



Preston School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123891
LEA Somerset
Inspection number 281586
Inspection dates 22 March 2006 to 23 March 2006
Reporting inspector Peter Griffiths HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Monks Dale
School category	Community		Yeovil
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Somerset BA21 3JD
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01935 471131
Number on roll	958	Fax number	01935 431216
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Bernard Critchley
Date of previous inspection	15 May 2000	Headteacher	Mr Reg Jones

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 16	22 March 2006 - 23 March 2006	281586

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

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.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Preston School is an oversubscribed, mixed 11-16 specialist business and enterprise college. The school is of average size. The number of boys and girls in each year group has varied significantly from year to year. On entry to the school, pupils' attainment is broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. Both the proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those with statements of special educational needs are also below the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The senior leadership team at Preston School judges the school's overall effectiveness to be satisfactory. The inspection confirms this judgement. The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The quality of the schools' self-evaluation is good and the senior leaders know what they need to do to be more effective. Last year, standards at GCSE were below average. The long term absence through sickness of a few teachers has had a negative impact on the standards in some subjects. The school is developing strategies, including the more effective use of data on pupils' attainment and progress, in order to improve learning and achievement. Implementation of such strategies needs to take place as soon as possible. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. In the many lessons where teaching is good, the work is well matched to the needs of the pupils who show positive attitudes and make good progress. The checking of teaching is good though the dissemination of best practice does not take place regularly enough. The school's designation as a business and enterprise college is having a positive impact on developments in the curriculum, including the introduction of information technology and business-related courses. Specialist status has also strengthened the school's promotion of pupils' future economic well-being and has increased the ways in which they make a contribution to the community. The pupils are well cared for and feel safe and this is contributing to their desire to do well. Pupils enjoy coming to school. Many take part in the wide range of extra activities. The vast majority of parents are very happy with the school and all it offers. The school has demonstrated the capacity to improve. It has successfully addressed the weaknesses identified at the time of the last inspection. This has been accomplished alongside its successful development as a specialist business and enterprise college. The school has formed very good working partnerships, which have contributed to the achievement and well-being of the pupils. The school has used its resources effectively and provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- ensure that the strategy to make more effective use of data on pupils' attainment and progress is implemented as soon as possible
- regularly disseminate the evidence of what constitutes good teaching and learning, gathered from the schools' effective lesson checking procedures
- consider ways of minimising the impact on pupils' achievement of long term teacher absences, especially in science.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' standards on entry are average. In 2005, Year 9 pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science was broadly in line with national standards. Pupils did better in science and mathematics than in English. Grouping arrangements such as setting ensure that work is pitched at levels well suited to pupils' needs so that all are challenged properly. Staffing difficulties, including absences of senior staff, have had

an adverse impact on achievement, particularly in English and more so in science. The recent focus on challenging the ablest pupils is helpful, but the school recognises the need to improve this further, to ensure that all achieve to their potential. In 2005, the GCSE results were below average and many pupils did not achieve well enough. This triggered major developments in the school's monitoring and tracking systems. Though these systems are not yet fully in place, achievement is now satisfactory. Pupils' achievement in the vocational subjects, introduced as part of the school's specialist college status, is good. The pupils make satisfactory progress overall, and those with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress. Interim reports ensure that parents and pupils know when pupils are on the right track. Departments now provide support measures to prevent underachievement. The expectations of subject leaders include increased accountability for ensuring that all pupils reach their potential.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development is good. From Year 7, pupils of all abilities present their views clearly and confidently. Their development in spiritual, social and cultural understanding is satisfactory. Pupils have a strong moral sense. The overwhelming majority of pupils enjoy their learning. While the behaviour of nearly all pupils is good, a minority spoil learning in a few lessons. However, internal systems for managing poor behaviour, such as referral to the Blue Zone, are effective in resolving most issues. Pupils and parents appreciate school rewards for good or improved behaviour. Attendance is average. Pupils feel safe and there is little bullying. Through personal, social and health education (PSHE) they learn how to deal with any name-calling and can talk to adults with confidence about any problems. While pupils' understanding of a healthy lifestyle is satisfactory, not all pupils make suitably healthy food choices. Pupils understand the importance of fitness and many participate in extra-curricular sports activities. Contributions to the community are good. Many pupils participate in sports leadership or Young Enterprise ventures. All pupils take a business and communication course and vocational options are increasing. Through these and other activities such as citizenship projects, pupils are well prepared for their future and for the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory so that in almost all lessons all pupils make at least satisfactory progress. In the best lessons, work is well planned, takes account of what pupils have done before, and engages them in a range of interesting fast-paced learning activities. Teachers state the lesson objectives clearly, so pupils know what they are learning and why. Teachers know their subject well and skilfully use questions to extend pupils' knowledge and to assess what they have learnt. Interactive whiteboards are used very effectively by some teachers in order to engage pupils.

