

The Hollins Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119757
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313415
Inspection dates	14–15 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Sonya Williamson 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	757
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Heather Pitman
Headteacher	Mr Mark Jackson
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 2004
School address	Hollins Lane Accrington Lancashire BB5 2QY
Telephone number	01254 233500
Fax number	01254 236970

Age group	11-16
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The Hollins Technology College is slightly smaller than the average secondary school. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is just above the national average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is just below national figures but is increasing. The proportion of students who do not have English as their first language is just above national figures and increasing. Although the proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is in line with national figures, the proportion that has a statement of educational need is considerably above and increasing. The school has been awarded the National Healthy School Standard and has Investors in People status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The Hollins Technology College is a successful school. Inspectors agree with the school that its overall effectiveness is good and that it has outstanding features. Many areas of the school's work are improving. Issues from the last inspection have been addressed well. Most significantly, achievement is improving quickly and some aspects, such as students' progress in mathematics, have been outstanding for some time. Parents who responded to the questionnaire are overwhelmingly pleased with how their children are encouraged to do their best. They value the caring ethos of the school. One parent's view, typical of many, described the school as having 'a warm, calm feeling'.

Standards attained by students are broadly average but they are on a rising trend in most subjects at both key stages. The school is particularly successful in ensuring that a higher than the national proportion of students achieve five GCSEs, including English and mathematics, at the higher grades A* - C. Students' achievement is good overall but is outstanding in some subjects, particularly in Key Stage 3. Teaching is good with many strengths and this contributes to students' good progress. Teachers use the information they are given about students' prior attainment to plan work that is appropriate for the classes they teach; however, the levels of challenge for higher attaining students within classes are not always high enough. Subject leaders work hard to promote the best practice in their subjects so that teaching continues to improve. The specialist school status has had a significant impact on many aspects of the school's work. Information and communication technology (ICT) resources for staff and students have improved. The transition of students between different stages of their education is good. Students in Key Stage 4 are offered an increasingly wide range of curriculum opportunities.

The school has made very effective use of partnerships to promote students' well-being. Students' personal development and well-being are good as a result of the good care, guidance and support they receive. The support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding. Academic guidance is not as strong. Students are not always aware of how to improve their work and this inhibits their development as independent learners. Although attendance is a little lower than that found nationally, the school works hard to promote good attendance. Students enjoy school. They value the way the good curriculum meets their needs and interests, and they participate well in the wide variety of extra-curricular activities. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is also good. Developments in religious education and citizenship have strengthened these areas since the previous inspection and students respond well. This is evidenced by their enthusiasm for actively helping in their local community and supporting the work of communities abroad. Students work together co-operatively, and they behave well and safely both in and out of their classrooms. They understand the importance of healthy lifestyles and are increasingly trying to make healthy food choices and to participate in physical exercise.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a clear vision for the continuing improvement of the school, and frequently and actively promotes this in discussions with staff and students. Subject leaders are given appropriate direction by senior managers and they are increasingly well equipped to identify the strengths and areas for development in their departments. Targets are increasingly well used to hold staff to account and to help identify further areas for improvement in all aspects of provision. However, self-evaluation is not yet rigorously informed by checking, analysis and consultation with all stakeholders. Governors provide good support to the school and they are developing their capacity to act as critical

friends as a result of their take-up of training and the ways in which they make links with departments.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure levels of challenge are appropriate for all learners.
- Ensure all students know how to improve their work.
- Further develop the rigour of self-evaluation.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students make good progress. This confirms the school's judgement. Students reach standards that are broadly in line with national averages. Over recent years, there has been a clear trend of improvement in results in external tests and examinations.

The 2006 GCSE results show the proportion of students gaining five or more A*-C grades was close to the national average. However, a significant strength is that in 2006 more than half of the students gained five or more A*-C grades including English and mathematics. This figure is above the national average, and data supplied by the school shows that it has risen further in 2007. Achievement is good, and this was confirmed by the progress seen in lessons observed. Students enter the school with standards that vary from year to year, and range from just below average to more clearly below average. They leave with standards that are in line with national averages, and sometimes above. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported, and they too achieve well.

In most subjects, students meet their challenging targets, but in some, such as science, physical education, drama and the resistant materials aspect of design and technology, achievement is not yet consistently good. However, there are areas where achievement is outstanding, for example in Key Stage 3, where students make particularly impressive gains in their learning. In English there has been a rapid improvement in students' progress, which is now outstanding in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. Achievement in mathematics has been consistently outstanding for several years.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of students, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Students say that they enjoy school and lessons are interesting, and that they benefit from taking part in extra-curricular activities. Relationships between staff and students are good, leading to good behaviour in lessons and around the school. The number of permanent exclusions has fallen, although the number of fixed term exclusions rose last year due to a firmer stand being taken on some aspects of misbehaviour outside lessons. Attendance is just below average although the school is working hard to improve it. Students are aware of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle. The dining hall provides healthy food and drinking water is readily available. The school successfully promotes exercise through a variety of sporting activities and encourages students to cycle to school. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools Award. Effective drugs and sex education are delivered through specialist teaching and input from external agencies.

