



# Rivington and Blackrod High School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 105261  
**Local Authority** Bolton  
**Inspection number** 287179  
**Inspection dates** 6–7 December 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Heather Barnett HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Comprehensive	<b>School address</b>	Rivington Lane Horwich, Bolton Greater Manchester BL6 7RU
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled	<b>Telephone number</b>	01204 333266
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18	<b>Fax number</b>	01204 333264
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Chair</b>	Mr P Garner
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	1919	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Anthony Purcell
<b>Number on roll (6th form)</b>	342		
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body		
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	10 February 2003		

<b>Age group</b> 11–18	<b>Inspection dates</b> 6–7 December 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 287179
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Rivington and Blackrod High School is a larger than average comprehensive school. It works very closely with Ladybridge High School within 'The Brook Learning Partnership', which is a 'hard federation' started in 2004 as part of a collaborative restart for Ladybridge. The federation has one governing body. Rivington and Blackrod school is oversubscribed and stable, with a lower than average percentage of students entitled to free school meals. There are few students from minority ethnic backgrounds or with English as an additional language. The proportion of students with statements of special educational needs is broadly average. However, there are fewer than average students who need extra help with their learning. The school has achieved a number of awards, such as Sportsmark Gold, Artsmark Silver and Investors in People (IIP) status and IIP Champion status. The school has specialist technology college status and has been designated a training school. It is also involved in a very wide range of partnership work and has extensive community links.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 3**

Rivington and Blackrod High School provides a satisfactory education for its students. Achievements and standards are satisfactory with students achieving results at the end of each key stage that are in line with national averages. However, the school recognises the need to improve achievement further, particularly at Key Stage 4, so that all students do as well as possible. Students' personal development is good. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning are good and they feel safe, happy and secure. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Students enjoy their lessons and make satisfactory progress but in some lessons there is insufficient focus on meeting the differing needs of all students. There are some good examples of marking but this is not the case in all subjects.

The curriculum is good with some outstanding features. There are very good option choices at Key Stages 4 and 5 which are helping to raise achievement. A good example of this is the opening of the 'Power Wave' skills centre, which provides vocational education courses in construction and the built environment. There is a wide range of extracurricular activities which are greatly appreciated by the students. The school provides good care, guidance and support for its students and there are good links with numerous external organisations to support the welfare and education of students.

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory with some very strong features. The school plays a leading role in many partnerships and collaboratives, which benefit students and the local community. There is a clear focus on raising achievement and the impact of this can be seen at Key Stage 3. Managers are clear where further improvement is needed and have put in place detailed monitoring systems. However, these have yet to have a full impact in all areas and there are variations in performance between departments. The benefits of specialist status have been well used to improve resources. The school has made at least satisfactory progress since its previous inspection and is well placed to improve further.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 3**

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form is satisfactory overall with some good aspects. Students make satisfactory progress but the school recognises the need to improve standards achieved. Personal development is good. The students have very positive attitudes and feel that they are given opportunities to take responsibility through the school senate as well as supporting the younger students with reading and mathematics. The quality of teaching is satisfactory: there is some very effective teaching but the variation between departments limits overall progress. The curriculum offers a good range of subjects and there is very good provision for a wide variety of pathways within the Bolton West collaboration. There is a strong programme of curriculum enrichment activities and many opportunities for community service and work experience. The students appreciate the good support and guidance they receive

and speak positively about relationships with staff. Leadership and management are satisfactory with systems now in place to bring about further improvements.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise achievement at Key Stage 4 so that all students do as well as they are able.
- Improve the quality of teaching to ensure work is accurately matched to the needs of students and that students are given constructive feedback on how to improve further.
- Improve the consistency of monitoring to support departments in achieving the same high levels.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 3**

Achievement is satisfactory in both the main school and the sixth form.

Students enter the school in Year 7 having achieved standards that are broadly average. In 2005 students in Year 9 obtained results in English, mathematics and science tests that were also in line with national averages. When compared with schools having similar intakes, progress was below expectations nationally. In 2006, however, student performance in mathematics and science improved considerably resulting in overall satisfactory achievement.

In 2005 Year 11 students attained standards that were broadly in line with the national averages although below those achieved by similar students in other schools. Girls' progress was better than that of the boys. Standards in 2006 were below the targets set by the school. However, a full analysis of the available data reveals that this cohort achieved satisfactory levels when compared with the performance of similar students elsewhere.

The school has identified where there are areas of underachievement and the leadership team has taken action to bring about improvements. The curriculum provision and access to accredited vocational courses has been reviewed: inspectors agree with the school that this is having a very positive effect. Evidence from the school's tracking system, lesson observations during the inspection and results obtained in external modular examinations confirms that achievement is now satisfactory. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress.

