration. Facilities have been greatly enhanced by the re-building of a third of the school to a high standard. The improved learning environment has been a great boost to the morale of teachers and pupils alike. The links established with partner schools through the

Community Programme initiatives associated with specialist school status have been strongly welcomed by those who have benefited; this has helped to raise the school's standing in the community. The school is very thorough and candid in assessment of its strengths and weaknesses. Senior staff and others have been tireless in nurturing difficult pupils; this has been rewarded with considerable success in many cases, but not all. This is now a school where pupils are academically successful, generally demonstrate positive attitudes, and usually behave well. It is a good school.

The leadership of several departments is very effective. There is extensive monitoring of teachers' classroom work; departmental self-review and notes from review by senior managers are detailed and helpful. However, more intervention is needed to raise all teaching to good standards. In particular, the marking of books and the use of assessment to inform teaching and pupils' awareness of what they need to learn needs to be tighter.

The governors have a good knowledge of how things stand with all aspects of the school's work and give wise counsel and good support to senior staff. Financial management is adroit; earmarked funding is used for the intended purposes and senior managers give generously of their time by teaching in order to eke out the limited budget. The steady improvement in the school gives confidence in its capacity 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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

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

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

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

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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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Carnforth High School

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17 February 2006

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Carnforth High School, February 2006

Thank you for all your help when we visited the school. We saw a lot of good work in classrooms and in your books, and we valued opportunities to talk with you in discussion groups, on the playground and in the dining room.

We think this is a good school.

GCSE results have been getting better for some years and are above the national average. In comparison with the standards you had reached when you left primary school, the progress last year's pupils made, and their success at GCSE put the school in the top quarter of schools in England.

There is quite a lot of good teaching, you are well looked after, and there are appropriate courses for you in the last two years of schooling; this has contributed to the improving standards.

Most of you and your parents are full of praise for the school. Most of you enjoy being at school and you get on well with one another and with your teachers. You value all that teachers do to help you. About a quarter of parents who wrote to us were worried about behaviour in the school and a few of you mentioned this kind of thing to us. We looked carefully at behaviour, in classrooms, on corridors and on the yard – including behind the old science labs. We found that behaviour is at least as good as in most schools. We think some of your parents are more concerned than they need be. The school is well run by the headteacher and senior staff and the governors do a lot to help things along.

Though this is a good school, we think there are some things that might make it even better.

Some lessons are better than others and teachers should try to make all of them as good as the best; the same is true of the marking.

The school is already using information on how well you are doing to tell you about what you should be aiming for and how to get there, but this could be strengthened.

The school does its best for all of you, though some of you can be quite awkward. The school should keep an even closer eye on things and take strong action over any hint of unpleasantness.

You are fortunate in being at such a good school. We wish you all well in the future.

Yours faithfully

Jim Bennetts

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools