



Lytham St Annes High Technology College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 119740
Local Authority Lancashire
Inspection number 291527
Inspection dates 19–20 September 2006
Reporting inspector Vincent Ashworth HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Worsley Road
School category	Community		Lytham St Annes, Lancashire
Age range of pupils	11–18		FY8 4DG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01253 733192
Number on roll (school)	1749	Fax number	01253 795109
Number on roll (6th form)	302		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Jim Stephenson
		Headteacher	Mr Philip Wood
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	19–20 September 2006	291527

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The school is larger than most. The proportion of students with learning difficulties is below average and almost all students are White British. The number of students entitled to free school meals is around half the national average. The school has held specialist status in technology since 1997. It has been awarded Arts Mark Silver and also has Investors in People status and Sports Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school's view that overall effectiveness is satisfactory. It is an improving school, where students feel safe and enjoy what the school has to offer. Demand for places is high and most parents are happy with the school. Students enter the school with above average standards and make satisfactory progress.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. There is some outstanding teaching and learning, but this is often confined to particular individuals or within particular subjects. The results of this challenging and imaginative teaching are most clearly evident in performing arts, physical education and music. However, inspectors observed too much variation in the quality of teaching and the performance of different subjects. Results in information and communication technology (ICT) are inadequate and a minority of parents are concerned about the quality of teaching and the impact of low level disruptive behaviour in some lessons. The management team and staff have worked hard to bring about improvements to the quality of teaching in science and modern foreign languages.

The curriculum is of good quality and much improved. Students benefit from a wide range of subjects and courses that prepare them well for adult life. They receive good pastoral support. The quality of academic support and assessment varies between subjects. As a result, students are not always clear about what they need to do to achieve even better standards.

Managers and staff have brought about improvement in some areas of the school and this is evident, for example, in the closing of the gap between boys' and girls' attainment. But they are clear that there is more work to be done to improve the quality and consistency of students' experiences. There is a determination amongst managers and staff to maintain improvement, and good systems and procedures have been established to identify where things could be done better in order to raise achievement for all students. The school has good capacity to improve.

The school has met many of its 2006 performance targets as a specialist technology college. The specialist status has had a positive impact on the school's curriculum and extra curricular activities; for example, through an increased choice of subjects and options as well as an innovative project that links with local primary schools. The extent to which teachers have acquired the skills and confidence to integrate the use of learning technology into their lessons varies across the school.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Overall standards in the sixth form are high. Pass rates on GCE AS level courses have improved significantly and are higher than average. Pass rates on GCE A level courses are also high. On vocational courses, students produce a high standard of coursework and make good use of the school's ICT resources to research and present their assignments. Because of good teaching and strong support, the majority of students

make good progress. Students are taught the necessary study and research skills that will help them succeed when they go to university. They also benefit from the good resources in the learning resource centre and the sixth form careers room.

Students are prepared well for higher education. The school's careers and higher education programme is well devised and helps students to make informed decisions about their future. The thorough and supportive interviews that take place before students join the sixth form ensure that they make the right choices. As a result, very few students leave before they complete their courses. Teachers and tutors give freely of their time to ensure that students are well supported and able to progress. One student said, 'there's always someone there to listen to you if you have a problem.' Students play a full and active role in school life and make good use of a wide range of enrichment activities to extend their skills and interests. In particular, students have been instrumental in raising significant sums of money for charity. The sixth form is well led. A rigorous and systematic cycle of self-review allows managers and staff to evaluate effectively the quality of provision. With high retention rates, high levels of student satisfaction and good achievement, the sixth form provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the good practice in teaching and learning is shared across all departments so that all students can make at least good progress.
- Ensure that monitoring and assessment procedures are applied consistently well by all staff.
- Improve the quality of provision in ICT.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Achievement throughout the main school is satisfactory and improving. Standards are above average and this represents satisfactory progress given students' above average attainment when they enter the school. Students with learning difficulties are making the same progress as others.

