

Broughton Hall High School, A Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104713
Local Authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	301671
Inspection dates	18–19 April 2007
Reporting inspector	Ian Thompson

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll	
School	1249
6th form	194
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Hartley
Headteacher	Mr Gerard Murphy
Date of previous school inspection	17 March 2003
School address	Yew Tree Lane West Derby Liverpool Merseyside L12 9HJ
Telephone number	0151 2283622
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This average size Catholic school has had specialist technology college status since 1998. It draws its students from a wide area that includes some pockets of considerable social and economic disadvantage. Most students are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational need. The school has gained a number of awards including the International Schools award, SportsMark, ArtsMark Gold, Eco Schools and Healthy Schools awards. It is the lead school in the West Derby learning network, is a member of the Liverpool East post-16 collaborative partnership, and has many international links.

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 that serves its students and its community well. Students of all levels of capability achieve well as they move through the school because teaching is good. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are above average and in the sixth form broadly average.

All aspects of the school's work are underpinned by mutually respectful relationships that reflect its values. What the school does really well is to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development so that they become confident, responsible young women who have a strong sense of community. This is the result of the school's leadership ensuring good curriculum provision that provides well for students' personal development together with high standards of care and guidance. Students gain considerable benefit from the school's technology college status, which has resulted in improved resources and innovative approaches to teaching and learning.

Although management is good overall, the quality of middle management supervision and monitoring of performance in subjects varies. As a result, there are inconsistencies in the application of school policies which are sometimes not picked up. In particular, the quality of marking of students' work varies in quality both within and between departments. At times it is perfunctory, and commentary does not consistently give students clear pointers for improvement. Opportunities are missed to make links with individual targets, although students are well aware of these. Some departments do considerably better than others, reflecting the rigour of monitoring and the quality of departmental leadership.

The school has made good progress since the last inspection as a result of good leadership, and has a good capacity for further improvement. It provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is good and standards are improving. There are very effective and efficient collaborative arrangements with neighbouring high schools which enable students to take courses from a wide range of academic and vocational subjects. All students are actively involved in an extensive range of enrichment activities. The breadth of the curriculum and its match to individual needs is having a positive impact on standards and expectations. Teaching is good and students' work is closely monitored so that they know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Provision for students' personal development and well-being is outstanding. Students are very well guided and supported and they express appreciation of the school in a mature and articulate manner. The sixth form is well led and all these factors are reflected in the high proportion of students who complete their courses.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the rigour of middle management monitoring to ensure the consistent application of school policies and to improve the performance of departments not doing as well as the best.
- Improve the quality of marking, particularly to make better links between commentary and students' targets.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Achievement is good. Standards are above average in the main school and broadly average in the sixth form.

The majority of students enter the school in Year 7 with standards that are broadly average. During the period since the last inspection there has been a consistent pattern of good progress by students throughout the school. In national tests in 2006, Year 9 students obtained results in English, mathematics and science that were above national averages and above expectations when compared with schools having similar intakes. GCSE results in 2006 were above the national averages, although slightly below the targets set by the school. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similarly good progress to others.

The school has identified where there are areas of underachievement and the leadership team has taken effective action to bring about improvements. The specialist college status has had a positive impact, as is evident in the improvement in standards reached in information and communication technology (ICT), technology and business studies.

Results from 2006 indicated some areas of underachievement at AS level but results at A level were in line with the national averages. Action has been taken to raise standards in the sixth form. Evidence from the school's tracking system, work seen during the inspection and results obtained in external modular examinations confirms that achievement is now good in relation to students' standards when they began their courses.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They have an exceptional understanding of other lifestyles built around the school's international links. Students readily accept each other's differences and know that racism and bullying are unacceptable. 'This is a tolerant school society' is a view expressed by many. The very strong emphasis on social and moral development leads to good behaviour and attitudes to work. Students say this is a good school but their enjoyment of learning is closely allied to the quality of teaching so that occasionally, when teaching is less dynamic, students are passive rather than actively engaged in lessons. In the sixth form, students' behaviour and their approach to their work is exemplary. They take great pride in their work and school life.

The school's support systems are very effective. Students confirm that they are very happy to approach staff with any problems they may have in the secure knowledge that help is always readily at hand. They keenly appreciate how to stay safe and show a high level of concern for the well-being of others. They have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, reflecting the national award achieved by the school. Students in the sixth form take on a very wide range of responsibilities and contribute significantly to the wider community. This prepares them very well for their lives beyond school. The school and year councils are influential in bringing about changes to school life. The school is doing all it reasonably can to improve attendance but this remains broadly average. A significant minority of students have an overly relaxed approach to arriving at school and to lessons on time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good in the main school and in the sixth form. The resources resulting from specialist college status are having a positive influence on developing teaching and learning styles. Monitoring, evaluation and time for discussing ideas support continuing professional development and the sharing of good practice. Lessons are conducted in a purposeful atmosphere because of the mutual respect that characterises relationships. Teachers have good subject expertise and use ICT well to support and enrich learning. Students make the greatest progress in lessons where they are engaged by a variety of strategies and are required to think for themselves. This sustains their interest, levels of concentration and enjoyment. In outstanding lessons, these features are complemented by the teachers' vitality and enthusiasm for their subjects. In less effective lessons there is a lack of urgency and a tendency to be too relaxed about the rate of progress. There is sometimes a lack of challenge because the work is not always matched to the needs of different groups of students.

