



Haydock Sports College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 104827
Local Authority St. Helens
Inspection number 287045
Inspection dates 25–26 September 2006
Reporting inspector Jon Lovgreen

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Clipsley Lane
School category	Community		Haydock, St Helens
Age range of pupils	11–16		Merseyside WA11 0JG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01744 678833
Number on roll (school)	767	Fax number	01744 678832
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Scott
		Headteacher	Mr S Fullerton
Date of previous school inspection	27 January 2003		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	25–26 September 2006	287045

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Haydock Sports College is a school of average size and is in its second year of specialist sports status. It has come through a challenging period following amalgamation with another school and some sudden staff changes at senior level. It serves an area where some families experience considerable hardship and many have limited educational ambitions for their children. Pupil numbers are declining but the proportion with learning difficulties and statements of educational need remains above average. Many more pupils join from other schools during the year than is typically the case. The vast majority of pupils are White British. The school has received awards which include Artsmark, Investors in People, and Career Guidance and Support.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a caring school which gives pupils a satisfactory standard of education. The school's self-evaluation rightly highlighted its success in creating a supportive and purposeful atmosphere during a challenging period. It shows a clear general understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Inspectors agree with all aspects of the school's self-evaluation apart from that on leadership and management. Inspectors feel that the effectiveness of management is satisfactory, rather than good, because of a lack of rigour and precision in monitoring some key aspects of the school's work and planning for its improvement. As a consequence, value for money and the school's capacity to improve are satisfactory. Attendance and behaviour are improving. This is resulting in steady improvements in pupils' achievement and standards, although some average attaining pupils, usually girls, could still do better. By the end of Year 9 and Year 11, standards are well below average and achievement is satisfactory. The high number of pupils who join the school throughout the year, many after unsuccessful school careers elsewhere, impacts on the overall level of achievement and standards. The school welcomes and accepts all, and is sensitive and thoughtful in bringing pupils on as young people. This leads to good relationships. Most pupils are loyal, responsible and behave well but a minority misbehave if teaching does not interest them enough. Teaching and learning are variable in quality. Pupils remain receptive rather than responsive in many lessons, showing willingness rather than curiosity and independence of thought. While much teaching is good, too much is ordinary and unstimulating. This is partly because teachers do not always use the excellent assessment information available to them to make lessons more relevant to pupils' abilities. This results in pupils' achievement being uneven. Lack of lesson monitoring is holding improved learning back because some teachers are not self-critical enough about their craft. Many pupils have low self-esteem and the school is successful in building self-confidence, though this does not extend enough into oral work. The curriculum has been successfully broadened. The philosophy of extending pupils' awareness and horizons by visits, residentials and other experiences is well thought out. This has a positive influence on pupils' personal development.

In a short time, the stimulus of gaining Sports College status has raised the profile of physical education, fitness and healthy living issues considerably. The school has new accommodation including fitness suites which are available to the community and a 'multi-use games area' planned for outside games in winter. The curriculum has also been widened considerably, and ten Year 10 pupils gained early entry A and B grades in GCSE physical education. Similar accreditation was gained in GCSE dance. Pupils are growing in confidence and commitment; this is beginning to extend into their work in other academic areas and school life generally. Strong links are developing with local secondary and primary schools and a sports summer school takes place.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make pupils' achievement more consistent across subjects.

- Improve the quality of teaching by regular and rigorous checks on how good it is, and what works best.
- Use assessment information to help teachers plan lessons which are better matched to pupils' needs and learning styles.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are well below average but rising steadily and achievement is satisfactory. Data suggest that pupils join the school with well below average standards and poor literacy skills. This reflects both a past amalgamation and the school taking in a very high number of pupils other than at normal times. There has been some success in raising standards. The 2005 results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 showed an overall improvement, despite a decline in mathematics. This was corrected in 2006, when there was another improvement in results generally, including the number of pupils achieving the higher levels. GCSE results have risen modestly over the last three years but, in 2005, there was an increase in the number of pupils gaining few, if any, passes. Although the 2006 results have not been verified, they show a significant improvement in this area, a result of the close attention which the school has paid to meeting the needs of lower attaining pupils. Some average attaining pupils, especially girls, do not make enough progress in some subjects during their time in school. Progress between subjects is variable. Pupils tended to do less well in English literature and French at GCSE. Pupils with learning difficulties are helped to make satisfactory progress because of additional support, and changes to curriculum and teaching styles.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school provides a warm, supportive environment so that, as one of many parents put it: 'pupils really like going to school now, and enjoy every aspect of it.' Despite little support from outside agencies, the systems put in place by the school have borne fruit and attendance has improved. In addition, exclusion rates have fallen; learning mentors play a considerable part in this improvement, along with the school providing alternative curriculum opportunities for some pupils. Relationships are good and this is shown by the generally good behaviour of pupils in most lessons and their willingness to listen and work. The school council and the prefect system provide some pupils with an opportunity for exercising responsibility. Whilst the school council is influential, it lacks status with many pupils because they get little feedback on what it has achieved. A rich programme of out of school activities, charity events and trips abroad, such as to New York and Paris, underpins the pupils' good moral, social and cultural development. Some assemblies do not provide pupils with sufficient spiritual experience or time for reflection.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In many lessons, good relationships between staff and pupils help pupils enjoy interesting activities. Teachers usually explain the purpose of the lesson clearly. Pupils are competent in assessing their own or each other's work. In these lessons pupils behave well, rise to challenges and all, including those with additional needs, make good progress. There are, however, too few times when pupils are encouraged to think deeply by developing their answers. Few teachers use skilled and probing questioning to extend pupils' understanding. A disappointing number of lessons are dull and predictable. Here, learning slows and pupils become bored, inattentive, or frustrated.

