

Lostock Hall Community High School and Arts College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119755
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313414
Inspection date	2 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Vincent Ashworth, 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	806
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr William Pitcher
Headteacher	Mr David Lowe
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2004
School address	Todd Lane North Lostock Hall Preston Lancashire PR5 5UR
Telephone number	01772 336293
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Introduction

The school was visited by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school by investigating the following issues: the progress students make, the quality of teaching and learning, students' personal development and well-being, academic support and leadership and management. This was done by gathering evidence from observing lessons, scrutinising school documentation and questionnaires completed by parents, and by talking with students, teachers, school managers and the headteacher. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified.

Description of the school

Lostock Hall Community High School and Arts College is a smaller than average secondary school. Almost all students are of White British background; most come from advantaged backgrounds. The number of students eligible for free school meals is much lower than average. The proportion of students with a statement of special educational need has declined in recent years, but is slightly higher than that found nationally. The school has been a specialist visual arts college since 2004. It has achieved Healthy School status, the Artsmark Silver award and was recently re-designated as an Investors in People.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Lostock Hall Community High School and Arts College is an outstanding school. It provides its students with an excellent education. Through outstanding leadership and strong management the school has improved many aspects of its provision since the last inspection. Standards in English, modern foreign languages, history and drama have risen significantly. Other subjects that were previously strong have improved still further. Academic support has improved so that all students have targets that challenge and stretch them; as a consequence, they make better than expected progress in many subjects. More able students are motivated by being entered for GCSE examinations in Year 10. Last year a number of students also sat a Certificate in Financial Studies which is a GCE AS level equivalent. In the arts, students are challenged and inspired by working on a range of projects and activities that involve employers and professionals who are specialists in their field. The headteacher and other managers are very clear about both the school's strengths and where further improvements can be made. Staff have high ambitions and have plans to make sure these ambitions will be fulfilled by helping students to achieve consistently well. The strong and collaborative working relationships between teachers and students contribute enormously to students' excellent behaviour, attitudes to learning and their enjoyment of school life.

Students join the school with standards that are broadly average and relatively few start with very high standards. The majority of students make outstanding progress and reach above average standards by the end of Year 11. The number of students attaining five or more good GCSE grades has steadily increased year on year. Because of the improvements in English, and because of an outstanding mathematics department, the proportion of students who achieve both GCSE mathematics and English is much higher than in similar schools. High expectations of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) ensure that students are well prepared for employment and further study. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve particularly well; because of the well-targeted support and care they receive they make outstanding progress. More generally, boys' standards are lower than those for girls. The school recognises this and has made plans to close the gap in attainment.

The school's achievements in developing its specialist visual arts status are breathtaking. Standards are exceptionally high in this area, and students acquire skills and levels of maturity that would normally be seen in further education. Management of this aspect of the school's work is innovative, inspirational and entrepreneurial.

The outstanding teaching in the arts and in mathematics has had a very positive impact on raising the quality of teaching across the school. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge; they have very high expectations of all students and communicate this through their enthusiasm for their subject. School records indicate that unsatisfactory teaching has been eradicated, and that the vast majority of teaching is recorded as at least good. Visits to lessons during the inspection reinforced the accuracy of the school's judgement on the quality of teaching. The school is already well on its way to ensuring that all teaching is as good as the very best at Lostock Hall. In order to achieve this, it is focusing on ensuring consistency across all subjects in how well lesson objectives are matched to the individual needs and ability of each student. The needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are diagnosed effectively, and teachers make good provision for them in their lessons.

Students feel safe at school because behaviour is excellent, and they act responsibly and maturely. They are polite, show consideration for others and respect each other's rights. The vast majority of students enjoy school and make the most of everything it has to offer. There are very few instances of unauthorised absence. There are excellent collaborative arrangements in place with other schools to ensure alternative provision is in place to meet the needs of students who would otherwise be excluded from school. The students' willingness to take on extra responsibility is impressive. Through their regular involvement in a wide range of extra-curricular activities and school clubs, they develop as mature and responsible individuals. The school council takes its role seriously and works collaboratively with senior managers and governors to bring about improvements, for example, more healthy eating options in the canteen, new toilet facilities and 'buddying' for younger students. Many aspects, including sport and an emphasis on healthy eating, encourage students to adopt healthy lifestyles. The school also pays good attention to ensuring students' emotional well-being; for instance, there are strong links with external specialist services and staff based at school have the skills to provide counselling. Provision for religious education has improved and the appointment of a specialist teacher is starting to have an impact. The school has plans to develop students' spiritual awareness more systematically. Students demonstrate a sound understanding of other cultures.