Standards attained at AS and A level are in line with the national averages. An analysis of sixth form results shows satisfactory progress when compared with similar students in other schools and colleges and in relation to the students' attainment on entry to the sixth form.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

#### Grade for sixth form: 2

Students enjoy coming to school and involve themselves in activities with enthusiasm. Students' positive attitudes are reflected in their good attendance and there are effective strategies in place to monitor attendance and improve it further. Students' behaviour is good. They try hard in lessons and are keen to express their views in class discussions. There is little unruly behaviour and students move between lessons in an orderly fashion. Students told the inspectors that they feel safe on the school sites. They report that any bullying or racial harassment is always dealt with swiftly. Students understand the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle. In particular, they enjoy the many opportunities to participate in sporting activities.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They learn to think of others and to show compassion. Some year groups have raised considerable amounts of money for charity whilst others have undertaken projects such as sponsoring children in developing countries. Students make a good contribution to the development of the school through involvement in the school senate and focus groups. Older students take on a variety of responsibilities such as leading assemblies in the lower school. Students acquire attitudes, habits and skills that will provide a good foundation for entering the workplace.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

#### Grade for sixth form: 3

The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is satisfactory overall. Senior leaders know the strengths and weakness and have initiated a range of strategies to promote good teaching and learning. There is a systematic approach to checking the quality of teaching and learning and the sharing of good practice across the school. In most lessons there are a variety of activities and good planning. Teachers have high expectations and use questioning so that all students participate. In less effective lessons teachers do not address the full range of students' learning needs and, consequently, some learners do not make the progress they should.

The school recognises a need for sharp analysis. The use of data is a focus of the regular monitoring that helps to identify underachievement. There is a range of activities to help students catch up if they fall behind. The school sets realistic targets for students and has a robust monitoring system but the day-to-day assessment of progress is less well developed. In the best lessons, plenary sessions are used effectively by teachers to gauge whether learning objectives have been achieved. Where marking is best, it is regular and includes comments to help students improve further. However, these examples of good practice are not consistent features across the school.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The curriculum is good with some outstanding features. It fulfils statutory requirements and meets the needs of all students. In Key Stage 3 students have the opportunity to develop their self-confidence and self-esteem through drama and a second modern foreign language. In Key Stage 4 there is a wide ranging programme of activities that offer students an outstanding choice. For example, students are able to take part in external work based training, follow a vocational curriculum in school or benefit from fast-track activities that prepare them well for the next stage of their learning. On entering the sixth form, the opportunities widen further through the school's involvement in the Bolton West initiative.

The specialist technology college status enhances the curriculum and has supported the development of resources. However, there is a need for a greater provision of information and communication technology in some areas. There is a rich programme of extra-curricular opportunities. Students appreciate the time given by teachers and one student said, 'Teachers truly care at Rivington: they enjoy teaching their subjects and are willing to put themselves out for students.' Partnerships with other education providers, training organisations and the wider community are extensive.

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

**Grade for sixth form: 2**

The quality of care, guidance and support provided for students is good. There are rigorous systems to promote students' safety. Appropriate checks are made on adults working in the school and risk assessments and fire checks are carried out thoroughly. There are very strong links with outside agencies and a variety of carefully planned support systems have been established. Consequently, vulnerable students, such as those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those in public care, are confident and fully included in the life of the school.

There is good support and guidance at points of transition. Students benefit from individual mentoring sessions to set and review their learning targets. This means that they are clear about what they are trying to achieve and how well they are doing in reaching the targets. Individual education plans are in place for students with additional needs. However, although they have recently been improved, the learning objectives in the plans are still too broad. This means that it is harder to demonstrate the progress which the students make.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

#### **Grade for sixth form: 3**

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory with some very strong features. The school runs smoothly on all sites and a secure and caring atmosphere has been created. Senior managers set a clear direction for the school. They are ably supported by middle managers who have a key role to play in raising standards. The school is strongly focussed on raising achievement and this has had a clear impact, as seen in the improvements at Key Stage 3. However the strategies put in place to support improvements at Key Stage 4 have yet to have a marked impact on all external results, although internal school data shows current progress is satisfactory or better overall.

Self-evaluation is thorough and the senior leaders have a clear idea of where the strengths and areas for improvement are. They have put in place a detailed quality assurance system, but not all aspects of this have been in place long enough to ensure improvements in all areas and there are still variations between the performance of different departments. The professional development of staff has a high priority in the school and staff welcome the opportunities they have for developing their skills and sharing good practice.

Governors play an effective role in the management of the school: they know the school well and have appropriate training. They have an effective committee structure and provide appropriate challenge to the leadership team. A suitable plan has been agreed with the local authority for the school to reduce its budget deficit and the school provides satisfactory value for money. The specialist status of the school has had many beneficial effects in broadening opportunities for students and improving resources.

There is a very strong focus on partnership and collaborative working and this is of great benefit to the students and the wider community. Examples cover work with the youth service, feeder schools, secondary schools, colleges, training providers and international links to Sweden and South Africa.



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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>	3	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
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

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
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	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	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**

Thank you for being so pleasant and helpful when we came to your lessons, talked with you in discussion groups or met you around the school. We also found the questionnaire completed by your parents helpful.

We think that your school is providing you with a satisfactory education and seeking to improve even further. You make satisfactory progress in your studies. The school provides good care and support for all of you and teachers keep close track of how you are getting on in your courses. Almost everywhere we went we found that you were keen to learn and behaved well. Teaching is good in many lessons and you particularly enjoy it when you have a variety of activities and are challenged to do well. You like the range of subjects you can study and enjoy all the extra-curricular activities.

Your teachers and other staff are very committed to you and the community. You told us that they are very approachable and help you to deal with any problems that you may have. We were pleased to note that there were very few instances of bullying and that any unpleasant incidents were quickly resolved.

The headteacher and senior staff are determined to provide you with high quality care and education. They have a clear idea of where improvements are needed and are working with you so you achieve the best possible results, particularly at Key Stage 4. They are also working to ensure that all departments reach the same high standards. To support this we have asked the school to ensure all your work is marked with helpful comments and that all lessons have activities in them that match your needs.

Your school has improved in many ways since the last inspection and with your support can make even better progress in the future.