

Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic High School and Engineering College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119782
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	313422
Inspection dates	27–28 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Garry Jones HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	790
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Kath Gresty
Headteacher	Mrs Carmel Foster
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2005
School address	Glenburn Road Skelmersdale Lancashire WN8 6JW
Telephone number	01695 725635
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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

This is a smaller than average secondary school that serves the town of Skelmersdale. The pupils are almost all of White British origin, however there is a small, but growing, number of pupils with English as an additional language. The community has significant pockets of social and economic disadvantage and this is reflected in the above average proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly above that found nationally. The school is a specialist college for engineering. It has Investors in People status, the Bronze award Arts Mark and has met the Healthy Schools Standard.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. It has a number of good features, including provision for care and guidance and an innovative curriculum. The provision is greatly valued by the majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire.

Pupils enter the school with standards that are broadly in line with the national average, although there are a smaller proportion of more able students than is found normally. The skills of pupils in English are less well developed than those in mathematics and this inhibits learning. Progress during Key Stage 3 is slow and in the national tests at the end of Year 9 pupils achieve results that are below the national average. In Key Stage 4 progress improves and at the end of the key stage pupils attain standards that are broadly average overall. The proportion gaining 5 or more GCSE passes at grades A* - C, including English and mathematics is below the national average but is improving. Almost all students gain a GCSE or equivalent qualification and the proportion gaining 5 or more qualifications is above that found nationally. This reflects the inclusive nature of the school and the appropriateness of its Key Stage 4 curriculum. Overall, given their starting points pupils make progress by the end of Key Stage 4 that is satisfactory. Pupils with identified learning difficulties and the small number of pupils with English as an additional language make more progress than other pupils.

This level of achievement reflects teaching that is satisfactory overall. There is some good teaching, but there is not sufficient to ensure that all pupils make good progress. In the best lessons teachers plan the use of the considerable time available well to ensure that a brisk pace is maintained and pupils are challenged appropriately. The satisfactory teaching does not always address sufficiently the individual needs of all pupils. In some lessons the pace is too slow and the range of learning activities too limited to ensure that learning is good. Pupils' attitudes to learning in these lessons are passive and they do not become sufficiently engaged in the planned tasks. Behaviour is satisfactory, but in some lessons a minority of pupils distract others from their learning with minor disruptions. The use of marking to provide detailed guidance on how pupils can improve their work is inconsistent.

The curriculum is good. It is being effectively developed in Key Stage 3 to support pupils in acquiring effective learning skills. While in Key Stage 4 a number of pathways meet pupils' interests well and reflect the demands of the local community. Links with local companies and organisations are good and support the development of engineering in the school. The links with primary schools to enrich their curriculum and ensure effective transition are well developed.

Care and guidance are good. There is good pastoral support for all pupils through a well resourced pastoral team. The care for the most vulnerable students including those with learning difficulties and or disabilities is a particular strength; with the inclusion centre providing effective support and guidance for their academic progress and well-being. Overall pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Pupils' attend regularly and their enjoyment of school is satisfactory. Their social, moral and cultural development is sound, but spiritual development is good. Pupils are well aware of healthy lifestyles, but do not always choose to put these principles into practice. They make a good contribution to the school through the school council and to the wider community, for example, by pupils working together, in association with a national company, to develop a primary electronics teaching module. The impact of the specialist status in engineering has influenced the development of the curriculum in Key Stage 4 and this

together with the opportunities for enterprise education and work-related learning prepare the pupils well for their future economic well being.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The established headteacher has a clear sense of direction for the development of the school. She is well supported by a developing senior leadership team and a well informed and supportive board of governors. The procedures for self-evaluation are satisfactory and there is a sound plan for improvement, but this has yet to impact sufficiently on raising achievement in both key stages. The role of middle leaders is developing, but as yet the impact of this group on provision and achievement is inconsistent. The school has satisfactory capacity to improve further and provides sound value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the progress of pupils, particularly in Key Stage 3 and in English and mathematics.
- Improve the consistency of the quality of teaching to fully meet the needs of all pupils.
- Ensure that the impact of the middle leaders in improving provision and raising achievement is consistently effective.

