

# West Lancashire Community High School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	131258
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	315764
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Caroline Broomhead HMI

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	63
Sixth form	14
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Margaret Sumner
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Sue Reynolds
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	School Lane Chapel House Skelmersdale Lancashire WN8 8EH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01695 721487
<b>Fax number</b>	01695 559078

---

<b>Age group</b>	11–19
<b>Inspection dates</b>	7–8 October 2008
<b>Inspection number</b>	315764

---

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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 of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

## Description of the school

West Lancashire Community High School opened in September 2006 following the reorganisation of special schools in the area. It is on the same site as the original school, Black Moss School, which provided mainly for students with moderate learning difficulties across a wide age range. West Lancashire Community High School admits up to 90 students aged 11 to 19 years who have a broad range of complex needs including moderate, severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties and/or disabilities, autism and communication difficulties. There are 63 students on roll, all of whom have a statement of special educational needs. All the students are of White British origin.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Under the strong leadership of the headteacher, the school has made great strides since it opened two years ago and has successfully achieved its initial goal of establishing good provision for the broader range of complex needs whilst maintaining a strong inclusive ethos. The students have settled well and enjoy coming to school. They thrive in this calm, relaxed and safe environment. They are extremely polite and courteous and achieve well in relation to their starting points.

In a relatively short timescale, the headteacher and her senior managers have adapted the curriculum, extended the range of accreditation available, built specialist facilities, adapted the teaching groups to tailor provision to individual needs, improved assessment and developed staff confidence and expertise. The staff have worked together to share their ideas and learn from each other and as a result have formed a strong team.

A strength of the school is its commitment to promoting equality of opportunity for all. Students are given high levels of support and guidance to enable them to take part in all aspects of school life. The teaching is good. Rigorous assessment enables the school to track the small steps of progress which students make in the main subjects, although this is not yet taking place in all subjects. Parents speak highly of the school's provision and the progress their children have made.

This is an outward looking school which seeks and shares good practice. It has excellent partnership arrangements with other special schools, mainstream schools, colleges and work placements, which all enrich and add relevance to the curriculum.

It is also a reflective school which keeps its provision under review and adapts its practice as needed. Self-evaluation is firmly embedded in all aspects of the school's work and this enables the staff to identify accurately the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The school improvement plan effectively guides the work of the school but it does not specify the resulting improvements expected in students' attainment over time. The governors provide good support and are growing in their confidence to challenge the school. They ensure that the school uses its resources well and provides good value for money. The school has outstanding capacity to improve further.

## Effectiveness of the sixth form

### Grade: 2

Provision for those aged 16 to 19 is good. There is a strong emphasis on enabling students to develop their independence and social and communication skills. They build up a good awareness of the world of work in readiness for leaving school. Most students attend college and work placements each week and are well supported. They successfully achieve accreditation at levels relevant to their ability and needs through Oxford, Cambridge and RSA (OCR) modular programmes.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the rigorous assessment procedures which are already in place for the core subjects to all subjects of the curriculum.
- Make clear the impact the school's improvement plans are expected to have on students' attainment in all subjects.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

All students are working below national standards due to their learning difficulties and other complex needs. Their attainment ranges from P levels to National Curriculum Level 3. During their time at the school the students make steady progress in their learning and their achievement is good when set against their starting points. Many students make significant gains in their speaking, listening and communication skills as a result of the emphasis this is given in the curriculum. The more able students speak with enthusiasm and some clarity about what they have learned. Others begin to communicate their needs more effectively using signs, symbols and pictures. A small number make exceptional gains, for example, when given the opportunity to study more challenging GCSE courses at local mainstream schools. For other students significant achievement involves beginning to participate in group activities, or complete a simple task with minimal adult support. By the end of Year 11, students successfully complete courses leading to Entry Level certificates at Levels 1 to 3 and OCR National Skills Profile modules at first, second or third grade, depending on their ability and aptitude. Two students are currently studying GCSE French at a local mainstream school. Students in the sixth form complete OCR modules in Accreditation for Life and Living (ALL) and the National Skills Profile. Those in the sensory group with more severe and complex needs study modules at introductory level or first grade and for some this is the first external accreditation they have received.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

The students thoroughly enjoy coming to school as shown in their regular attendance. Their behaviour is excellent. They are well aware of what is expected of them and rise to the challenge. There is a 'buzz' about the school. The good pace of daily life encourages them to be active. They learn to organise themselves and to follow routines. They show care and respect for others and take a pride in themselves and their school. They begin to be aware of how to keep themselves safe, for example in food technology lessons they wash their hands before working with food and learn to use equipment safely. The students are given many opportunities to take responsibility and to develop their independence and this leads to a growing self-confidence, maturity and awareness of the needs of others. Members of the school council are elected by their peers and make suggestions which are acted upon, for example in relation to improvements to school meals. Through events such as the 'Beatles Day' or 'Red Nose Day' they have fun raising money for charities. For example, one student spoke about how pleased he was that the money raised will go to UNICEF to help poor people in Africa. Visits to places of interest such as the Hindu Temple, and visitors to the school such as African drummers, help the students to understand and respect different faiths and cultures. The older students spend a considerable proportion of their time at college and on work placements. They have many opportunities in school to develop their life skills and take part in enterprise activities. This high quality provision prepares them well for adult life.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Students are taught in ability groups for literacy and numeracy and in their class groups for other subjects. In response to the changing needs of the student population, the school has recently set up a Learning Suite where those with autism and severe communication difficulties receive specialist tuition for part of the day. Teachers have high expectations of learning and behaviour. They plan their lessons well and include a variety of activities which capture students' interest and aid their understanding. Students develop a positive, respectful attitude and are keen to learn. They receive good support which helps them to progress well in their learning and some students are able to reduce their dependency on adults. A good brisk pace is maintained and teachers are flexible and responsive to students' emotional needs and personalities. Visual timetables are used well to help students organise themselves and understand that they must complete given tasks before being allowed to move onto reward activities. Information, communication technology (ICT) is used effectively to support teaching and aid students' learning. There is a strong focus on developing students' speaking, listening and communication skills in all lessons. However, the resources used to teach literacy and numeracy to the older less able students do not always reflect their age and interests well enough.

