

Pendle Vale College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134989
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	316300
Inspection dates	27–28 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Jean Kendall 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	824
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John David
Headteacher	Mr Steven Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Oxford Road Nelson Lancashire BB9 8JG
Telephone number	01282 615065
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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

Pendle Vale College is a comprehensive school where 38.2% of students speak English as an additional language. The main ethnic groups are White British and Pakistani. Although the population is mixed, the majority of students come from wards with significant levels of deprivation. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well above average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties is below the national average, although there is a higher than average proportion with statements of special educational need.

The school opened on the 1 August 2006 under Building Schools for the Future reorganisation in Lancashire. It is currently housed in the former Walton High School buildings until the new site is finished. The admission number has increased from 160 to 210 under the reorganisation. Years 9, 10 and 11 are made up of the student population from Walton High School but the staff is not the same. Several, including the headteacher and one of the deputy headteachers have taken up their posts since it opened. The school achieved the National Healthy School's Award in 2007 and is working toward a bid for specialist sports college status. This is the school's first inspection since opening.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Pendle Vale College provides a satisfactory quality of education with some good features. It provides satisfactory value for money. The headteacher and senior leadership team are providing strong leadership and clear direction based on accurate self-evaluation. Governors provide good support and challenge to the leadership team. Middle leaders are engaging in a variety of strategies to enhance performance within departments and develop strategies to raise students' achievement. Standards are beginning to improve but because many of the strategies are new they have yet to demonstrate consistent impact across the whole college. Teachers and support staff are enthusiastically embracing professional development and are sharing good practice to promote a strong culture for learning and raise expectations of what students can achieve. The capacity for further improvement is good.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Although there is much good teaching, there is not currently enough to ensure students remain motivated and achieve as well as they should in all lessons, especially at Key Stage 4. Records of students' progress indicate that standards and achievement are improving, although standards attained in GCSE examinations in 2007 were below national averages. The curriculum is suitably broad and balanced and there is a good range of courses at Key Stage 4 which includes access to vocational options offered at the local college.

Care, guidance and support for students are good. Effective systems are in place to monitor their personal and academic progress and provide support where it is needed. Students make satisfactory progress in their personal development and their behaviour and attendance are satisfactory. Students say that they enjoy being in college and they feel safe. Most students have positive attitudes to learning, although a few arrive late to lessons and disruptive behaviour by a few undermines learning in some lessons. The college makes good provision to promote healthy lifestyles. It works well in partnership with other agencies to support students in developing the personal qualities they need for their future lives, for example through work-related learning opportunities and with the local college.

Most parents who responded to questionnaires expressed a high level of satisfaction with the school. However, a minority expressed some concern about disruptions to teaching caused by staff absence and about students' behaviour around school. No poor behaviour was observed by inspectors and students expressed confidence in the college's ability to deal with any incidents of poor behaviour should they occur.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement throughout the college.
- Increase the amount of teaching that is good or better.
- Ensure all students know how to improve the quality of their work and can take responsibility for their own learning.
- Improve punctuality to lessons and at the start of the day.

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

Students' achievement is improving and is satisfactory. The leadership team have put effective processes in place to track students' progress and provide support for those who are underachieving. This, together with teaching that is increasingly focused on meeting individual learning needs, is beginning to raise standards. Attainment on entry to the college is below average. The college has records of student progress since they began secondary school. These show that most students taking Key Stage 3 tests in 2007 made satisfactory progress in mathematics and science and many made good progress in English and information and communication technology (ICT).

Standards attained in GCSE examinations in 2007 were below average and White British boys in particular underachieved. The college has taken action to tackle these issues and standards are beginning to improve. Progress tracking indicates that most students are making satisfactory progress over time. Where there is underachievement, intervention and support is having a positive impact in helping students to make faster progress. Lessons and students' work observed during the inspection indicate that students are making at least satisfactory and sometimes good progress in their lessons. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make consistently good progress because they receive good quality support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The personal development and well-being of students are satisfactory; there are some good features. Most students have positive attitudes to learning. However, in some lessons where the teaching is insufficiently motivating, low level disruption and incidents of poor behaviour by a few can affect learning. The college is developing effective strategies to deal with inappropriate behaviour which are beginning to have a positive impact. Consequently, there are now fewer fixed-term exclusions and there have been no recent permanent exclusions. The majority of students are polite, friendly and confident young people and much good behaviour was seen in lessons and around the college during the inspection. Relationships between students and with their teachers are generally good. The college works hard to improve attendance with the good support of outside agencies and attendance is at present in line with the national average. A few students arrive late for morning registration and lessons.

