

Colne Park High School; A Specialist Mathematics and Computing College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119719
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313405
Inspection dates	16–17 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Ruth James 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	908
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ian Gillespie
Headteacher	Dr Paul Parkin
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2004
School address	Venables Avenue Colne Lancashire BB8 7DP
Telephone number	01282 865200
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Age group	11-16
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Colne Park High School achieved specialist status in mathematics and computing in September 2005. The majority of students are of White British heritage and very few have a first language other than English. About an average number of students has learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but the proportion with a statement of special educational need is high. The proportion of students receiving free school meals is about average. The school has achieved Sports Mark Gold, National Healthy Schools, Microsoft Academy and Investors in People awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Colne Park High is a satisfactory school with several good features. Students are well cared for, and vulnerable students are very well supported. The school provides a well ordered, friendly environment. Students report that there is very little bullying, and incidents that occur are tackled and resolved quickly. The majority of parents are very positive about the school, although a few raised concerns, for example about bullying and variation in quality of teaching. Students' personal development is good. Inspectors found that students are generally well behaved in lessons and around school. Attendance is in line with the national average and has improved significantly in recent years.

Standards are about average and students make satisfactory progress to achieve the standards they are capable of. The proportion of students who achieved five higher GCSE grades was below the national average in 2007, as was the proportion achieving five or more higher grades including English and mathematics. Key Stage 3 results improved in mathematics and science in 2007, but were not as good in English.

Teaching is satisfactory overall. There are some good and occasional outstanding lessons, but there are variations both within and between subjects. Good lessons are characterised by clear, authoritative teachers providing plenty of stimulating and challenging work which engages interest and promotes learning at a rapid pace. Satisfactory teaching often fails to engage the interest of students, and teachers talk for too long resulting in minor inattention and a slower pace of learning.

The curriculum is good and enhanced by good links with a local college and also other schools. The Key Stage 4 curriculum is designed to allow considerable flexibility and choice, including a good range of vocational options. Specialist status is being used to extend the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in lessons across the curriculum. The good range of extra-curricular activities and trips enhances the curriculum.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher is leading the school well, and with the active support of the recently constituted senior leadership team is providing a clear sense of direction and purpose. A number of new middle managers are bringing energy and enthusiasm to their roles. The school's self-evaluation provided a thorough and accurate analysis of data, but was overgenerous in its judgements of the quality of teaching and learning and leadership and management. Management successes include the improved attendance since the last inspection and a recent reduction in staff absence. These demonstrate that the school has satisfactory capacity to improve. The comprehensive tracking system is being used to more accurately monitor students' progress and plan support and intervention, although this is not yet consistent across all departments. Strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning are being put in place but are not yet impacting enough on students' progress. At middle management levels, the evaluation of performance and improvement planning are not sufficiently rigorous. Governance is good. Governors are very supportive of the school and aware of its strengths and weaknesses.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that more matches the good practice that already exists.
- Improve the progress of students to raise standards throughout the school.

- Develop the skills of middle managers in evaluating the quality of provision and implementing strategies to drive improvements.

A small proportion of the 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

Standards are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory. Attainment on entry to the school is typically slightly below average, although it does vary between year groups. Data which compares students' attainment on entry with their attainment when they leave school, taking account of contextual factors, show that students make satisfactory progress. In 2007 this was consistent across most groups.

In national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 the proportion of students gaining at least the expected level improved in 2007, to around the national average for mathematics and science. The proportions attaining a higher level also rose. However, the comparable figures for English both fell.

The proportion of students gaining five or more good GCSE grades is typically just over 50%, which is below the national average. In 2007 the proportion gaining five or more higher GCSE grades including English and mathematics was 39%, compared with the national average of 46%. Some students took alternative mathematics qualifications and did well in these. All groups of Year 11 students made satisfactory progress in 2007, which is an improvement on 2006 when girls made less progress than boys. This reflects the work of the school in targeting underachieving students.

The school has achieved some, but not all, of its targets. Some were narrowly missed, but in 2007 results for GCSE applied ICT were poor. Students made less progress in their GCSE in applied Engineering, systems and controls, resistant materials, religious studies and physical education. Students did well in applied health and social care, art, food technology, English literature, and French. Students with additional learning needs also make satisfactory progress and achieve results in line with expectations.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of students are good. Behaviour is good around school and in lessons. Students are polite and friendly and an orderly atmosphere prevails. Students say that they enjoy school and this point is confirmed by parents. It is also highlighted in the very high take up of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. These are promoted by the school and seen as very important contributions to students' personal development. The promotion of healthy eating options, the impact of two hours physical activity for all students and good participation in a wide range of sporting activities are encouraging students to adopt healthy lifestyles. An active, and increasingly effective student voice, and the opportunity for older students to be peer mentors, enable students to support their own school community and take on responsibility. The school raises money for local and national charities. Attendance is in line with the national average, reflecting a year on year improvement. The school has developed strategies such as the 'Turning Point' facility to support students with a variety of

