

Clayton Hall Business and Language College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124412
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	292989
Inspection date	26 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Kevin Sheldrick HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	942
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Porter
Headteacher	Mark Heuston
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2001
School address	Clayton Lane Clayton Newcastle under Lyme ST5 3DN
Telephone number	01782 297570
Fax number	01782 297569

Age group	11–16
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

This is an average-size secondary school that serves a community that is relatively affluent. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and the remaining 5% are from minority ethnic groups. On entry to the school, pupils are generally of above-average ability, although there is significant variation between different year groups. The school has about half the national average proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities. Part of the school is a Grade 2 listed building. The school gained business and languages specialist status in 2004.

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. All members of the school community take great pride in the unique school building, its long history and the impressive setting. Pupils attain above-average results in both key stages. Achievement is good, largely as a result of good teaching and an outstanding curriculum. Pupils are really pleased with the option choices available and this contributes significantly to the good progress made in Key Stage 4. The school made a wise decision to specialise in business and languages several years ago. This has contributed enormously to the curriculum and the focus on enterprise has improved learning. Teaching and learning are not as strong at Key Stage 3 and this explains why achievement is satisfactory rather than good in this key stage.

Preparation for future economic well-being is outstanding because of the exceptional work-related curriculum and the high standards achieved. Pupils' positive contribution to the community is also outstanding because the school responds very well to pupils' views and there are exceptional opportunities for pupils to help others. Overall, personal development and well-being are good. Most pupils eat healthily and undertake regular physical exercise. Pupils' considerable enjoyment of school contributes to their good attitudes, attendance and behaviour. For a minority of pupils their enjoyment is less at Key Stage 3 because there are some inconsistencies in teaching and this occasionally results in misbehaviour. Nevertheless, teaching and learning are good because the majority of lessons are stimulating and challenging and a significant proportion are outstanding.

Care, support and guidance are good. Progress is monitored well so pupils know their targets and timely interventions are now being made to improve pupils' achievement. Pupils feel safe because they are well cared for. The support provided for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is effective in ensuring all attain qualifications and achieve well.

Leadership and management are good. Monitoring and evaluation are effective so the school knows what it must do to improve. Although governors and senior leaders could have been more ambitious in the past, they have correctly recognised that the time is right to set more challenging targets, and a clear vision for an improved school does exist. This vision and the track record of steady improvement indicate the school has a good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure greater consistency in teaching, particularly at Key Stage 3.
- Develop a longer term plan that captures the schools desire to become outstanding.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are above average and achievement is good. This is particularly due to the good progress that pupils make in Key Stage 4. GCSE results in 2006 were well above average and since 2004 the rate of improvement has been faster than that seen nationally. Average point scores in GCSE examinations and the proportion of pupils attaining five or more A* to C grades have improved significantly and were well above average. All pupils gained at least five A* to G GCSE grades, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities. Achievement has been good in 2004/05 and 2005/06.

In 2006, the proportion of pupils attaining at least Level 5 at Key Stage 3 was above average in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. A relatively high proportion of pupils attained the higher Levels 6 and 7 in mathematics and science, but this was not the case in English. The school carefully monitors the progress of pupils and this indicates that the situation has improved in English this year, with an above-average proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels. Attainment in other subjects is also above average. The progress made in Key Stage 3 is broadly satisfactory, and the school's tracking of achievement indicates an improving picture.

A good feature of the school is that it ensures pupils of all backgrounds and abilities achieve at least satisfactorily. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress and there is no difference between the achievement of boys and girls.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. An outstanding feature is the extent to which pupils make a positive contribution to the community. The school council has credibility with pupils because the school listens carefully to views expressed and significant improvements to the school have followed. Pupils also make significant contributions through the prefect system and the extensive opportunities to support younger pupils through peer mentoring and reading schemes. Pupils raise money for charity and deliberate with great care as to how this should be used. Almost all pupils eat healthily and enthusiastically take part in physical activity. Safe practices are adopted well and students indicate that they feel safe and secure in the school. Lessons at Key Stage 4 are enjoyed most because pupils like the options they have. A minority of lessons at Key Stage 3 are not enjoyed because pupils are passive for too long. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance and behaviour are both good. Preparation for future economic well-being is highly effective because pupils consistently attain well and have very good basic skills. Enterprise and team-working skills are promoted well.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers consistently plan lessons with clear objectives that are shared with pupils and usually reviewed at the end of lessons. There is a significant amount of outstanding teaching in the school. Examples of effective teaching include drama lessons in which pupils become completely immersed in a character as a result of a totally convincing role adopted by the teacher. In a modern foreign languages lesson, pupils used German as if they were really in Germany. In a history lesson, Year 7 pupils were effectively challenged because the teacher had a really good grasp of how pupils could be made to think more deeply and then write in a more evaluative way. Despite this highly effective practice, there are a minority of lessons at Key Stage 3 that do not consistently challenge pupils.

