



Chorley Southlands High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119738
Local Authority Lancashire
Inspection number 291525
Inspection dates 11–12 October 2006
Reporting inspector Alan Brine HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Clover Road
School category	Community		Chorley, Lancashire
Age range of pupils	11–16		PR7 2NJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01257 414455
Number on roll (school)	1002	Fax number	01257 414460
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Tom Frost
		Headteacher	Mr Mark Fowle
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	11–12 October 2006	291525

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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

Southlands High School has specialist technology college status and is situated on the southern edge of the market town of Chorley. It is of average size and the proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is very low. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average and the percentage eligible for free school meals is also below average. The school has received a number of national awards in recent years including Sports and Arts Mark, Beacon School and Leading Edge Status, Investors in People designation and the National Healthy Schools Standard.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Southlands High is a popular school which provides its students with a satisfactory education. There is a clear commitment to improvement and the school provides a very welcoming, orderly and safe environment within which students can learn.

Standards in examinations and tests are broadly average, although performance and students' achievement varies year on year between subjects and different ability groups. This is partly, but not entirely, because the pattern of prior attainment and the ability of the students also vary significantly from year to year. Students make satisfactory progress overall and the school is striving to gain more consistency in the achievement of its students. A key barrier to reaching a more consistent pattern of good achievement is the limited use made of information to target support towards those students who are not making enough progress.

The students' personal development is good. Most students have positive attitudes towards learning and enjoy coming to school. Attendance and behaviour are good. A small proportion of students find it difficult to concentrate and apply themselves in lessons. Students respond well to opportunities to take responsibility and to work collaboratively with others. They also take the initiative and show a sense of community spirit through, for example, their involvement in the school council and the various charity activities within the school. Students appreciate the importance of safety and living a healthy lifestyle. Their participation in the work and enterprise related activities organised by the school is positive. Students' moral and social development is good, although their awareness and understanding of cultural diversity is limited.

Teaching is satisfactory; some lessons are good or outstanding. Inadequate teaching is very rare. While attention has been paid to securing high expectations about teaching quality, these are not yet embedded securely into all lessons. Most lessons are well-organised, but some do not challenge students enough. The curriculum offered to the students is satisfactory, while extra-curricular provision is very good. The provision for citizenship is inadequate. The school has introduced a number of curriculum innovations intended to ensure the needs of all students are met. Some of these are proving effective, notably the provision of a nurture group to support the transition of lower attaining students into Year 7. While the school's specialist status has had a positive impact on, for example, provision and standards in design and technology, progress in introducing an effective vocational programme for older students has been tentative.

Students are well-cared for and supported overall. However, there is a lack of consistency in the way they are guided about their progress and how to improve further. Parents rightly praise the caring and safe environment which the school provides and the efforts made to ensure that new students settle quickly. The school is particularly effective in the measures taken to ensure the safety and happiness of vulnerable students.

The senior leadership team ensures that the day-to-day running of the school is very orderly. The recent enlargement of this team is helping extend the programme of

monitoring and improvement planning. Self-evaluation, while broadly accurate in its identification of relative strengths and weaknesses, has tended to over-estimate the quality of the current provision. The new headteacher has, rightly, identified the need to introduce more systematic and rigorous monitoring procedures and to develop a clear, shared agreement about what constitutes high quality education. The school has a strong programme of professional development and the capacity for further improvement is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Promote consistently high achievement in all subjects by:
 - effectively monitoring teaching and learning to promote consistently high expectations and suitably challenging lessons
 - improving the monitoring of students' progress, target setting and subsequent support.
- Ensure that all initiatives, such as the development of vocational options, are more carefully evaluated according to clear criteria for success.
- Extend the provision made for citizenship and for students to develop their understanding of cultural diversity.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The standards attained by students when they enter the school in Year 7 are broadly average. Their overall achievement in the school is satisfactory. Standards in examinations and tests are broadly average, although performance varies year on year between subjects and different ability groups. The pattern of achievement in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is particularly inconsistent. There are significant strengths in some subjects, for example, design and technology, where the school's specialist status has impacted positively on student progress, and modern foreign languages. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also achieve satisfactorily, and the introduction of the nurture group for more vulnerable students in Year 7 is having a very positive impact on their learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Around the school, students behave in a calm and orderly manner and cope cheerfully with changes to routines, for example, when the venue for assemblies was moved. Over recent years, attendance has been good. The vast majority of students enjoy school and appreciate taking part in the full range of activities which are offered. Moral development is good and the social development of students is particularly strong. Opportunities for spiritual development are more limited despite some improvements since the previous inspection. Links with a Gambian school successfully enable students to gain some insight into

lives very different from their own, but their overall understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity closer to home is limited.

