

West Craven High Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119725
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313408
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Peter Cox

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	710
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Malcolm Sterratt
Headteacher	Mr Arnold Kuchartschuk
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2004
School address	Kelbrook Road Barnoldswick Lancashire BB18 5TB
Telephone number	01282 812292
Fax number	01282 850427

Age group	11-16
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2008
Inspection number	313408

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector on secondment to Ofsted, and three other Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

West Craven High takes students from Barnoldswick, Earby and surrounding villages. It is smaller than most secondary schools and the number on roll has been falling for several years. The number of students who receive a free school meal is well below the national average. There are few students from minority ethnic groups and few who are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than the national figure but those with a statement of special educational need is above average. The school achieved Technology College status in 2000 and the second phase was confirmed in 2005.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

West Craven High Technology College provides a satisfactory standard of education for its students. The recently strengthened senior leadership team under the direction of a caring and committed headteacher, is well positioned to ensure that the improvements already seen continue more rapidly. By accelerating improvement, the gap between the schools' achievement and standards and that expected nationally is reducing. The school is now ensuring that students of all abilities reach the expected standards in relation to their start points. This is helped by developing the student target setting and tracking system which is in its early stages and is not currently effective in aiding improvement across the school.

Results in the national tests in 2007 for English, mathematics and science, at the end of Key Stage 3, were lower than the school expected and lower when compared with the national averages, although mathematics results were closer to the national average. The standards reached by students in their GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 were more encouraging. Nearly all students left with 5 or more GCSE examination grades and a high proportion, almost meeting the national average, left securing 5 GCSE examinations at grade C including English and mathematics. This was because the school put every effort into securing the best results possible for those students in their final year. The school realises it is equally important to concentrate on all students at both key stages. The school demonstrated that the underachievement evident in previous years has been reversed. The previous instability in staffing in English has now gone and the appointment of committed specialists has helped support this improving picture.

The quality of teaching varies and is satisfactory overall although almost a third of the lessons seen were good. The schools own evaluation of teaching and learning is accurate. Support from the local authority is helping to embed improved teaching and learning strategies. These include methods to ensure that the full range of students' abilities are met. This support is directed at the subject areas of most need. The curriculum is well matched to the needs of the students and contains some innovative strengths, for example, the off-site provision for girls and boys to study a GCSE in engineering. The school was not put off in providing this well regarded initiative and found alternative provision when one of its providers produced less than satisfactory outcomes for their students. Parents are in the main very supportive of the school and comment on the friendliness and helpfulness of staff. However, some have expressed a desire to be more fully informed of what is going on in the school. There is a satisfactory capacity to improve

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate the rising trend of improvement at Key Stage 4.
- Raise achievement and standards at Key Stage 3 particularly in English and science.
- Increase the proportion of good teaching and learning to meet the needs of all students.
- Improve the systems of monitoring student performance to ensure a consistent approach to aid improvement.

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 average and achievement is satisfactory. Students come to the school with broadly average standards overall but with a slightly lower than average proportion of higher attaining students. The standards reached at the end of Year 11 in 2007 were broadly average. The percentage of students gaining 5 good GCSE examinations was over half. This was in excess of the schools own target of 50% but less than the national average of 60%. There has been a modest yet sustained improvement since 2006 as a result of the school focusing its attention on the examination classes in Year 11. The proportion of students achieving 5 or more A* to C grades, including English and mathematics was very close to the national average. The proportion of those securing 5 or more grades in their GCSE examinations was in excess of the national average.

Students in Year 9 taking their national tests in 2007 fared less well due to some instability in staffing, which has now been addressed. This was also because of the school's disproportionate attention on the older students preparing for their examinations. The number of students gaining the expected levels in English, mathematics and science fell short of national expectations; although the number in mathematics was closer to the average and included some gaining the higher levels. Student assessment has identified the early entry of some students in subjects including English, product design and art. Given the students' attainment on entry the school is beginning to set more appropriate whole school targets that more closely match the national averages.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students' personal development and well-being is satisfactory. Most students feel safe in school and say that bullying is dealt with effectively. They are taken seriously when reporting any concerns which are followed up rigorously. Behaviour in and around the school is satisfactory although there is sometimes a lack of consideration for others on crowded corridors and staircases. The majority of students behave well in class and are polite and helpful to visitors. When teaching is good they have positive attitudes to learning and often respond well to opportunities to express their views. Whilst the school's exclusion rates remain above average the headteacher does everything possible to include those who are at risk and only as a last resort excludes permanently. Appropriate sanctions are in place for those whose behaviour falls below the schools expectation. Attendance levels are in line with the national average. Most students enjoy coming to school although they are not particularly enthusiastic about the lessons that lack dynamism and energy from the teacher. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory but there is little opportunity for students to gain first hand experience and understanding of cultural diversity in Britain. Healthy eating and lifestyles are actively encouraged, many students enjoy taking part in extra-curricular sport. The school is working towards the Healthy Schools Initiative and has made available to the students a variety of healthy food options, although not all students take these up. Year 11 students make a good contribution to their school community through the prefect system and take responsibility for the well-being of students new to the school. Students in all years make a positive contribution through raising money for charity and being members of the school council. Many students have been involved in the consultation process regarding the change to the school uniform. Students are adequately prepared for the next stage of their education through

satisfactory careers guidance, work experience and strong links with local industry and post-16 providers.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The school has a clear idea of what constitutes good teaching and is beginning to invest time and resources to bring about improvement so that the proportion of good or better lessons is increased. Vibrant and challenging teaching was seen in about one third of lessons where students made better progress and enjoyed the experience. In these lessons learning objectives were shared with students, and the variety of tasks used was closely matched to their abilities. Activities at the start and end of the lesson linked with previous learning and prepared students well for future lessons. Students were involved in assessing their own performance and that of others which promoted a wider understanding and an appreciation of areas to improve upon. These elements were seen in the more successful lessons. In the less successful lessons there is too much teacher talk and few opportunities for independent learning to take place. As a result, students make slower progress, become easily disengaged and show poor attitudes to learning. This sometimes leads to poor behaviour which some teachers do not handle well, and which disrupts the learning of the majority. Lesson planning does not follow a common format across the school and there is inconsistency in providing work that matches the range of abilities.