There are good relationships between pupils and staff, and consequently pupils are attentive, well behaved and enthusiastic about learning. Pupils are keen to contribute, and lessons are stimulating and lively. Any minor disturbance is swiftly and effectively dealt with by teachers. In a small number of lessons the teaching lacks pace and variety and it fails to retain the pupils' interest and attention. When pupils are given too long to complete tasks, they often become restless and inattentive. Here, the poor behaviour of some pupils distracts others from learning. Arrangements for assessing pupils' progress are improving, and are enabling teachers to determine whether pupils are likely to achieve their targets. Any pupils at risk of underachievement are identified and strategies put in place to support them. Where practice is particularly effective, pupils know exactly what is required of them if they are to improve their work and as a result make better progress. The practice of regularly setting productive and challenging homework is not consistent across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has a good curriculum. It has been successfully developed in response to the pupils' varying needs and interests. In Years 10 and 11, pupils can choose from a wide range of GCSE and vocational courses. The school takes care to find out what pupils want and then to ensure there is a course closely matched to their needs. For example, the recently introduced fast-track GCSE courses in English, mathematics and modern languages are proving popular. However, current curricular arrangements do not give enough attention to the development of literacy skills across the curriculum. To broaden choice for pupils, the school is working closely with a local further education (FE) college and two local schools. One outcome has been the enhanced provision for potentially disaffected pupils, who have shown improvements in both their attendance and behaviour. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is good. They receive good support in lessons, enabling them to fulfil their potential. Gifted and talented pupils are provided with a range of activities to meet their needs and interests. The programmes for PSHE and citizenship and the wide range of extracurricular clubs and visits make significant contributions to pupils' personal development. The school's designation as a business and enterprise college is having a positive impact on developments in the curriculum, including the introduction of ICT and business-related courses. In some subjects, such as physical education and art, there are strong links with primary schools. The school's specialist status has strengthened the school's promotion of pupils' future economic wellbeing and has increased the ways in which pupils can make a contribution to the community. The good attention given to enterprise education and work based learning helps prepare pupils for future employment.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support for pupils throughout the school is good with some outstanding features. Pupils of all ages feel that the school is a safe

environment and are confident that the staff will help them to deal with any problems that arise. They report that there is little bullying and what occurs is discussed with staff and dealt with quickly and firmly. The pastoral support that pupils receive from tutors both during individual monitoring sessions and tutor time is outstanding. Such sessions are encouraging pupils to strive to do their best. The new reporting and assessment system provides good quality interim and final progress reports. While communication with parents about the progress of their child is good, parents sometimes feel less well informed about general school matters. Child protection procedures are in place and staff receive appropriate training. The school welfare officer plays a pivotal role in ensuring that pupils are cared for and supported appropriately. She evaluates the risk attached to out of school visits, prepares the necessary forms and makes sure that the needs of all pupils can be met. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are integrated well in lessons and into the life of the school. Health and safety procedures around the school are robust. The school counsellor, Connexions adviser and external agencies provide good additional care and guidance and are particularly adept at supporting vulnerable pupils. The in-school withdrawal room (Blue Zone) is used effectively to allow pupils to reflect and to start to resolve problems. Thorough induction arrangements, supported by excellent links with local primary schools mean new pupils settle in quickly. In Year 9, pupils receive good guidance to help them to choose their optional subjects and are well prepared for future education, employment and life.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory with some good features. The acting headteacher has been in post for one term. Her good communication and team-building skills have ensured that all members of the school community have contributed to the further development of an inclusive ethos, where pupils feel valued and safe and where relationships are good. The senior leadership team has reviewed strategies to raise the pupils' achievement. Some, such as the broadening of the Key Stage 4 curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils, are in place and contributing to pupils' raised expectations of themselves. A review of the use of data on pupils' attainment and progress has identified the exceptionally good practice that is already in place in some departments such as mathematics. Developing and implementing a whole school strategy for this need to occur sooner than is currently proposed. The checking of teaching and learning is good. The senior leadership team and subject leaders share this work using a common format for recording their observations. Effective practice is identified throughout the school but not disseminated widely or regularly enough. The senior leadership team and governors have a clear and accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors are hard working, committed to the school, and are focused on achieving excellence. They provide a good balance of challenge and support and act productively as critical friends. The link governor to the specialist business and enterprise college programme has played a key role in establishing the very good links the school has with the business community and with other schools and the FE college. The teaching staff are well qualified. Current strategies to lessen the impact of teacher absences in

science have not had the desired effect and alternative solutions are needed. The bursar has successfully eliminated a budget deficit and has introduced effective procedures to ensure that subject leaders have a better understanding of the financial implications of curriculum developments. Overall, the school provides satisfactory value for money and makes effective use of its resources and the well maintained accommodation. Members of the senior leadership team are working together extremely well. They demonstrate that they have the capacity to work with pupils, parents, staff and governors to build on the strengths within the school and make it a good one.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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
--	-----------------------	--------------

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	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

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

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?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	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	3	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

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

Dear Pupils I am writing to thank you for taking part in the inspection by welcoming us so warmly to your school, talking to us about your work, your life in school and all that you do. At Preston school, the staff look after and guide you extremely well. As a result, you feel safe and well cared for and this is contributing to your desire to do well. You enjoy coming to school and taking part in the wide range of after school activities. Becoming a business and enterprise college has led to the introduction of ICT and business-related courses. In addition, as well as GCSE subjects you now enjoy a number of vocational courses that are well matched to both your needs and to your future career intentions. In the majority of lessons where the teaching is good, you show positive attitudes to your work and make significant contributions to your own learning. The acting headteacher and those with responsibility have your best interests in mind and are working hard to ensure that you are successful in all that you do. Your school needs to:

- ensure that in all subjects you know how well you are doing and what you need to do to improve
- encourage teachers to share good practice on teaching and learning to ensure lessons are consistently well paced, interesting and matched to your needs
- consider ways of minimising the impact on your achievement of long term teacher absences especially in science.

Yours sincerely Peter Griffiths HM Inspector