



Ribblesdale High School Technology College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119716
Local Authority Lancashire
Inspection number 291515
Inspection date 21 September 2006
Reporting inspector Gillian Salter-Smith

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Queen's Road
School category	Community		Clitheroe, Lancashire
Age range of pupils	11–16		BB7 1EJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01200 422 563
Number on roll (school)	1300	Fax number	01200 442 506
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Dr John Saunders
		Headteacher	Mr Simon Smith
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
11–16	21 September 2006	291515

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Most students are from White British backgrounds. A very small proportion of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and there are a small number for whom English is not their first language. There are fewer pupils than average with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A small number of pupils are looked- after by persons other than their parents. A below average proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Standards when pupils start school are average. There are fewer high attaining pupils than average because many of the most able pupils from local primary schools attend a grammar school nearby.

The school has specialist status as a Technology College and it recently gained further specialist status for vocational learning. The school was designated as a High Performing Specialist School (HPSS) in November 2005 and received the School Achievement Award in the same year. A new headteacher was appointed in January 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. Pupils feel happy and secure because staff take good care of them and relationships are very supportive. Most pupils enjoy attending school and they achieve well. Parents and carers value the work of the school and appreciate the good teaching and the care that their children receive.

Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils understand how to develop healthy lifestyles and the school's success in this area is recognised through the Healthy Schools Award and the Sportsmark Gold Award. Pupils make a good contribution to their own community. The school council is active and effective in bringing about change and improvements for pupils. Considerable fundraising for local charities and involvement in the recent United Nations International Peace Day reflect pupils' awareness of the wider community. Pupils are well prepared for their futures. They develop secure skills in literacy, information and communication technology (ICT) and numeracy and learn to work cooperatively in lessons.

Pupils start school with average standards, make good progress and reach above average standards in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. Pupils' achievement is good because they enjoy learning and are well taught. Teachers have considerable expertise in their subjects and in the use of ICT to support learning. Results in Key Stage 3 national tests in English, mathematics and science and for GCSE have been significantly above average for the past five years. The school has recognised that a minority of boys do not always perform as well as they should in Key Stage 4. Outstanding partnerships with local education and training providers have enabled the school to act quickly and improve the choice of courses for pupils in Key Stage 4. These include learning in many vocational and work-based settings and, as a result, pupils' motivation and attendance have improved. There are exciting plans well underway to improve the choice of courses for pupils aged 14 to 19 even further.

Though learning and teaching are good overall, not all lessons provide enough challenge and pupils are not always expected to use higher level thinking skills such as predicting, analysing, reasoning and justifying. The school has correctly identified that not all pupils know what they need to do to succeed or improve and pupils are not often encouraged to judge their own success.

The most vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because teachers, teaching assistants and learning mentors give well-targeted support and the school works closely with many local agencies to ensure their well-being.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, with the able support of senior leaders and governors, has an accurate view of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. A clear agenda for improvement, based on rigorous analysis of pupils' performance, underpins the school's work. The staff work well as a team in the relentless pursuit of improved standards for all pupils and there is a determination to make this an outstanding school. There is good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve boys' progress and standards in Key Stage 4 and increase the proportion of pupils gaining the higher grades in English language, science and French.
- Increase the challenge for pupils in lessons by providing more opportunities for thinking at a higher level such as predicting, analysing, reasoning and justifying.
- Ensure that teachers give detailed guidance to pupils on how to improve their work and give them opportunities to evaluate their own success.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are above average, although boys' standards are slightly lower than those of girls. In 2005 and 2006, realistic targets for GCSE were broadly met and, in Key Stage 3, targets were exceeded in mathematics and ICT but not quite met in English and science. GCSE results in 2006 were broadly similar to those in 2005. In the 2005 GCSE results, the proportion of pupils gaining A* to C grades was well above average in design and technology (D&T), mathematics, English literature, geography, religious education, statistics and physical education. In 2005, GCSE results were lower than expected for A* and A grades in English language, science and French, due in part to unavoidable staff absence. In addition, the underperformance of a small group of boys had a negative effect on standards. The school acted quickly to overcome staffing and curriculum difficulties and standards are rising in these subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Daily opportunities for personal reflection on topical issues and regular visits from local clergy and Christian organisations contribute to pupils' spiritual development. Behaviour is very good, especially in the classroom where relationships with adults and each other are positive and supportive. The vast majority of pupils enjoy learning and this is reflected in above average levels of attendance.

Pupils feel safe and secure in the school. The rare incidents of bullying and racist incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively to the satisfaction of pupils and parents. Pupils are aware of how to stay safe in higher risk activities in lessons. With encouragement from prefects on duty, they move sensibly around the school and are courteous to one another. Pupils understand how to maintain healthy lifestyles through healthy eating and regular exercise.

