



Prestwich Arts College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105362
Local Authority Bury
Inspection number 287209
Inspection dates 21–22 February 2007
Reporting inspector Janet Palmer HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Heys Road
School category	Community		Prestwich, Manchester
Age range of pupils	11–16		Lancashire M25 1JZ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0161 7732052
Number on roll (school)	845	Fax number	0161 7735644
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr R Austin
		Headteacher	Mr Geoffrey Barlow
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	21–22 February 2007	287209

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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

Prestwich Arts College is a smaller than average secondary school which has grown in numbers in recent years and is oversubscribed. The school draws pupils from Prestwich and inner city areas of Manchester and Salford. There are more boys than girls and a higher than average number of pupils who are eligible for free school meals. Around 35% of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, which is higher than the national average. There is also a higher than average percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than average.

The local strategic review of secondary education (2005-2006) proposed the closure of the school in 2011. This proposal was withdrawn following a local campaign to keep the school open.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Prestwich Arts College is an effective and improving school. The pupils receive a sound education overall, within a secure and supportive environment. The headteacher, senior team and governing body provide good direction and parents show overwhelming support for the school and its leadership. Pupils particularly enjoy the benefits of the school's specialist arts college status which provides them with an excellent range of opportunities in the performing arts.

At Key Stage 4 pupils achieve satisfactorily and the general certificate of education grades (GCSE) are slowly improving year on year. However, at Key Stage 3, pupils' progress has slowed in English, mathematics and science and the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than that of their peers. Senior managers know that there is underachievement and have begun to put strategies in place to improve attendance and boost the progress of pupils in Key Stage 3.

Teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers know the pupils well and there are positive relationships in lessons. However, teaching does not always take account of pupils' individual needs and as a result, some pupils do not achieve as well as they could. Nevertheless, pupils are confident and good natured and behave well in the classroom and around the school. An outstanding feature is the very friendly way the girls and boys, from many different cultures, mix socially and support each other. There are effective systems to keep track of how well pupils are achieving, although these are not yet being used consistently so not all pupils know how well they are doing or how to improve.

The school provides a good, broad and balanced curriculum which has been strengthened by their specialist arts status. The range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities are well-matched to suit the pupils' interests and abilities. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the achievement of pupils at Key Stage 3 and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- Improve the quality of teaching to ensure all pupils' learning needs are being met in lessons.
- Make the use of assessment data and the tracking of learners' progress more consistent across the subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Pupils enter the school with below average standards compared with similar schools but leave at the end of Year 11 having made satisfactory progress. However, over the last three years pupils' levels of achievement at Key Stage 3 have dipped in English, mathematics and science and in 2006 represented

the lowest results the school has seen in recent years. This in turn had an impact on achievement and standards at the end of Key Stage 4.

Pupils and teachers in Years 10 and 11 work hard from a low start point and pupils make satisfactory progress. There has been a small increase in examination results in 2006, supporting an upward trend but results remain below national averages, although they are satisfactory compared to similar schools. Challenging targets are set by the school but these are not yet reached. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress less well than other pupils and there is a difference between how well boys and girls achieve, with the girls outperforming the boys. In lessons standards and achievement are satisfactory overall and sometimes good.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Throughout their time at the school pupils make good progress in developing their personal skills and attributes which help them become thoughtful and mature young people. The ethos of inclusiveness is very strong and pupils from many ethnic backgrounds socialise well and take pleasure in supporting each other. Older pupils and younger get on well together as do boys and girls. The school council provides great support for the pupil population, meeting regularly and making decisions which have helped move the school forward. They have assisted in changing the catering contractors to improve the quality and healthy content of the school dinners.

A comprehensive personal, social and health education programme, together with citizenship and a range of out of school activities, underpins the pupils' good moral and social development. All pupils take part in fund-raising events supporting causes such as 'Childline', linking this with the school's anti-bullying campaign.