Recently implemented strategies aimed at the promotion of good behaviour have resulted in a fall in the rate of exclusions. Although a small proportion of students find it difficult to concentrate and apply themselves in lessons, behaviour in classrooms is good. Students make positive contributions to their own and the wider community and their involvement in charitable activities is particularly impressive. There is satisfactory development of workplace and other skills related to their future economic well-being. Students are willing to exercise responsibility, for example, as prefects or through the innovative system of school councils which take responsibility for different key aspects of students' lives in school, for instance, through involvement in measures promoting healthy eating. Many students take part in the extensive programme of extra-curricular activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with some that is good and outstanding. There are some very good teachers in the school but as yet their good practice has not been shared extensively so that all teachers routinely teach well. The best lessons are planned carefully, so that work is accurately matched to students' abilities and specific needs. In these lessons, teachers' high expectations and good subject knowledge usually result in effective learning and rapid progress. A variety of challenging activities help to engage students in their work and probing questioning extends their knowledge and understanding.

In other lessons, often but not always with lower attaining students, steps in learning are not identified clearly enough and this makes checking on progress and planning the next lesson unnecessarily difficult. These lessons are usually orderly and well organised but the pace is sometimes too slow, the range of teaching methods used is limited, and the level of challenge is insufficient. As a result, students do not make sufficiently rapid progress or acquire good learning habits. Marking is usually regular but it does not always set out what students need to do to improve. The extent and quality of homework set varies widely between subjects and year groups.

Across the school, there is a system for the routine monitoring of the quality of lessons but there is inconsistency in the rigour with which it is applied. Consequently, the school's own evaluation of teaching and learning is inexact and has not led to routine high quality teaching and learning for all students.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Curriculum and other activities are satisfactory overall. At Key Stage 3, most National Curriculum subjects are taught for a suitable period of time. A particularly good feature

is the Year 7 nurture group, which provides well for the most vulnerable students. Most students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well in lessons and, in some instances, are withdrawn and taught in small groups. At Key Stage 4, students follow one of three pathways and the curriculum has been broadened in recent years to include more vocational options. The impact of this has been mixed and not all students have benefited as much as expected. Enterprise week offers the students opportunities to build on existing skills and develop new ones, for example, finance development and applying skills in marketing.

Specialist college status has brought benefits, particularly in design and technology and in the availability of information and communication technology (ICT) across the school. However, the latter is not used as widely as it could be in all lessons.

Students enjoy a well-structured personal development programme. While the school is making progress in the delivery of citizenship, the current provision is inadequate. The range and quality of extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities, such as sports clubs, ICT and science activities, are very good.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Relationships in the school are good and students say that they feel safe and well cared for. Arrangements for ensuring that students are safeguarded are in place and supported by appropriate training for all staff. Support for more vulnerable students is strongly backed up through good liaison with appropriate outside agencies. Careers guidance enables students to make informed decisions about subject choices in Year 9 and post-16 courses, training and careers on leaving Southlands. Arrangements for transition from their primary schools are good especially for students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but the school recognises that it could strengthen this aspect of provision for these students as they leave the school. The quality of the guidance is not as high as the care and support because of the limited use made of data to target support on those students who are not making enough progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The recently appointed headteacher and the management team are firmly committed to raising achievement and standards. Changes to the structure of the senior leadership team have strengthened their effectiveness. The headteacher is successfully capitalising on the strength of middle managers who have developed a common sense of purpose. The usefulness of self-evaluation is being systematically improved. However, the analysis of strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning has insufficient rigour and consistency and the monitoring of initiatives aimed at driving up achievement is not sharp enough. As a consequence, the extent of improved achievement and student learning is not being accurately measured.

Adult vetting procedures are in place and the governing body ensures that statutory responsibilities are met. The governors review performance information methodically and are increasingly proactive in asking questions about how things are going. As a consequence, they are effective as critical friends in holding the school to account. Resources are used efficiently to improve outcomes for students and give satisfactory value for money. While the school's specialist status has been effective in improving standards in some areas, not all opportunities have been taken to develop a broader vocational culture. The provision of an innovative and regular professional development programme together with improvements in monitoring and self-evaluation mean the school has a good capacity to improve further.

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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	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	3
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	3

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?	3
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	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
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

Chorley Southlands High School

Clover Road

Chorley

Lancashire

PR7 2NJ

11 Oct 2006

Dear Students,

Thank you for the contribution you made to the recent inspection of your school. We enjoyed visiting your lessons and talking with many of you. We also read carefully the questionnaires completed by your parents. These were very helpful to us.

We are pleased to tell you that Southlands High School provides you with a satisfactory education. This is a summary of our main findings, which I hope will interest you.

- Your school provides you with a very orderly and safe environment in which you can learn. You are well cared for and supported by your teachers. We have asked the school to give you more guidance about the progress you are making and how you can improve your work further.
- Most of the teaching is very well organised and we saw some very enjoyable and lively lessons. We have asked your school to ensure that all teaching challenges you to achieve your very best.
- Your attendance and behaviour are good. You usually behave well in lessons and around the school and show positive attitudes towards learning. We were particularly impressed by how you take responsibility through, for example, the various School Council activities. A good range of extra-curricular activities is provided for you.
- We agree with the school's view that they should increase the opportunities for you to take vocational courses. They should also ensure that your knowledge and understanding of how to be a good citizen in a culturally diverse world are well developed.

Thank you again for welcoming us to your school. We wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Alan Brine, HMI