

The Radclyffe School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105738
Local Authority	Oldham
Inspection number	308940
Inspection dates	24–25 October 2007
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 category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1326
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cllr J Greenwood
Headteacher	Mr H Hayer
Date of previous school inspection	9 May 2005
School address	Broadway Chadderton Oldham Lancashire OL9 9QZ
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The Radclyffe School is a specialist technology college. It is a larger than average 11-16 mixed secondary school, serving a generally disadvantaged area of Oldham. The proportion of students receiving free school meals is nearly twice the national average. The school operates on two sites about one mile apart, and is due to move to a new single-site building in February 2008. There are more boys than girls in the school. Most of the students attending the school come from one of three ethnic groups: one half of the students are White British, one fifth are Pakistani, and one fifth are Bangladeshi. The proportion of students whose first language is not English is very high compared with national averages, and this number has increased in recent years. Similarly, the proportion of students who have special educational needs is above average. The school has been awarded International School status and was a Pathfinder school for the national remodelling of the school workforce initiative. The school also has Sportsmark and Investors in People status, and benefits from an extensive range of sports facilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Radclyffe is a good school. It has a number of outstanding features. Under the inspirational leadership of its headteacher and senior team, the school has worked tirelessly and effectively to build a robust culture of success embodying its motto 'Working Together for Excellence'. Because of these efforts the school's overall performance rose very significantly in 2007. Leadership and management at all levels are excellent and the school has an outstanding capacity for sustaining the recent rapid improvement. The move to a new building in 2008 is eagerly anticipated.

In 2007, the students leaving the school at the end of Year 11 attained results in line with, and in some cases significantly above, the national average. Given that the pattern of attainment on entry to the school was below average, this represented outstanding achievement for this cohort of students and a considerable improvement over performance in recent years.

One key to this success is the excellent provision for the care, guidance and support of students. In particular, highly effective and systematic use is made of data to track students' performance and establish patterns of intervention to address underachievement. As well as supporting the improvement in standards, these systems are extremely reliable in predicting students' examination performance. The information on the current Year 11 students shows that they are on track to achieve at a level similar to, or slightly better than, 2007.

Until recently, the school has rightly focused much of its attention on raising achievement at Key Stage 4. There is now a concerted drive to extend this to embrace Key Stage 3. As a result, standards attained by students at the end of Year 9 are rising and the achievement at this level is at least satisfactory and, in the case of the most able, it is good.

A number of key factors have promoted the improvements in the school. Overarching the developments has been the visionary leadership of the headteacher, coupled with the determination of all staff and governors, to promote a positive climate for learning and to create a school of which all can be proud and in which all can succeed. The school's specialist status has had a significant impact in raising achievement, through, for example, the development of the virtual teaching and learning environment. Improving teaching and establishing a curriculum that meets the needs of all the students have been key milestones in the journey to success. The innovative approach adopted towards remodelling the school workforce has also proved highly effective in supporting the drive to raise standards.

The overall quality of teaching is good and much is outstanding. There is scope to share the best practice more widely and, in particular, to encourage students to develop their skills in speaking and listening, and provide them with more opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. Students' personal development is good, although the school is aware of the need to improve the attitudes to learning and the attendance of a small minority.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise further the attainment of students at Key Stage 3.
- Share the best practice in teaching, particularly in the promotion of students' speaking and listening skills and their ability to take greater responsibility for their own learning.
- Improve the patterns of inappropriate attitudes to learning and low attendance which are proving a barrier to success for a small minority of students.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students arrive in the school in Year 7 with prior attainment that is below average and has been declining slightly year on year over the past five years. The percentage of students attaining five A* to C grades in 2007 was significantly above the national average and when results in English and mathematics are included, the results were just above the national average. This represents impressive achievement for this cohort of students and an outstanding improvement on results in previous years. The school has a highly reliable system for tracking and predicting students' performance and the analysis for the current Year 11 shows them to be on track to attain a similar pattern of results in 2008. The significant improvement in English results in 2006 was sustained in 2007. The school's specialist status has had a positive impact with particularly good results in the key areas of design and technology, information and communication technology (ICT) and mathematics. GCSE results in science, which have been disappointing in recent years, improved significantly in 2007 as result of successful developments in the provision for the subject.