Results in the Year 9 national tests in 2005 were above average. Standards in mathematics are high. Boys who had low prior attainment on entry however, performed less well than expected in English. The school is now successfully improving boys' performance in English. Standards at Year 9, and the improving trend, have been maintained in the 2006 results.

The GCSE results in 2005 were above average overall and students made excellent progress in mathematics. The proportion of students who achieved at least five good passes at GCSE, including English and mathematics, was higher than in most schools. There has been a significant improvement in boys' overall achievement, particularly in English, and they now attain in line with the girls. Standards in ICT, child development and some vocational courses are lower than expected. The overall performance in 2006

was similar to that of 2005. The school has significantly reduced the number of students who leave school with no qualifications. Students' attainment in the sixth form in 2005 was above average and their progress and achievement are good overall. These high standards are reflected in the 2006 results.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The personal development and well-being of students are satisfactory. Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are satisfactory. Temporary exclusions are dealt with effectively; there are relatively few permanent exclusions. The school provides a calm and orderly environment but there are occasional instances of minor misbehaviour in lessons that disrupt learning. Levels of attendance reflect the national average. Students enjoy coming to school. They try to put into practice the good advice they receive about healthy lifestyles. The school's new dining facilities have had a significant impact on improving students' attitudes to healthy eating. Students also have a strong sense of ownership of the meeting and leisure facilities the impressive new building provides during break and lunchtimes. They enjoy after-school activities and participation rates, especially in sport and music, are high. Students make a good contribution to the school and wider communities. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Their awareness of the needs of others is heightened through generous support of charity and fundraising events. Their future economic well-being is enhanced through their significantly higher than average GCSE results in English and mathematics, but there are insufficient careers and work-related learning opportunities in Year 7 to 9.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and good in the sixth form. There is evidence of some good practice in Years 7 to 11, where the teachers' enthusiasm in class is infectious. In such lessons, teaching excites students and engages them in interesting activities that extend to independent learning and collaborative work, as well as assessment of their own progress. This contrasts with other less effective lessons where students are more passive. In these, students listen and respond to their teachers, but activities are not varied or demanding enough. They do not stimulate students to achieve their full potential. This is partly because such lessons provide too few opportunities for them to learn from each other or from their own research and individual exploration. In addition, the marking of students' work does not always result in explicit comments that show them how to improve. Students say that they

enjoy learning most when they 'do things for themselves', be it in oral, written or practical work. In the sixth form, teaching is good because teachers focus on students' particular needs and interests, which enthuses them to give of their best.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good. It provides for students well because it is regularly reviewed and revised to take account of students' needs and changing circumstances linked to the national agenda. For example, there are options available to older students to enable them to combine academic and vocational courses, so gaining accreditation from a variety of external agencies. This pattern also continues into the sixth form, where students are provided with a wide repertoire of academic and vocational subjects. Students are guided towards a balanced combination of subjects and experiences that are tailored to their aptitudes and capabilities. The school has successfully implemented strategies to develop and reinforce the literacy and numeracy skills of lower attaining students. This has resulted in improved attainment, particularly for boys. Provision for ICT does not meet students' needs because too little account is taken of their prior attainment and their developing skills. Consequently, much of the work in ICT is repetitive and students lose interest.

Innovative work was seen in the performing arts and technical subjects, for example, in the Formula 1 Project. This initiative, which focuses on the design of a jet powered engine for cars, is being developed in conjunction with primary schools. It is attracting positive publicity in the local community. The school provides a wide spectrum of extra-curricular activities. The rates of participation are high, indicating the intensity of the students' interest and the value placed on developing skills that will be of value throughout life.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school takes good care of its students and provides them with good personal support. Links with external agencies are strong, and enable the school to support all groups of students effectively, in particular the looked-after and vulnerable students. The school provides a well ordered and safe environment within which students feel secure. They know they can turn to an adult they can trust if needed. The few instances where bullying has been reported to staff have been dealt with effectively. Relationships with senior pastoral staff are good. Requirements for child protection are in place and staff are very alert to symptoms of distress. Good personal support is offered through an effective Personal Social and Health Education programme. Students with learning and/or physical difficulties are well supported. The pastoral system has been greatly strengthened by recent appointments and is already providing an effective programme of intervention to support underachievers in Years 10 and 11. Links with partner