needs, including inappropriate behaviour and disengagement, and these are having a positive impact. Consequently, there are now far fewer exclusions than in previous years. Some students are leisurely in their approach to learning and lack independent initiative and drive. Students do have concerns about bullying but appreciate that staff usually respond promptly and effectively to tackle such problems. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Relationships throughout the school are good. Students know right from wrong and opportunities to develop their spiritual and cultural awareness are improving. Vocational courses, enterprise education and a well organised work experience programme provide opportunities for students to understand the personal qualities required for their working lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There are examples of good, and occasionally outstanding, teaching, but the overall quality of teaching does not ensure consistently good progress. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Many question students well and give them clear explanations. ICT is being used increasingly effectively in many lessons. In the best lessons there is a productive atmosphere, with good relationships. Students are actively engaged in a range of activities and involved in assessing their work. Students enjoy these lessons and make good progress. Other lessons lack variety and students are more passively engaged with few opportunities for independent learning. The vast majority of students have positive attitudes to learning, but in lessons where teaching is insufficiently motivating, or lacks pace, low level disruption by a few students adversely affects learning. Some lessons are well structured but planning is inconsistent across the school. Work is not always matched effectively to the full range of needs, and higher attaining students are not fully challenged. Students' work is marked regularly but the quality of feedback is variable. Assessment of progress is linked to target grades and most students are aware of their targets. However, they do not always know what they have to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and is well matched to students' needs. It is reviewed regularly. Students are well prepared for their future and personal development is encouraged. Students are enthusiastic about the wide range of extra-curricular activities offered and participation is good. Outdoor pursuits, Key Stage 3 activity weeks, and trips abroad are available. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 is very flexible allowing students to take different combinations of courses including a range of vocational options. There are strong links with the local college where students can study courses such as engineering, catering, and hairdressing. In school health and social care and sport studies are delivered. Other options at Key Stage 4 include alternative awards. Provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good but for gifted and talented students it is not well developed. The school has used its specialist status to develop the use of ICT across the curriculum and use of the virtual learning environment is developing.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school places a strong emphasis on ensuring that students' wide ranging personal needs are met. The care and support for vulnerable students and those with learning and/or physical disabilities are good. Students appreciate and value the support and care that they receive. They say they feel safe in school knowing that there is someone to turn to should they need help. Students' care, support and guidance are enhanced by strong and effective partnerships with outside agencies. Guidance on careers options helps students make well informed choices about their futures. Strong links with primary schools and other partner institutions smooth the transition at each stage of their education. Child protection and safeguarding arrangements are in line with recent government guidelines. Systems for tracking students' personal development and welfare are good. The systems for tracking academic progress are new and beginning to have a positive impact. Many students know their target levels or grades and are beginning to understand how they can take responsibility for their own learning. However, this varies between subjects.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new headteacher is leading the school well. With the active support of the recently constituted senior leadership team he has accurately identified the strengths and weaknesses of the school. A valid agenda for improvement has been put in place and staff are responding positively to increased levels of accountability. The leadership team acknowledge that performance should be better. They are taking appropriate action to tackle this, for example, through closer monitoring of the work of subjects, improved curriculum, and better tracking of students' progress. As yet, the success of these and other planned initiatives are not reflected in improved test and examination results. The school improvement plan is an extensive document, with clear responsibilities and success criteria across a wide range of priority areas. There is an appropriate focus on raising standards and ensuring students reach their full potential. However, too little emphasis is given to improving the quality of teaching. The quality of subject management is variable and satisfactory overall. Monitoring at this level is not yet consistent enough to ensure high quality teaching and learning. Effective training, support and professional development opportunities have been introduced to strengthen self-evaluation and subject review.

Governors know their school well. They are aware of what needs to be done to improve further, and have a clear appreciation of their role in checking on the school's progress. They are committed and supportive and carry out their responsibilities effectively.

School leadership has successfully stabilised staffing and notably reduced the incidence of staff absence. Effective team building strategies are resulting in good relationships at all levels and students who enjoy school. The school's specialist status has enabled extensive ICT resource development, including a flourishing on-line virtual learning environment, and these are used and managed well. Day-to-day management is effective and the school runs smoothly. The school achieves satisfactory 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?	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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ 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

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
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	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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
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?	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?	3
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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
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	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

18 January 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Colne Park High School; A Specialist Mathematics and Computing College,
Lancashire, BB8 7DP

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school. We were able to visit lessons and talk to a number of you and to some of the staff. We also looked at the results of questionnaires sent in by your parents. The majority of your parents are very positive about the school, although a few do have concerns.

We found that yours is a satisfactory school. Since the school was last inspected it has gained mathematics and computing specialist status. There is more ICT equipment which is helping to enhance lessons and the virtual learning environment is also being used to help you learn.

Most of you enjoy being at school. Attendance at your school has improved and is now about average. You can help it get even better by all attending regularly. We found that generally you behave well in lessons and around school. The school cares for you well and you told us that there is very little bullying. You are helped to settle in when you arrive in Year 7, and you receive good advice and guidance on Year 9 options, and choices when you leave school. Many of you take advantage of the good extra-curricular activities on offer.

The school provides a good range of courses and subjects for all of you, including vocational options in Key Stage 4. Some of you also have the opportunity to take courses at the local college. GCSE results for your school are broadly average, reflecting the satisfactory progress that you make in school.

Some of your lessons are good and a few are outstanding, but we found that teaching is satisfactory overall. You told us that you enjoy lessons where you are actively involved in interesting activities, and in some lessons teachers do give you opportunities for this. We have asked your headteacher to continue to work with the teachers to make even more of your lessons as good as the best. This should help you to make good progress and get even better results. You can help by working hard and doing your very best. We have also asked that heads of department look at ways of improving provision in their areas of responsibility.

We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Ruth James HMI