The standards attained by students at Key Stage 3 are below the national average but overall they have been rising steadily over the past three years. Results in 2007 show a continued slight rise overall with a particularly positive improvement in science. After a period in which students' achievement at Key Stage 3 gave cause for concern, the achievement of the students in 2007 was satisfactory overall and that of the more able was good.

The school analyses its exam and test results very carefully and can demonstrate where there are variations in the achievement of different groups. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well as a result of the good support they receive. The pattern of underachievement by a small minority of students, whose performance is affected by poor attendance or inappropriate attitudes to learning, is recognised and is being addressed.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. They feel safe. One student described the school as being 'like my second family'. They understand and practise healthy lifestyles and speak with enthusiasm about the school's sports provision and the way in which it helps them to enjoy exercise as part of a healthy lifestyle. Many are developing their self-confidence and ability to manage their responsibilities as a result of the good level of care they receive from the committed and dedicated staff. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and is well supported; for example, in the use made of restorative justice and through the opportunities for discussion of philosophical, social and moral issues in subjects like religious education. Relationships between the different cultural groups represented in the school are good. Students value the diversity in the school and enjoy finding out about different ways of life. Students are developing successfully the skills they require for their future economic well-being as a result of, for example, the high profile given to developing basic literacy and ICT skills, and through projects such as the school shop. The sense the students have of the contribution they can make to their community benefits from participation in events and competitions such as the Flagship Age Concern Project. Many students develop teamwork skills through, for example, participation in the highly regarded school council.

Students have positive attitudes to their learning and most enjoy their lessons, particularly when these include opportunities to collaborate and engage in independent work. Students are clear the school helps them achieve their best. Occasionally, the attitudes to learning of a minority of students are less satisfactory and this impacts on the enjoyment they derive from their work.

Students' behaviour is at least satisfactory and often good. There is little bullying and incidents are handled quickly and decisively. Those who experience difficulties with their behaviour are well supported inside the school and, as a result, exclusion rates have fallen significantly since the last inspection and are now low. Attendance has improved steadily from 89% in 2005/06 to just under 91% in 2006/07. The school has adopted the challenging target of 92% overall attendance for the current year. Levels of punctuality have improved since the last inspection but there are still problems with some students arriving at school late in the morning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school grades the quality of the teaching and learning as good and the inspectors agree. A significant amount of teaching is outstanding and no inadequate teaching was seen. The school has invested considerable energy and resources in extending the range of teaching and learning strategies used, and this is having a positive impact on the quality of many lessons. For example, teachers are using ICT with increasing confidence and this is having a very positive impact on learning. In addition, the appointment of a team of staff linked to the development of a virtual learning and teaching environment has helped students engage more effectively with their work. In almost all lessons there is a harmonious atmosphere and a positive climate of learning, despite the poor quality of some of the current accommodation. Lessons are conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect between teachers and students. Teachers have good subject expertise and their planning is usually very thorough. They share learning objectives with students and in the best lessons involve them in assessing the progress made in meeting the targets. Students make the most progress when they are engaged by a range of activities and, where there is not too much teacher direction, they are required to think for themselves. In outstanding lessons these features are enhanced by the teachers' vibrancy and infectious enthusiasm for the subject. More attention could be given to activities which develop speaking and listening skills and to encouraging students to take more responsibility for their own learning. Although there are inconsistencies in the quality of marking, students usually know how well they are doing and how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum that is broad, balanced and well-matched to the range of the students' needs and interests. It is routinely reviewed and adapted to take account of changing demands and initiatives. Recent changes in, for example, the GCSE science provision have had a very positive impact on student achievement in the subject. At Key Stage 4, there is an extensive choice of both academic and vocational pathways enabling students to follow programmes that are tailored to meet their individual needs. The school's specialist status has been used very positively to enrich the range of opportunities available to students in, for example, the areas of design and technology and ICT. The provision is enhanced by collaboration