The school council, a democratically elected body, has initiated changes to the lunchtime menu and the system of rewards for pupils. It is a useful way for pupils to make their views known to leaders. However, some pupils and parents are right to

think that the school should seek pupils' views more regularly and in different ways to ensure that everyone's view can be heard.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good in helping pupils to make good progress. Teachers' frequent and well-deserved use of praise of pupils encourages very good behaviour, positive attitudes and self-confidence. Teachers' expertise in their subjects enables them to plan manageable steps in learning and explain difficult concepts clearly. Specialist status has enabled the school to provide excellent ICT resources to support learning in classrooms and for pupils when they work at home. Teachers use ICT very well to help pupils to learn. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly but do not always give enough guidance on how to improve and thus challenge pupils to do better. The school is right to focus its efforts on improving pupils' understanding of how well they are doing in their work and what they can do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum meets pupils' needs well and supports their good achievement and personal development. Specialist status for technology and vocational learning has enabled the school to develop outstanding partnerships with local education and training providers. This has resulted in broader curriculum opportunities and rising standards. An increasing range of vocational courses and work-place learning, more in Year 10 than in Year 11, is meeting pupils' needs, especially boys. There has been a positive effect on attendance and pupils' interest in their work and future careers. Considerable work carried out in local primary schools, for example in D&T, is leading to improved standards.

The school provides well for the higher-attaining pupils by encouraging early entrance to GCSE examinations and other higher level qualifications in D&T. Curriculum time is used imaginatively to provide extensive practical experience of citizenship. A wide range of extra-curricular activities is very well supported by pupils, especially in physical education. This is recognised in the Sportsmark Gold Award. Around 70 pupils in Year 9 are preparing for the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. Procedures for child protection, health and safety and safeguarding children are in place.

The arrangements for grouping pupils of different ages across the age range within a key stage and working with a form tutor is helping most pupils to settle into the school

well. It promotes supportive behaviour towards one another across the age groups. Younger pupils appreciate the support of older pupil mentors when they arrive new to the school.

Older pupils are aware of their targets in some subjects but not necessarily of what they need to do to improve. The school recognises that the best practice needs to be extended across all subjects and to all ages and has plans to do so.

The school has excellent links with a wide range of agencies. These and the good partnership with parents help staff provide a very good level of support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those considered more vulnerable.

The school responds well to parents' concerns, for example, by adjusting the arrangements for the review of their children's progress with teachers, but a small minority would like more frequent consultation about matters in the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, ably supported by senior leaders, provides clear educational direction strongly focused on raising standards and improving the quality of provision. Secure systems for checking on the work of the school enable leaders to identify the correct priorities for improvement. Senior leaders carry out well-focused checks on learning in lessons and pupils' written work. Pupils' performance is analysed closely to identify areas for improvement. Increasingly, leaders at subject and faculty level carry out similar secure checks, though this does not yet extend to all subjects.

The school recognised the need to motivate boys and increase their achievement. They have successfully broadened the curriculum at Key Stage 4 and the wide variety of choice has led to greater motivation and increased attendance. Staffing difficulties in a small number of subjects had resulted in lower achievement in Key Stage 4. These were resolved quickly and pupils are making better progress.

They pose challenging questions to leaders about pupils' achievement. They are well informed about the school's performance but could take a more structured role in monitoring school improvement. Standards since the last inspection have remained above average and the improvements identified have been tackled successfully. The school has made the most of its specialist status to improve provision, especially in ICT resources and the curriculum. Finances are well managed and the school provides good value for money.

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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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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	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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
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	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

The Students

Ribblesdale High School Technology College

Queen's Road

Clitheroe

Lancashire

BB7 1EJ

22 September 2006

Dear Students

We thoroughly enjoyed meeting you, visiting lessons and talking to the staff on our visit to your school last week. We appreciated the friendly welcome you gave us. It is important that you know what we found out and what we shall be reporting to your parents and the government.

You have a good school. Most of you make good progress and many of you reach above average standards by the time you leave. You do particularly well in mathematics, design and technology, English literature, statistics and physical education. Your school's specialist status has been a great advantage to you. You have impressive facilities for ICT to help you to learn both in school and at home. The many outstanding partnerships developed with local education and training providers have helped the school to give you a good range of vocational and work-place learning opportunities. You are well taught and cared for and it was good to see so many of you enjoying lessons, behaving very well and getting on well with each other. Your school council is doing sterling work on your behalf, making many positive changes in your school. We were very heartened to see the efforts you make to raise money for local charities and support worthwhile international events such as the United Nations International Day of Peace.

In the past, a small number of older pupils, particularly boys, did not do as well as they should have done. The school was quick to spot where things were not going well and has made improvements. We agree with the school that in order for you to do your very best, you need to be challenged to find different ways of thinking things out in your work. For example, you need lots of practice in making predictions during investigations, analysing problems and situations, and using reasoning when presenting an argument. We also agree with the school that you will benefit from knowing how to evaluate your own success in your work and from knowing exactly what you must do to improve your work.

We wish you all the best for your futures and hope that you continue to enjoy the rest of your time at Ribblesdale.

Yours sincerely

Gillian Salter-Smith

(Lead Inspector)