Learning support assistants are effective in helping with learning difficulties though, in some instances, teachers only use them as general help rather than for specific support.

The excellent assessment system allows tracking of pupils' progress. However, the information is not used consistently in lesson planning to tailor lessons to meet the range of learning needs, especially for average attaining pupils. Systems for regularly and rigorously evaluating teaching and learning across the whole school are inconsistent. Therefore the school's knowledge of where the best and least effective teaching happens is variable, and the priorities for developing teaching are not clear enough.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good and improving curriculum which is constantly reviewed and adapted. Emphasis is placed on the promotion of work related learning and economic awareness. These aspects are supported by a good range of enterprise activities and provision for citizenship, preparing pupils well for life beyond school. A focus on a healthy schools curriculum, new approaches to learning skills for Year 7 pupils, and carefully planned early GCSE entry for some Year 10 pupils are imaginative. Pupils become more motivated as a result.

A good variety of alternative pathways for Key Stage 4 pupils gives the flexibility to match individual pupils' needs. This provides opportunities for all learners, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to progress and enjoy their work. Effective partnerships with neighbouring schools and colleges enhance provision. There are many extra-curricular activities, particularly in sport, and most pupils take part in at least one additional activity. Many pupils are involved in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. Projects, such as drama trips to Broadway and the 'dare to dream' experience, widen pupils' opportunities and horizons.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, support and guidance is good, contributing significantly to pupils' progress, enjoyment and well-being. Parents agree that their children are well cared for. A number of pupils transfer to the school after unhappy experiences elsewhere and parents praise how they are helped to settle, and how their attendance improves. Procedures to ensure health and safety, including those for child protection, are in place. Pupils feel safe and say that any bullying that occurs is dealt with quickly and well. Mentors use the assessment system well and, consequently, the more vulnerable pupils are well supported academically. Parents are well informed about their child's progress. The Year 7 course 'Opening Minds' works well in helping pupils develop their learning and social skills. Older pupils get good advice for option choices, and careers guidance arrangements are effective, enabling pupils to make a smooth transition from one stage of their education to the next. Regular marking helps pupils understand how to improve their work, but targets for improvement are varied in their usefulness.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

After a period of changes in staffing and in the school's status, and the final impact of amalgamation and its after-effects, the school is now a calm and orderly place where all feel valued and things run smoothly. The headteacher has a clear, perceptive and firmly held vision about the school's direction. He is ably supported by senior staff, who commit themselves to making sure that this is not only understood by all, but that pupils and staff alike realise and accept the part they have to play in improving the school. There has been some success in raising standards, and considerable success in making pupils feel involved and supported. Including and motivating disaffected or disadvantaged pupils is a key feature of the school. Middle managers are effective and enthusiastic. However, a potentially good departmental review system does not give full value because middle managers do not get enough guidance about how to assess the quality of work in their areas. The school has a good idea of where it needs to improve but the practical steps for bringing this about lack clarity in some areas, notably in monitoring teaching and learning. As a result, good plans and intentions have a modest impact on how all pupils learn in their different lessons. The lack of an agreed central system for checking the quality of what happens in the classroom and to share good practice inhibits the development of consistently good teaching and learning in both key stages.

Management of the school's finances is good. Governors are supportive of the school, get clear information about its progress and successes, and have a good general idea of what needs to be improved. They are beginning to ask constructively critical questions to help the school develop. Effective steps have been taken to respond to the issues raised in the last report.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
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	3
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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you know, we recently inspected your school and this letter is to let you know our findings. Thank you for the way you made us feel welcome and helped us by being willing to talk about your work and to explain your views.

We think that Haydock Sports College is a satisfactory and improving school. We were impressed with the pride you take in your smart uniform, and how you respect the clean and tidy school you work in. This shows your good attitudes to school and what it has to offer, so that you come prepared to learn and show a really positive attitude most of the time. You are attentive in lessons but need to learn to probe into ideas more in class discussion. Being more prepared to explain and develop what you say, and to think how you say it would help you in this. Teachers plan lessons carefully, but need to focus more on the skills and knowledge you are capable of gaining. Adults care for you well so that you feel safe and secure and able to approach them with problems. The leadership team have worked really hard to bring all this about and have created an atmosphere where everyone feels supported and valued as part of the community. Gaining sports college status, too, has been a major step forward. It has taken a lot of time and energy to get these important things right. As a result, some important checks on how well you are doing in lessons have not been given enough attention.

To help your school improve, we have highlighted three areas for teachers to work on.

- Checking why you make quicker progress in some years and some subjects than in others. You could help by always trying to achieve your personal best in all subjects.
- Having a regular and thorough system for checking on the progress you are making in lessons, so that the school knows which lessons you make most progress in and why.
- Making sure that teachers use the detailed information about your individual standards to plan lessons which match your potential. You have a part to play by making sure that you are clear about the purpose behind a particular lesson or homework task, and exactly what you can do to improve your skills and understanding.

We wish you success and happiness in the future.