Students' individual targets make clear the small steps of progress that are expected. Rigorous assessment enables the school to track progress in English, mathematics, science, ICT and personal and social development. However, assessment in other subjects is not so detailed. Where students are following accredited courses in Years 10, 11 and post-16, assessment shows clearly how well they are achieving against the expected learning outcomes.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. It is well structured to meet the learning needs of all students and gives each of them appropriate opportunities to make progress. It places appropriate emphasis on developing their communication and social skills in preparation for adult life. The excellent links with schools, colleges and employers enable students to apply these emerging skills in realistic settings. Work-related learning is a strength. All students have opportunities to develop pre-vocational skills either within the school or in the community. The school's 'Step to Work' programme offers supported work placements for those who need them and, as students become more confident, the support is reduced to promote their independence. Equal care is taken in the planning and monitoring of college link courses. Within school the curriculum is being adapted to provide a relevant and challenging range of experiences for those with the most complex needs. The school works closely with other professionals such as the speech and language therapists in developing such provision. The school's 'Social Use of Language Programme' is well established and provides individual support for identified students within the school and well as within mainstream schools.

The school has established a good range of accredited courses to suit the wider range of ability within the school. These include Entry Level courses in English, mathematics, science, art, French, design technology, ICT and geography. GCSE courses are available through links with mainstream schools to challenge the most able students in French and art and design. OCR

courses in 'ALL' enable students to achieve accreditation in communication, ICT, numeracy, personal skills, the community, the environment, home management, leisure and world of work modules. OCR National Skills Profile modules studied include: communication, ICT, numeracy, practical work skills and personal skills.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Students receive outstanding levels of care throughout the school day. Careful attention is paid to safeguarding them and promoting their well-being. Rigorous procedures are in place for conducting risk assessments, vetting all staff working with the students and attending to students' emotional and medical needs. All staff have received appropriate training so that they are well prepared for the different roles and responsibilities that they carry.

Students are given excellent guidance and support according to their individual needs. Their progress is closely monitored in partnership with parents and other professionals. In conjunction with the Young Persons' Service the school organises and hosts a Transitions Evening involving national providers and this is valued by parents who are seeking information about the options open to their children when they leave school.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

Leadership and management are outstanding. Staff share the headteacher's vision for a happy, inclusive school which values individual differences. She and her senior managers set high standards and provide clear direction. They have successfully built upon the good practice which existed before reorganisation and made significant improvements to many important aspects of the provision to meet the broader range of students' needs. Subject leaders also have clearly defined roles and responsibilities and are accountable for the quality of provision. They routinely monitor teaching and learning and identify and share good practice with colleagues. One of the school's identified priorities is for subject leaders to use information from analysis of student attainment data more effectively. All staff are involved in reviewing the school's work, offering ideas for improvement and determining the actions needed to achieve it, though evaluation of the impact of improvements is not yet fully developed.

The school identifies students' additional needs using the 'Wave of Intervention' programme and carefully monitors the effectiveness of the provision which is put in place to meet these needs. Senior managers ensure that pupils are well cared for and that the school's safeguarding arrangements remain rigorous.

The school has demonstrated that it is adaptable, flexible and responsive to the changing student population.

**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](http://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	16-19
---	----------------	-------

### 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	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2	

<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	1	
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	1	

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1	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	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	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**

9 October 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of West Lancashire Community High School, Lancashire, WN8 8EH

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave when I inspected your school this week. I enjoyed meeting you and hearing your views about your school.

These are the main findings from the inspection.

- I agree with you that you are very well cared for. Your behaviour around school is excellent and I was very impressed with how polite and courteous you are with each other. Most of you attend school regularly, which is good.
- The headteacher and the senior managers have very high expectations and want what is best for you. They have made big improvements since the school opened. For example, they have worked with you to create the new sensory garden. Some of you told me you want to spend more time in the new sensory and light rooms which have been built. Senior staff have good plans to improve the school even further and are well supported by the governors, some of whom come into school to see how well you are doing.
- The teachers are well aware of your individual needs and interests and plan a variety of activities to help you to concentrate and learn. Although I didn't see any of your French lessons, it sounds like they are good fun. You receive good support in your lessons and when you are out at college or on work placements.
- You work hard and are rewarded for your efforts by gaining certificates for what you have achieved. Some students have been very successful in attending local mainstream schools and achieving GCSE qualifications. I can see from the art work around school that some of you are very creative.

These are the areas for improvement I have recommended.

- The school has very good systems for assessing how well you are learning in some subjects such as English and mathematics. It is in the process of making sure it has the same information about all your subjects.
- I said earlier that the school has good plans for improving further but they don't say how much they expect this to raise the standards in the different subjects you study. I have asked them to make this clear.

Once again, I would like to thank you for your thoughts and views and offer you my very best wishes for the future.

Caroline Broomhead

Her Majesty's Inspector