primary schools are good. Academic guidance is satisfactory. The degree of effectiveness with which teachers set and monitor individual targets for students is variable, both between and within departments. Students know their individual target grades but do not get sufficiently clear and detailed guidance on what they have to do to improve and move up a level or a grade.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall and some aspects are good. Prominent amongst these are palpably strong commitments to student welfare and to providing them with an inclusive school. The school's work with a wide range of partners to promote students' well-being is good and much appreciated by students and parents. The headteacher has established a clear vision based on a commitment to raising standards, which is widely supported by staff and governors. Through his good strategic leadership much has already been achieved. Of particular note are the real gains made in the raising of boys' achievement and the improvements in modern foreign languages and science. Senior management is consultative and acts positively on imaginative suggestions from staff and parents; for example, the introduction of congratulatory text messages telling parents when their child has done particularly well.

Monitoring and evaluation procedures are well established, reflective and evaluative in nature. As a result, the school has an accurate view of where its weaknesses lie and what it needs to do to improve. The school's leadership team holds middle managers to account for their actions. This has resulted in an improvement in standards, for example, in English. There has been a period of rapid staff turnover and staff absence that has had an adverse effect on the quality of students' learning in some areas. In addition, the degree of rigour and consistency with which middle managers apply quality assurance procedures is variable. As a result, there is significant variation in the quality of teaching and learning in different departments and this affects students' performance across different subjects.

Recent appointments have strengthened the management capacity of the school and they are starting to have an impact on the pace of change and improvement. A more consistent approach to teaching and learning is being managed through a variety of staff development opportunities, including leadership training programmes for middle managers. The school has a good capacity to improve.

The school is taking appropriate action to safeguard students by producing a central record of staff qualifications and criminal records checks. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are strongly committed to the school, but they do not ensure it is sufficiently held to account, for example, over the progress students make. Governors' meetings often focus too much on operational matters rather than key strategic issues. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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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>	School Overall	16-19
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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	2
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	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
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?	3	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	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	3	

The quality of provision

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

Lytham St Annes High Technology College

Worsley Road

Lytham St Annes

Lancashire

FY8 4DG

22 September 2006

Dear Students

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we have made about your school. I thank those of you who helped the inspection by talking to us about your work and your life at school. Many of your parents returned a questionnaire and indeed quite a few telephoned me to talk about what they think about your school. This was also very helpful as I was also able to take their views into account.

Your school is providing you with a satisfactory and improving standard of education. The headteacher is helped and supported by an impressive senior team and a supportive group of governors. Senior managers know what needs to be done to improve the school and have got the plans to do it. Most of you behave well in lessons and around the school. It's a pity that a very small minority of you don't always behave as well as you could, because this means you miss out on so much that the school has to offer. Your school is very caring and supportive. It offers you good opportunities both personally and academically to get the skills and qualifications that will help you succeed in life. Inspectors were impressed with the quality of students' work in the sixth form as well as the good work they are doing to raise funds for charities. The school dining facilities are very popular and you enjoy the healthy eating options that are now on offer.

The school has good exam results, as would be expected, based on how well you did in primary school. To help you do even better in your exams we have asked the school to focus on three main things:

- to further improve the quality of teaching by spreading the skills of the best teachers more widely across all subjects;
- to make sure that when teachers mark your work or agree targets with you, that you are given very clear and specific actions that will help you understand how to achieve even higher grades;
- to make your ICT lessons more interesting and stimulating.

We wish you success in working with your teachers to help the school improve. Inspectors hope that you all do well and realise your ambitions.

Yours sincerely

Vincent Ashworth

Her Majesty's Inspector of schools