Assessment of students' work is generally effective in helping them to know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. This is having a positive impact on standards and expectations. However, in the main school the quality of marking and assessment of work varies. This misses opportunities for using data and targets to track students' progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good. It is designed well to meet students' needs and aspirations effectively, including for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The innovative 'opening minds' programme (making links between subjects in ways that help students to make sense of their learning) has engaged the interest of Year 7 students and is enabling them to develop skills for learning as well as literacy and communication skills. A wide and appropriate range of academic and vocational courses is offered at Key Stage 4 which is responsive to local needs. This is also the case for the sixth form curriculum, where provision has been enhanced through membership of a consortium with other local schools.

The school has benefited from its specialist status through the wide and effective use of excellent ICT resources and by encouraging an innovative approach to teaching and learning. All Year 9 students complete a GCSE course in ICT. There is an effective personal, social and health education and citizenship programme. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstandingly effective. Students have many opportunities for reflection and expression of thoughts and feelings; the school makes excellent use of its international links to promote understanding. The school provides many opportunities for students to contribute to the wider community, for example the production of artefacts in technology for a local hospice, and work with the visually impaired. Many students participate in the school's broad variety of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. The school has achieved the ArtsMark Gold award in recognition of its work in this field.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Parents are unanimous in their view that their children are well cared for. The comment 'Our child has grown in confidence whilst at Broughton Hall', reflects the views of many.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from very good support. Those who have extra gifts or talents are also very well supported and have the opportunity to reach the standards of which they are capable. Involvement with a wide range of external agencies, close liaison with parents, and the guidance provided by the learning mentors ensure that students' emotional and social well-being are catered for well. Procedures to safeguard students are robust, as are arrangements for health, safety and welfare.

Older students get very good advice about courses and this encourages the girls to look beyond the traditional subjects. Careers guidance arrangements are very effective, enabling students to make a smooth transition from one stage of education to the next.

Students in the sixth form say that the encouragement and support they receive is a real strength. This, together with clear targets and thorough marking of their work, is contributing to raising standards and achievement.

In the main school students are given targets for improvement that are useful. But these are not linked well enough to the marking of work, so that students are clear about what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school is led and managed well. The headteacher, supported by a very effective senior team, provides strong leadership, communicates a clear vision for the school and sets high expectations for staff and students. The school's evaluation of its performance is good and largely matches inspection findings. Strengths and weaknesses are understood well. Views of parents, students and other stakeholders are sought and acted on.

The day-to-day work of the school and the good achievement of students of all abilities confirm its strong commitment to equality of opportunity. The senior team's analysis of performance data is thorough although still developing.

Middle managers evaluate the performance of departments through direct observation of lessons and sampling of students' work. Quality assurance is variable across departments, however. Inconsistencies in the application of school policies, for example in the quality of marking, go unnoticed and there remain variations in performance between departments.

The leadership of the sixth form is good. Collaborative arrangements at sixth form level are working well and bring considerable benefits for students. A robust system of target-setting has been established, the curriculum provision has been improved and the current cohort of students is making good progress.

Governors know and support the school well, constructively challenging senior and middle managers. The chair of governors is committed and highly involved, and has a major influence on many aspects of school life. Governors work well with the leadership group to reap the benefits of technology college status and to ensure that the school's finances are managed carefully and efficiently. The leadership of the school clearly has a good capacity to bring about further improvements.

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Annex A

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?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	1
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?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	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	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
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?	2	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	1

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	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	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	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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

Inspection of Broughton Hall High School, Liverpool, L12 9HJ

As you know, a team of inspectors visited your school to check on how well it is doing. Thank you very much for the way you welcomed us into your school. We were impressed by the courtesy and help you gave us and very much enjoyed talking to you about your work and your life in the school. You are a credit to your school. The school provides you with a good standard of education. It is improving and has some very strong features.

The best things about your school are that:

- you achieve well throughout the school because you are well taught
- you show admirable care and concern for others
- you get on well with each other
- you are happy in the school and enjoy the work and the opportunities that it provides
- you are good at taking on responsibility
- the school cares for you well so that you get the help and support you need.

We have asked your teachers to improve some things to make your school a better place to learn. These are:

- to make sure that heads of department keep a careful check on the quality of performance so that all departments do as well as the best
- to make sure that marking of your work lets you know how to improve and that it is linked to your targets.

Thank you for helping us with our work. We hope that you carry on enjoying being in the school and make the most of your opportunities. You can help to improve your own progress by making sure that you all attend regularly and arrive at lessons on time. We wish you well for the future.