The quality of both pastoral and academic support for students is outstanding. The recent appointment of two key stage coordinators has resulted in highly efficient management of both pastoral and academic systems for supporting students and helping them progress. School planners are used to good effect by teachers, students and their parents; this ensures good communication between a student's school life and home life, and any issues are picked up quickly and dealt with efficiently. Strong links with specialist services ensure that the most vulnerable students are well cared for. Arrangements and procedures for child protection are managed well. The very few incidents of bullying are dealt with efficiently and effectively. Indeed, the students themselves have been very proactive in challenging any form of harassment through their 'Bully Buddies' project. The tracking of students' progress towards targets is well developed and staff are skilled in interpreting data that helps them to understand how well students are doing.

Inspirational leadership and highly effective management over a sustained period gives the school outstanding capacity to improve. There has been a strong and motivating emphasis on developing the role of middle managers, who have taken on increased levels of accountability. The process of self-evaluation is thorough and results in an accurate picture of the school's major strengths and weaknesses. Managers at all levels are clear about where further work needs to be done and appropriate action is being taken to address issues. Governors are highly supportive of the school. They are regularly involved in school life which helps them speak authoritatively when holding senior managers to account. The school has produced a range of policies to promote equality and avoid discrimination. However, the extent to which these policies impact on school life or the experiences of students and adults who use the school's services has not yet been fully evaluated by the school. The school's work with a range of external partners, in particular in relation to the school's specialist status, has raised the profile of the school locally and nationally and has raised expectations for students about what they might achieve. Finances are carefully managed, and resources and ICT facilities been improved in recent years. The school's building stock is very outdated; some areas are inaccessible for students or adults with restricted mobility. Nevertheless, staff and students have worked very hard to overcome these barriers. For example, classrooms are maintained to a high standard

and attractive displays of students' work make classrooms welcoming and conducive to learning. The school provides excellent value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Systematically assess and monitor the impact of school equality policies to ensure that equality is embedded across all aspects of school life.

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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?	1
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?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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?	1
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	1
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

3 October 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Lostock Hall Community High School and Arts College, Lancashire, PR5 5UR.

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited you recently. You helped me to understand how your school operates and why Lostock Hall is an outstanding school. I only wish I could have stayed a little longer to take in all the marvellous things you have achieved. One of the real highlights of my day was meeting the school council – you are all really lucky to have such an impressive group of young people making sure that senior managers and governors understand clearly the things that concern you about school life. I was also pleased that so many of your parents took the time to complete the questionnaire we sent. The overwhelming majority of parents are highly supportive of the school and Mr Lowe's strong leadership. I appreciate that a few of you do not particularly like wearing school uniform, but I was impressed by the fact that you understood the reasons behind school rules. I would add that I thought you all looked smart and professional at the morning assembly with Mr Stopford.

You achieve high standards in your work and you make excellent progress during your time at school. I was deeply impressed with the outstanding quality of some of the artwork I saw as I walked around the school. You behave very well and are respectful of each other. You are also well aware of the need to keep fit and healthy, and your successes in team sports are a credit to you. Your teachers have very high expectations of you – and you certainly live up to them. What makes your school such a special place is the high quality of teaching, care and support you receive from your teachers. They are very committed to making sure you achieve your full potential – not least by the very wide range of clubs and workshops they put on for you. The school's outstanding track record in English and mathematics makes sure you are well placed for the next stage of your education or career. The school has a number of policies that promote equality for all students, staff and indeed other adults using the school's facilities. I have asked Mr Lowe and the governors to make sure that they evaluate the impact of these policies more regularly.

Many of you said to me that being in school was like being part of a family and I feel privileged for having been part of that 'family' for a day.

With very best wishes for your future.

Vincent Ashworth, HMI