

# Ashton Community Science College

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119707
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	313400
<b>Inspection dates</b>	1–2 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ann Wallis

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	795
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Mark Gutteridge
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Chris Lickiss
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 November 2003
<b>School address</b>	Aldwych Drive Ashton Preston Lancashire PR2 1SL
<b>Telephone number</b>	01772 513002
<b>Fax number</b>	01772 513006

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Ashton Community Science College is a smaller than average sized school which gained specialist status in 2004. It draws the majority of its students from the west of the city of Preston. The proportion of students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. The school has a 20 place Special Educational Resource Facility to support deaf students. A below average proportion of students are from minority ethnic groups and a small number have English as an additional language. The number of students eligible for free school meals is average. The school has Sportsmark and the Lancashire Healthy Schools awards.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Ashton Community Science College is a satisfactory and rapidly improving school. It has many good features; particularly in the way it is led and managed and its curriculum. Students' personal development and the care, guidance and support they are given are all good. Most parents are supportive of the school and speak well of the good care and support their children receive.

Students have benefited greatly from the school's specialist science status. The science curriculum has been enriched and results have improved in science subjects. Students' awareness of scientific and environmental issues has been raised very successfully through such distinctive features as the school's large wind turbine which generates sustainable electricity. Excellent links with partner schools, businesses and the community have been forged and enhanced as a result of specialist status.

Standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. Students enter the school with broadly average standards and make satisfactory progress as they move through the school to reach average standards when they leave. Although results in tests and examinations have fluctuated in recent years, GCSE results rose markedly in 2007. This is because the impact of an ambitious programme of school improvement is now being felt and is beginning to raise standards. The school recognises that standards in English and mathematics are not consistently high enough and further improvement is needed in teaching and learning if students are to achieve well. However, recent improvements in the procedures for planning and structuring lessons, tracking students' progress, monitoring teaching and sharing good practice are all contributing to improvements in students' learning. These procedures have yet to be evaluated and become embedded in the work of the school for their full impact to be realised.

Students' personal development and the care, guidance and support they receive are strengths of the school. The school has a calm and friendly atmosphere and relationships between staff and students are good. Most students behave well, attend school regularly and enjoy learning. Students feel safe and are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles. They enjoy taking responsibility and contributing to the community. This is an inclusive school where all students, including the most vulnerable and particularly those in the Special Educational Resource Facility for deaf students, are well supported. Students have satisfactory opportunities to develop workplace skills but, for some students, weaknesses in literacy and numeracy remain.

Good leadership and management have ensured that the school has a sharp focus on learning and the impact of this is seen in rising standards at Key Stage 4. It has successfully addressed issues from the last inspection and is very well placed to improve further.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement in English and mathematics.
- Increase the proportion of teaching that is good or better.
- Maintain the pace of improvement by embedding and evaluating recent changes to the curriculum and to systems and procedures for raising achievement.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Overall, standards are average and achievement is satisfactory. Test and examination results indicate that students' achievement, from their starting points when they enter the school to the time they leave Year 11, was satisfactory in both 2006 and 2007. However, test and examination results have fluctuated significantly in recent years. In 2006, test results at Key Stage 3 were average and students achieved well. In 2007, students' results at the end of Year 9 dropped in all core subjects and achievement was satisfactory. For this year group, targets were met in science but not in mathematics and English.

GCSE results at Key Stage 4 were below average in 2006 but have shown a marked improvement in 2007. The proportion of students gaining five higher grade GCSE passes has risen significantly this year and school targets were met. The achievement of all groups of students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language, is satisfactory. Students achieved best in design and technology, physical education and vocational subjects, and least well in geography.

Inspection evidence confirms that students continue to make satisfactory progress in lessons and school data show that they are on track to meet their targets this year.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of students are good. Attendance is improving steadily and is close to average. Good progress has been made in improving students' punctuality to school through changes to the timing of the day and increased tutor vigilance. Behaviour in and around school is good. Students are generally considerate and respond well to the school's expectations. They say they appreciate the fairness of the staged consequences to their actions in the classroom, but feel that not all teachers apply the system consistently. Instances of serious misconduct are infrequent and consequently the use of exclusion as a sanction is reducing. Students generally get on well with each other and with staff; the school is a friendly, well-ordered community.

Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good, and is well supported by carefully planned assemblies, pastoral and citizenship programmes. Students are encouraged to adopt healthy and safe lifestyles. Students feel their views are heard and valued. They are proud of the way the school has acted on their views, for example, in changes to the school uniform, and improvements to the school's rewards system. Students make a significant contribution to both the life of the school and to the local community. Their social skills are promoted effectively, for example, through the flourishing Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. As a result, students are increasingly well prepared for responsibilities in school and when they leave. For some, however, weaknesses in basic literacy and numeracy skills remain a factor that restricts the choices available to them in further education and training.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. A clear procedure for planning lessons has been introduced and implemented across the school as part of its drive to raise standards. This has been supported by the introduction of an appropriate system for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. However, the system is not yet robust enough or sufficiently well-tuned to provide a precisely accurate view of the overall quality of teaching and learning across the school. Inspection evidence indicates that the proportion of teaching which is good or better is not yet high enough to lead to good achievement. Throughout the school, classroom relationships are good and the majority of students are keen to learn. They are confident that their teachers' marking helps them to improve their work. In the best lessons, teachers use the agreed procedures to plan interesting activities and to structure lessons well. They have high expectations of students, carefully check their progress towards shared objectives and ensure that students are involved in assessing their own learning. In the very small proportion of unsatisfactory lessons seen and in some of those which were otherwise satisfactory, the pace of learning is slower. In these lessons activities are not sufficiently well matched to the needs of all students, and teaching does not fully engage their interest. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including some who are deaf, make generally similar progress to other students because of the effective support provided by their teaching assistants or specialist teachers.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum is good with outstanding features. Following recent review it is now tailored more closely to meet students' needs and is increasingly rich and relevant. Provision at Key Stage 3 is enhanced by the opportunity for early entry to GCSE in a wide range of subjects for students in Year 8. A growing range of successful vocational courses is offered at Key Stage 4, for example in catering, where students were seen to be really enjoying learning and making outstanding progress. The improvement in attendance and behaviour for certain groups of pupils indicates the effectiveness of this provision.

The curriculum has been further enriched by the additional science courses, and by greater investment in information and communications technology (ICT) which the school's specialist status has allowed. These developments reflect the school's ambition to ensure greater choice and flexibility for all students including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Provision for developing literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory, but is not yet consistent across the school. Students enjoy a good range of extra curricular activities in sport, music and the arts. Careers, enterprise and work experience are well planned and ensure students are well informed about their options when they leave school. The PSHCE education programme contributes well to students' personal development.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support of students are good. There is a high level of concern for, and commitment to, students' welfare. The recently revised pastoral arrangements offer good

guidance to students so they feel secure in this well-ordered community. Students are well-known to staff; they say that they are confident that they have adults they trust and can turn to for help with any problems. Procedures for child protection are fully implemented and understood by staff. Systems for risk assessment and required checks for safeguarding young people are in place. Sensitive and wide ranging support is provided for vulnerable students and for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teachers, support workers and others link effectively with outside agencies to give these students constructive, individual help. Close links with primary schools enable a smooth transfer of students into their new school. A programme of support, offered to a number of Year 10 and Year 11 students at risk of losing interest in their education, is having a positive impact on their attitudes. Increasingly good use is made of the school's data systems in tracking both students' academic and personal development and progress. Students understand their targets and how well they are doing. Any who fall behind are identified quickly and given effective support. Those who do well are rewarded and their achievement is reinforced as part of the school's drive to raise standards.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The dynamic headteacher has a very clear vision for the school which is shared by a talented senior team and supported by all staff. His ambitious programme of school improvement has already had a positive impact. For example, the curriculum is better matched to students' needs, punctuality has improved, exclusions have reduced and students' progress is tracked more closely. Strong action has been taken to improve standards and achievement and, although the full impact of this has yet to be felt, this has resulted in a significant improvement in examination results at Key Stage 4 in 2007. Monitoring procedures have been strengthened and the school has an increasingly accurate picture of the quality of teaching and of those departments, such as mathematics and English, where standards need to rise further. Good quality professional development is resulting in improvements in teaching and learning but good practice needs to be shared more widely in order to increase the proportion of good teaching further.

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**Annex A**

## Inspection judgements

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</b>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
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	2

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	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

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

3 November 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Ashton Community Science College, Lancashire, PR2 1SL

We recently visited your school to find out how well you are doing and how your school is supporting you. Thank you for making us so welcome. We are especially grateful to those of you who talked with us and shared your views so honestly. We really enjoyed our discussions with you.

What we have said about your school in the inspection report:

- yours is a satisfactory school which is improving rapidly and has many good features
- your school gives you good care, guidance and support and provides good personal development
- the standards you reach are average and your achievement is satisfactory but both are improving
- your school is well led and managed and the curriculum you study is good
- teaching is satisfactory overall but is often good.

What we have asked your school to do now:

- raise standards and achievement in English and mathematics
- increase the proportion of teaching that is good or better
- keep improving your school so that you can attain higher standards and make even faster progress.

You can support your school by attending regularly and working with your teachers to achieve the very best you can.

Yours sincerely

Ann Wallis

Lead inspector