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

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils enter the school with standards that are broadly average, although there are fewer high achieving pupils than are found nationally. Standards on entry are lower in English than in mathematics and this hinders the progress of pupils. At the end of Key Stage 3 overall results have been consistently below the national average for the last five years. In 2007 the results in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 were higher in mathematics and science than in English. The proportions of pupils gaining the expected level in mathematics and science were just below the national average, although fewer pupils attained the highest grades reflecting the ability of these pupils on entry. Pupils with learning difficulties and or disabilities attained above the national average for similar pupils. The results at the end of Key Stage 4 are broadly average having improved over the last three years. Almost all pupils leave with a qualification and the vast majority attain 5 or more GCSE qualifications. However, the proportion gaining five good passes that include English and mathematics is below that found nationally. Pupils do particularly well in art and design and physical education at GCSE. The school sets very challenging targets, including those related to its engineering college status, but attainment fell slightly below these in 2007.

The progress that pupils make during their school career is broadly average when their starting points and individual circumstances are taken into account. Progress is better in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3 where it is below average. Pupils with learning difficulties and or disabilities make more progress than other pupils. The achievement of pupils is satisfactory overall.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Most pupils enjoy coming to school and feel safe. Older pupils help younger ones to feel secure through the system of mixed age classes, but

some of the more vulnerable pupils are concerned about bullying. Incidents of racism are rare and are dealt with effectively. Behaviour is satisfactory. When teaching is good pupils behave well in class and have a positive attitude to learning, but in a significant number of lessons they become bored and lack motivation. Behaviour is usually orderly around the school, but there is sometimes a lack of consideration for others on crowded corridors and staircases. Litter in the outdoor areas reflect the negative attitudes of a minority. The pupils' moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, but spiritual development is good. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to gain first hand experience and understanding of cultural diversity in Britain. Healthy eating and keeping fit are actively encouraged, and many pupils eagerly take part in extra-curricular sport. Older pupils make a good contribution to their school community through the mentoring and prefect systems. Some take an additional GCSE in citizenship which provides further opportunities to contribute to the local community. Pupils in all years make a positive contribution through raising money for charity and membership of the school council. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education through good careers guidance and very good links with industry, post-16 providers and universities. The school has worked hard to reduce absence and attendance now meets the national average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the good lessons teachers make effective use of the recently extended length of time available to organise a wide range of imaginative activities to challenge pupils appropriately and maintain their interest. There are clear learning objectives and teachers ensure that a brisk pace is maintained. In these lessons pupils respond well, make good progress and clearly enjoy the activities. Where pupils had opportunities to be actively involved in and plan their learning they responded in a particularly positive manner, as was observed in physical education and engineering lessons.

In too many lessons there was insufficient pace and challenge to ensure good progress. A lack of detailed planning on how to effectively use the 100 minutes available in each lesson contributed to this weakness. In some of these lessons learning was over reliant on the teacher with the result that pupils did not actively engage with the tasks and became passive learners. Occasional incidents of poor behaviour in a few lessons went unchallenged and this hindered progress. In a few lessons the work did not sufficiently meet the needs of all abilities resulting in insufficient progress being achieved by some pupils.

In a few lessons good use was made of pupils assessing each others work to support learning. Marking is generally, but not always, completed regularly. However, pupils are not consistently given clear guidance on how well they are doing and how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school regularly reviews its curriculum to ensure that it supports the needs, interests and aspirations of pupils well. A recent innovative development is the introduction of a programme in Year 7 to ensure that all pupils acquire the skills necessary for effective learning. The restructuring of the school day to extend lessons to 100 minutes reflects the intention to provide greater opportunity for personalised learning, but this is at too early a stage for its effectiveness to be evaluated. The options available at the end of Year 9 provide a number of

pathways for pupils that include traditional academic courses alongside a good range of vocational courses.