Students contribute to the school community in a variety of ways. For example, they help to run sports fixtures and the school council has been responsible for improved safety in the car

park and a recycling project. Excellent contributions to society are made by students' fundraising and community work. All students are working for the Active Citizen in Society award. Recent events such as the multicultural evening and Eid party help to foster good community relationships.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. The strengths of teaching and learning far outweigh the weaknesses and no inadequate teaching was seen during the inspection. The quality of teaching and the range of strategies used help students to make good progress in a large majority of lessons. Where progress slows, levels of challenge for individual students are not sufficiently well matched to their learning needs. Classroom management, the management of behaviour and positive relationships between students and their teachers all help create a good climate for learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge and, as a result, they give clear explanations of difficult concepts and make students aware of common errors that might be made in their subjects. Teachers plan well and the pace of learning is good although the pace and challenge provided for the highest attaining students in some classes is less motivating. Most teachers make effective use of a range of methods to check how well students are learning. Learning is best when students are actively involved and are encouraged to assess how well they and their classmates are doing. Although ICT is well used for teaching, it is not as frequently used to promote independent learning skills for students.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. Improvements since the previous inspection give increased time for religious education, citizenship and physical education. Partnerships with other educational and training establishments have successfully increased the choice of courses at Key Stage 4. Students and parents are appreciative of the additional opportunities to study GCSE Dance and GCSE Engineering and Construction. Specialist school status in technology has given the curriculum flexibility. It has had a significant impact on providing opportunities for all students to take courses which match their needs and interests. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have outstanding provision. The school's curriculum and a substantial programme of lunchtime and after school clubs contribute significantly to the good personal development of students and their high levels of enjoyment. Liaison with primary feeder schools is strong. Curriculum links have been established in technology and this good practice is spreading to other subjects. The school has a programme of enterprise education days which it is continuing to develop further. In addition, students are well prepared for the next stage of their education or training through the emphasis on key skills and good careers guidance.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Child protection procedures are in place and staff are aware of them. Health and safety issues are dealt with appropriately and risk assessments are carried out for all educational visits. There is a strong pastoral system and students say that they enjoy school and feel safe. Incidents of bullying are rare and students feel confident that

there is always an adult to talk to should the need arise. There are good transition arrangements between all stages of students' education and Year 11 receive good careers advice. Target setting procedures are in place to promote students' learning. However, students do not always know how to achieve their targets or how to improve their work because targets are not consistently recorded and marking is too inconsistent. Care and support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are outstanding and because of this they make similar progress to other students. The school has received letters of recognition from the local authority for its work in this area, and letters of thanks from appreciative parents.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides dynamic leadership. He has helped build positive attitudes among students and a strong sense of teamwork among staff. He is ably supported by a senior leadership team and middle managers who share his vision for driving up standards further. Managers generally know their school well and make realistic judgements about its strengths and weaknesses. Through consultation and the involvement of external partners such as local authority consultants, managers are able to make the school more effective. For example, the increased use of data by teachers has led to more focused help for those at risk of underachieving, and this has helped to promote the recent improvements in examination results. Although improvement plans have appropriate areas of focus, outcomes, checking arrangements and timescales are sometimes not sufficiently precise.

The drive to improve provision has led to excellent collaborative arrangements with other local schools. These have resulted in better engagement from the few students at risk of becoming disaffected, and have contributed to good relationships between students from different schools. The school has addressed well the issues identified in the last inspection. For example, the curriculum now meets all statutory requirements, and because of improved teaching and targeted support, the standard of literacy is good.

The quality of governance is satisfactory and improving. The governors are undergoing appropriate training and becoming more involved in the school's self-evaluation. Financial management is sound, and the school provides good value for money.

Communication with parents and carers is good. Through a mixture of formal and informal structures, parents and carers are able to make their views known and are well informed about their children's progress. They appreciate this.

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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	2

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	2
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	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?	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?	2
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	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	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

16 November 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of The Hollins Technology College, Lancashire, BB5 2QY

Thank you so much for the help you gave us when we inspected your school recently. The other inspectors and I were very impressed by the confident way in which you spoke with us in lessons and at other times. You were also helpful and friendly when you helped us find our way around.

We think your school is good and that some aspects of it are outstanding. If you have been at the school for some time you have probably noticed how things are continually improving. This is because Mr. Jackson and the other staff work very well together as a strong team to help you to do as well you can. We agree with you that the school provides many opportunities for you, both in and out of lessons. We think you, in turn, work outstandingly hard to contribute to your local and other communities. Students achieve well at The Hollins because so much of the teaching is good and because you behave well, concentrate and work co-operatively together in lessons. You achieve particularly good results in mathematics. You develop good personal skills because you are cared for, guided and supported well. Your parents are well aware of all these positive aspects of the school and, overwhelmingly, they are pleased that you attend The Hollins.

To help your school improve even more we have asked the staff to make sure that you are always given work that is suitably challenging and that you know how to make the quality of your work even better. This means some of you might get more difficult tasks to do. The teachers will expect you to act on their advice when they talk to you about work and when they have made helpful suggestions in their marking. The staff are already trying to make sure they know about the stronger and weaker aspects of the school and make appropriate plans for improvement; we have asked them to be even more thorough when they do this.

On behalf of the team of inspectors, I would like to wish you all a happy and successful future in Hyndburn and beyond!

Sonya Williamson HMI

Lead Inspector