Pupils state that they enjoy school and that bullying is rare. They appreciate the rewards and sanctions that the school imposes to maintain the good behaviour seen around the school. The school has worked hard to reduce the higher than average absence rate and attendance has improved, but it still has a way to go, particularly with the low attendance in Year 11. Exclusions, although high, have reduced quite considerably over the past three years due to the school's new behaviour strategies.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Positive relationships are evident in nearly all lessons and this encourages good behaviour from pupils who are keen to cooperate with teachers and each other. The good lessons observed were well planned and focused sharply on what the pupils should learn. They included exciting and challenging activities and gave pupils a chance to play an active part in their own learning. In the less successful lessons, planning did not take account of pupils different

needs, activities lacked variety and pace and failed to enthuse pupils, particularly where there was too little opportunity for them to contribute. In these lessons pupils did not make sufficient progress.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do not achieve as well as they should because too many teachers do not adapt class work to meet individual needs and there is a lack of clear direction and organisation in the learning unit.

Pupils' books are marked regularly but teachers' comments, where they are given, do not always say what pupils have done well or explain what they need to do to improve. Not all pupils are clear about their National Curriculum levels or examination course grades.

Appropriate systems are in place for checking the progress of the pupils and this is beginning to have a positive impact. Pupils who are underachieving are identified and given additional support, although sharing this information between departments is currently underdeveloped.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school has a good curriculum that serves the pupils well. At Key Stage 3 pupils have the opportunity to learn two modern foreign languages. At Key Stage 4 there is a good selection of academic and vocational options to meet the needs of the gifted and talented pupils, as well as those who are disaffected or have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Specialist arts status has enabled the school to offer high quality extra-curricular provision in the performance arts. These activities have a good take up and help to develop pupils' talents, interests and aptitudes outside the classroom. The curriculum includes a well developed personal, social and health education programme, citizenship, financial awareness and work-related education. This encourages pupils to lead safe and healthy lives, understand the responsibility of being a citizen and contributes well to their future economic well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good overall. The high level of concern for individuals by the staff means that pupils feel safe and valued. Parents share this view and are extremely supportive of both the school and the efforts staff make to care for their children. Pupils' appreciate the guidance they are given through having targets set for their work.

The school works well with outside agencies to support those who are vulnerable and there are strong systems in place to provide for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, there are problems with the progress that these pupils make.

Over the past few years the school has extended the 'time out' facility and the 'quiet room' provides effective guidance and support for pupils with behavioural difficulties. Child protection requirements and health and safety procedures are understood by

staff and adhered to. There are good arrangements to help pupils settle in when they join the school. Careers guidance is effective and pupils receive appropriate advice and support for the next steps in their education and for the world of work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides strong leadership with high aspirations. A common sense of purpose is evident from the clear way that roles and responsibilities are defined. The new school self-evaluation policy is making a good contribution to the way school leaders at all levels are able to make improvements although this is still to be fully embedded across the school. There is a robust performance management system and the school monitors teaching and learning accurately, providing appropriate support and taking action where necessary. Members of the non-teaching and support staff take a full part in this process, reflecting the school's Investor in People status.

The influence of specialist arts college status is outstanding. The impact is evident right across the school and into the local community where cross-curricular community projects give opportunities for many people to benefit from the school's expertise. Governors discharge their duties very well and are involved in the monitoring of performance of subject areas, although this is at an early stage of development. The outstanding induction support given to new members enables the governors to hold the school to account with appropriate support and challenge. Equal opportunities are well promoted and the calm atmosphere, where pupils respect and value each other's opinions and beliefs, is a strength of the school. The school has a good capacity to improve.

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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	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
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?	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	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	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

I would like thank you on behalf of the inspection team for making us feel so welcome at your school. We appreciate the time many of you gave to tell us about your work and other activities.

Your school provides you with a satisfactory education overall, although there are some good and very good features. This is what we found out during our visit.

- Your school is well led by the headteacher, senior managers and governors and your parents are very supportive of the school.
- You are well behaved in lessons and around the school and we were particularly impressed by how well you get on with each other.
- You have told us you enjoy coming to school and feel safe and secure and that your teachers provide good care.
- The school provides a good range of subjects for you to study and there are many different activities for you to enjoy, particularly in music, dance and drama.
- You do quite well at Key Stage 4 but you are not all achieving as well as you could at Key Stage 3. We have asked your teachers to help you all achieve better by improving the way they plan their lessons to make sure that the work is interesting and suitable for all the different pupils in the class.
- Your teachers have begun to assess your work and monitor your progress in greater detail but, at the moment, you are not always clear about specific ways you can improve your work. We are recommending that your teachers improve the way they track your progress to help you achieve higher standards. You can help them to do this by continuing to work hard and listen to their advice.