with other schools and colleges in the area. These links also help to secure good transition as students move to the next stage in their education. The good quality of the curriculum is reflected in the improved examination results and the high proportion of students who opt to continue with their education when they leave school. The school provides students with an extensive variety of extra-curricular activities. These are well supported and make a valuable contribution to their levels of enjoyment and learning. Students are particularly appreciative of the impressive provision for sports and physical education both within the curriculum and in the range of extra-curricular activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The quality of care, guidance and support provided for the students is outstanding. They describe many instances of the positive and sensitive attention given to their needs and the respect shown for the diversity of their cultural backgrounds. Robust arrangements for safeguarding students and their welfare are in place and child protection practice is exemplary. Students at risk are very well supported by the school. The school's outstanding academic monitoring and support systems are highly effective in tracking students' progress and establishing programmes of support for those who are found to be underachieving. This is a key factor in ensuring that most students at Key Stage 4 are meeting and exceeding very challenging academic targets. Students at Key Stage 3 now also benefit from these arrangements. Effective arrangements are in place to meet the needs of students who experience difficulties with basic skills. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress as a result of the support they receive. Students in Year 9 and their parents/carers are guided well through the process of selecting from the extensive range of courses and pathways available at Key Stage 4. Effective use is made of additional resources such as the behaviour and education support team and outside agencies to help promote positive attitudes to school, to raise attendance and to reduce exclusions. Leaders and other adults are highly visible around the school and act as good role models, promoting high expectations and positive behaviour.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The leadership and management of the school and its capacity for further improvement are outstanding. Staff at all levels share the headteacher's vision that, 'No one person has all the answers but all the answers are in the room.' The headteacher has shown excellent leadership in creating teams of teachers and support staff who work together effectively and share what they do well. The school's single continuous improvement plan and setting of very high targets have ensured that the approach to improvement has been systematic, relentless and embedded in the life of the school. As a result, the steady improvement in examination results, already sustained over several years, has now begun to increase more rapidly. All members of staff show a good understanding of what the school does well and how it could be better.

The belief that all students must be encouraged to realise their potential permeates the school community and the recent positive examination results of 2007 have strengthened the confidence that all have in their own ability to succeed. The provision of time for staff to monitor, evaluate and discuss their performance is proving increasingly effective as a mechanism for sharing good practice. The quality of teaching and learning is monitored thoroughly whilst

professional development and support for colleagues is always on hand and often available from within the school's own resources.

The school's specialist college status has had a positive impact on achievement and has been a trigger for much of the innovative thinking in relation to, for example, developments in the use of ICT across the school. The management of the process of re-modelling the school workforce has been particularly effective in securing the very efficient deployment of staff. The contribution made by the governors to the life of the school is outstanding. They really care about what happens to the students and the staff and have a very good understanding of the school's mission. They routinely gather information from a variety of sources so that they can provide support and challenge when acting as a critical friend. Teachers trust their leaders and take up the challenges that they have had to embrace in recent years and, as the improvement is now embedded in practice, they are well placed to build on their success. The school provides 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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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?	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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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	1
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

Inspection of The Radclyffe School, Oldham, OL9 9QZ

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 think that The Radclyffe is providing you with a good education and that there are many things about your school which are outstanding and about which you should be proud. The most recent exam and test results show that the school is improving quickly and is providing you with a real chance for success. Last year's GCSE results were impressive and all the posters around about students who did well should be a real encouragement to you. The teachers are working very hard to make your lessons interesting and the various courses and pathways you can follow in Key Stage 4 give you a lot of opportunities to do well.

We think the school provides you with outstanding care, support and guidance. The school community is very harmonious and all the different groups get on very well together. If you do experience any problems with your work, your behaviour, or your attendance, the staff work very hard to help you. Your school is led exceptionally well. We think your headteacher provides inspiring leadership and all the staff are totally committed to your success.

The opening of the new school building next February is a very exciting opportunity. It is a real chance to make this good school even better. We have asked the teachers to try to make every lesson as good as the best by sharing their good practice. We think they should try to create more opportunities for you to develop your confidence in speaking and listening. You also need the chance to take a bit more responsibility for your learning. We think a few of you could do more to help yourselves and to improve the school even more by getting in on time in the morning, attending more regularly and improving your attitudes towards your learning.

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