The school's specialist status in engineering has been used to enrich the curriculum and ensure that it effectively reflects the needs of the community. There are productive links with local businesses to extend and enhance work-related learning. This is contributing slowly to raising students' achievement with particularly strong improvement in GCSE results in engineering in 2007. The Aim Higher project is being used effectively to raise students' aspirations for entering Higher Education. This is a strong feature of the school's preparation of students for the next stage of their education or employment.

The good range and variety of extra curricular opportunities are widely enjoyed by students. These include regular events in engineering which are shared with other schools within the district. The curriculum links with local primary schools and opportunities for adults to benefit from provision reflect the effective links with the community established through the engineering college developments.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school cares for all its pupils well. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and other vulnerable pupils is very good. As a result, these pupils feel happy and secure and participate fully in the life of the school. Many of these pupils receive extra help in the inclusion centre, where their academic progress and emotional well-being are effectively monitored. Monitoring of academic progress for all pupils is carried out regularly and strategies are in place to address underachievement, although the impact of these is not yet consistently evident. The school has very good procedures to help pupils in the transition from primary to secondary school. Careers education and guidance is good with opportunities for work related learning activities and work experience for all pupils. The school is strongly committed to provide equally for all pupils. As a result pupils feel valued and know that there are trusted adults they can turn to for help. Health and safety procedures and statutory checks conform to current guidance and risk assessments are carried out for all school trips. Child protection procedures are in place.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory, because the impact of their work is yet to be seen in raising achievement consistently across both key stages. The headteacher supported by the senior leadership team has established a vision for the development of the school. There is a strong focus on inclusion reflecting the well developed Catholic ethos of the school. Partnerships with other agencies and schools are good. The school improvement plan identifies appropriate priorities reflecting the clear awareness of priorities for development, but the activities to be undertaken are not always defined in sufficient detail. The systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision are in place, including the regular evaluation of departments. The role of middle managers in driving improvement is developing, but the impact of this work on improving the quality of provision and raising standards is inconsistent. The governors are well led by an informed chair and meet their statutory requirements. The governing body monitors the work of the school and challenges

it to improve, particularly through its established committees. There is satisfactory capacity for improvement.

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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?	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	2
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	2
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?	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	2
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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

29 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic High School and Engineering College,
Lancashire, WN8 6JW

Thank you for the warm welcome that you gave to the team when we recently inspected your school. We enjoyed talking to you about your work and hearing your views on the school.

We found that your school provides you with a satisfactory standard of education. While you are at the school you make progress that is satisfactory overall and achieve standards in your GCSE examinations that are broadly average, but improving. You do not make as much progress in Years 7 to 9 as in Years 10 and 11. The teaching you receive is satisfactory, but there is some good teaching and in those lessons you do well and clearly enjoy your work. At times when the lessons are less exciting you do not get involved enough in the tasks you have been set. The range of courses and other activities you are offered is good, particularly in Year 10 and 11 when you can choose from a wide range of vocational courses.

You are well looked after by all of the staff and those of you who have particular difficulties receive very good support. You attend school regularly and your behaviour is satisfactory, although a small number of you let yourselves down in some lessons. Overall your personal development is satisfactory, but your involvement in the school and wider community is good and you are well prepared for your future education and work. You are encouraged to take up healthy lifestyles but not all of you are committed to doing this.

The headteacher together with all her senior colleagues have clear ideas on how to continue to improve the school. They are working hard to bring about improvements and we have suggested that all the staff should work together, led by the subject leaders and progress coordinators to ensure that all your lessons are as good as the best in order that you should make better progress, particularly in Key Stage 3 and in English and mathematics. You can help them by telling them in which types of lesson you learn best and by behaving well and working hard.

Best wishes for the future

Garry Jones HMI