Although there are some inconsistencies, marking is generally helpful in highlighting areas for improvement. Pupils have a good awareness of their targets and the school is providing more information to parents so they are more able to support what the school is doing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding and is contributing significantly to the good achievement in the school. The school has steadily increased the availability of vocational options, provided both in-house and in collaboration with the local college. Higher-attaining pupils appreciate the effort the school has put into the provision of interesting options, including qualifications in Latin and advanced level information and communication technology (ICT). The schools' specialist status has further increased opportunities in languages and business. The enterprise focus in all subjects is significantly enhancing learning. Pupils are very positive about the option choices they have in Year 9 and appreciate the efforts the school makes to enable them to develop a clear view of the different pathways that can be followed beyond Key Stage 4. Year 10 pupils think their work placements were of high quality and further enhanced their grasp of the world of work. Through their vocational courses pupils have been actively involved in improving the school by building seats and making other changes to enhance the environment. Changes to the curriculum are a key reason why pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities all gain qualifications and achieve well. Despite resource limitations, pupils think ICT is used well to enhance the curriculum. The library makes a significant contribution to pupils' independent learning. Extra-curricular opportunities are extensive and participation levels are high.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Pupils' progress is carefully monitored and appropriate responses have been made to ensure all pupils have made at least satisfactory progress. Recently there has been significant improvement in interventions to support students, so that action is now taken in response to evidence of pupils not making good progress from Year 7 onwards. Planning diaries are used increasingly well with tutors and parents to share information about pupils' progress.

Mentoring undertaken by adults and pupils is promoting improved behaviour and attitudes to learning. Inputs from many outside agencies are well co-ordinated through the social inclusion officer. A quiet room has been developed in order to better meet the needs of vulnerable learners. Careers guidance is comprehensive. Pupils have adults they can speak to about any problems and the school meets the government's safeguarding requirements. There is scope for further improving the consistency of how behaviour is managed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The school regularly gains the views of parents and pupils and makes a point of always responding to their concerns and suggestions. As a result, the vast majority of the pupils and parents are highly supportive of the school. The school collaborates well with a range of partners.

As a result of good leadership by the senior team, the school now has effective leaders in all key positions. There has been a good blend of decisive action and support to bring about improvements in middle leadership. The schools growing reputation has helped attract good

new recruits at all levels in the school. A major step forward has been the willingness of middle leaders to adopt more challenging targets. Good progress has been made in dealing with the issues raised in the last inspection. The school has done extremely well in ensuring its specialism has had a very positive effect.

The school monitors and evaluates its work well and largely knows how it can improve. The arrangements for monitoring progress at whole-school level, and increasingly at middle-leadership level, are thorough. The school rightly recognises its significant strengths and makes use of these, although good practice could be shared more effectively. Governors' considerable expertise is used well, and they have played an important role in ensuring the school has carefully prioritised actions for improvement. The school deploys its resources efficiently to achieve good value for money.

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Annex A

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?	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?	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	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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?	1
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.

Annex A

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

27 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Clayton Hall Business and Languages College, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire, ST5 3DN

I am writing to you to thank you for your help during the recent inspection of your school and to inform you of the main findings. I particularly want to thank the pupils we interviewed because the views expressed were important in helping us arrive at our judgements.

As many of you know, your school is good. A really important feature of the school is the extent you can contribute positively to it through the school council and a host of other opportunities. We also think you are exceptionally well prepared for the future because you attain very well and develop really good work-related skills. Good leadership results in pupils achieving well. Teaching is generally good, although there is room for some improvement at Key Stage 3. You are cared for well and have a curriculum that is outstanding. Year 10 spoke very enthusiastically about their option choices and how much they enjoyed lessons as a result.

You told us that there is a minority of lessons that are not as enjoyable because you are not as actively involved. To improve further we have suggested that the school concentrates on becoming an outstanding school by further reducing inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. You can help by continuing to positively contribute and by sharing your views about the school. We know your school listens and responds well to what you have to say.

Once again, thank you for help and I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Sheldrick HMI