Teacher assessments are in the main accurate but students report that they do not always have the opportunity to analyse their performance rigorously enough to identify ways in which they might improve. Marking is sometimes inconsistent and gives little helpful guidance on how students can reach their expected targets. Homework is generally used well to reinforce and extend the learning experienced in class.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory with some strengths. It is planned to accommodate students prior learning and in meeting their aspirations by the end of Key Stage 4. Improvements to the curriculum have been made since the last inspection, notably in the wider provision of religious education and in the distribution of time between subjects. The school rightly focuses on the teaching of basic skills but the curriculum provision for literacy has not kept pace with that of numeracy. However, the school has demonstrated that the improvement in literacy is beginning to have a positive effect. A greater number of students have entered early into English language examinations. The curriculum is utilised well to support students who may wish to take vocational courses in Key Stage 4 including an off-site provision for GCSE engineering. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities that helps students to expand their sporting and lifestyle interests. These strong features are further supported by lessons in personal, social, health, and citizenship development. One Year 10 student has been elected to the National Youth Parliament. Curriculum provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities does not always meet students' needs in the classroom, although those who are withdrawn for additional help receive better individual support. Students are prepared satisfactorily for their future economic well being because of the relative strength and success of mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT).

The school's technology specialism has provided wider opportunities for curriculum development, particularly in relation to the use of ICT to support other subjects. This has led to some improvements in achievement and standards. The specialism has also supported visits to the school by people like Curtis Jobling the creator of Bob the Builder whose input on commercial animation techniques helped students better understand working practices in industry.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory with a number of strengths. Health and safety procedures and statutory checks conform to requirements and risk assessments are carried out well including those for educational visits off site. Appropriate child protection procedures are in place. Support for students with learning difficulties and other vulnerable students is good. As a result, these students feel happy and secure and participate fully in the life of the school. Many of these students receive extra help in the special needs department, where support is well-matched to their individual needs in a very caring, safe environment. Monitoring of academic progress for students is carried out although the regularity and rigour of the system is not consistent across all subjects. While most students know their targets they do not receive sufficiently detailed feedback from all their teachers on how to improve their work. Strategies are in place to address underachievement, including homework support sessions that take place on two evenings a week and Saturday activities to engage the more reluctant learners. The school cares for all its students and goes to great lengths to support and include troubled and disruptive youngsters. As a result, students feel valued and know that there are trusted adults they can turn to for help.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management at all levels are satisfactory. The headteacher displays a caring approach to the students and staff. The care shown by him permeates throughout the school and strengthens this provision. The recently changed senior leadership team is now well poised to drive improvement further by applying more robustly and consistently important procedures such as the monitoring and assessment of student progress.

The staffing problems experienced in recent years have been resolved. The school's development plan contains appropriate actions with measurable outcomes and the financial implications of carrying out the plan. Departmental plans are carefully linked and show how they can contribute to the school's overall aims and objectives, although there is some variance in the quality of these plans. In the main, the school is aware of its strengths and weaknesses and have identified these through appropriate self-evaluation systems. Resources are used effectively and the recent carry over of finance has been well used to improve the fabric of some parts of the school. There are some positive links with the local community and industries that help support the school, although there are a small number of parents who expressed their concern about some of the behaviour of a minority of students in the locality at lunchtime.

The governing body understand and carry out their statutory duties satisfactorily and have dealt effectively with the issues from the last inspection. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
--	-----------------------

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?	3
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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	3
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

6 March 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of West Craven High Technology College, Lancashire, BB18 5TB

Thank you for making us so welcome when we recently inspected your school. We spoke to a number of you, to the headteacher and many of your teachers. We observed lessons, looked at some of your work and reviewed the school's examination results. We are pleased to be able to share our findings with you. Overall, we judged West Craven High Technology College to be satisfactory.

The headteacher, governors and staff are working hard to improve your school and we have asked them to concentrate on four areas for improvement:

- Accelerate the rising trend of improvement at Key Stage 4. Over the last two years your school has improved the proportion of you getting 5 or more GCSE examinations of grade C or above. We want many more of you to succeed in this area and to continue to do so in the years to come.
- Raise achievement and standards at Key Stage 3 particularly in English and science. This means that too many of you are not getting the results at the end of Year 9 in the national tests that you are capable of. The school proved to us that many more of you will achieve the expected results in English, mathematics and science this year. You tend to do better in mathematics but need to do as well in the other subjects also.
- Increase the proportion of good teaching and learning to meet the needs of all students. We saw some good teaching but have asked the school to make sure that in all your lessons teaching is at least good and that you are challenged and motivated to reach your full potential. You can help by being prepared to work hard and making the most of your time in every lesson.
- Improve the systems of monitoring student performance to ensure a consistent approach to aid improvement. Many of your teachers record your academic progress. We have asked the school to make sure that all teachers do this and that the information is used to plan better lessons that will help you and your school improve.

With your willingness to do well in all subjects and your mature outlook, I am sure you will help your school to go from strength-to-strength. Good luck for the future!

Yours sincerely

Peter Cox

Lead Inspector