Students say that they enjoy school if not all aspects of their work. They say they feel safe knowing that if incidents of racism and bullying occur they are dealt with. There is a high take up of enrichment and extra-curricular activities. The impact of two hours physical activity for all students per week, the promotion of healthy eating options and the encouragement to drink water are encouraging students to adopt healthy lifestyles. Students can take on responsibility by serving on a purposeful and increasingly more effective school council, acting as school prefects and raising money for charities. Overall the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Students understand right from wrong and show confidence in asking questions and expressing themselves. Vocational courses, enterprise education and a well planned programme of work-related learning activities supported by outside agencies provide good opportunities for students to develop the personal qualities they need for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Much good teaching does occur, but not often enough to enable all students to consistently achieve well. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. Teachers know their subjects well and plan structured lessons that include a variety of different activities. They make the learning objectives clear to the students. In good lessons, these objectives are reviewed at the end of the lesson, and students assess their own progress. Where teachers provide stimulating activities and the chance to work in groups, students enjoy their lessons and make good progress. Good lessons are characterised by challenging work, good pace and positive relationships. In the satisfactory lessons, the pace and pitch of the work are less demanding, particularly for the more able students within the group. As a result, some students become distracted and do not maintain their motivation throughout the lesson. Some lessons start too slowly. This is because a number of students arrive late or the initial task is mundane. Marking is satisfactory overall. Where marking is good, comments relate to examination grades or National Curriculum levels and give advice on how to improve. In less effective examples, marking is not sufficiently constructive, for example failing to pick up errors. A well-organised staff development programme aimed at improving teaching is beginning to have an impact in making lessons focus more effectively on students' learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The college has a satisfactory curriculum, which is suitably broad and balanced and meets all statutory requirements. At Key Stage 4, the range of choices is good and includes vocational options. For example, students have opportunities to study photography, beauty therapy and/or construction, some through well-developed partnerships with a local college. The curriculum caters soundly for the needs of all groups, and is being developed so that it becomes more personalised. Provision and support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Provision for the most able students is less effective, and the college has correctly identified this as an area for development. The college evaluates its curriculum effectively, and has identified several appropriate areas for further development. A wide range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in physical education and music, help students to enjoy their time at the college. In addition, an impressive range of enrichment activities, such as a history trip to Ypres and visits to universities, are helping students to build a broader understanding of their studies and raise their aspirations.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support for students are good. A wide range of initiatives including mentoring and counselling along with very effective support from outside agencies provides very good pastoral care and support for students. Preventative measures are supporting those students at risk of exclusion. Support for vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and/or disability is good. Policies and procedures for safeguarding students are in place and are understood by staff. Systems to ensure that suitable staff are employed are in line with current government guidance. Systems for risk assessments, recording accidents and ensuring safe

practice are robust. Close liaison with primary schools supports the smooth transition of students into Year 7. This high standard of care and guidance combined with good links with partner institutions smoothes the transition for students at each stage of their education. Guidance on options and career choices helps students make well informed choices about their futures. The vast majority of students appreciate the good care and support that they receive. Effective systems are in place to monitor students' personal and academic progress. The systems also enable the staff to set individual academic targets and track progress over time. Students are aware of their targets but at present only have a rudimentary understanding about how to improve their academic standard.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory with some good features. The college has been through a challenging period of significant change as a result of reorganisation. Some long term absence and time lag related to the process of recruitment and selection have slowed the pace of developments. However, the newly formed leadership team is moving the college forward very effectively and it has the capacity to make further improvements rapidly. The headteacher's strong and clear leadership is creating an atmosphere of positive accomplishment. The exciting buzz provided by the sight of a new building offers a daily pick-me-up to the whole of the college community. Middle leaders feel empowered by senior staff and are keen to engage in a variety of initiatives to enhance performance, improve standards and achievement and develop clear strategies within departments towards achieving agreed objectives. Professional development and team building provided during weekly 'early closure days' are being enthusiastically embraced by staff who are committed to improving the quality of teaching and learning. Initiatives are improving the ethos of the college and having a beneficial effect on the morale of the teachers but because so many of these strategies are new they have yet to demonstrate consistent impact across the whole college.

Strategy groups have been established to review the curriculum and to improve the quality of teaching and learning through joint observation and feedback and more focused collaborative planning. The senior leadership team has a clear and convincing evaluation of how things stand and what needs to be done to improve the college's effectiveness. This is informed by data analysis and monitoring of performance. The views of parents and students are sought in appraising the college's work. The application for specialist sports college status is being led with vision, vigour and commitment. Governors are well informed and are perceptive and persistent in their support and encouragement as critical friends.

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
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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	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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	2

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	2
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?	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	2
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	2
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

29 November 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Pendle Vale College, Lancashire, BB9 8JG

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team into your college. We enjoyed talking with you and were impressed by how confidently you expressed your opinions. We found you to be very helpful, polite and friendly.

We judged your college to be providing a satisfactory quality of education with some good features. You told us that you enjoy college and generally feel safe and well cared for. We found the care, guidance and support provided by your teachers and support staff to be good. Your college works well with other agencies to support you in developing the personal qualities you need for your future life. We think your college makes good provision to promote healthy lifestyles and many of you told us how much you enjoy the sports on offer in curriculum time and at the end of the day. You generally behave well, although a few of you sometimes disrupt lessons and affect the learning of others. Most of you work hard because you want to learn and achieve highly.

We were pleased to see that performance in tests and examinations improved in 2007 and most of you are making satisfactory progress in your work. We think you could do even better if the teaching was matched more closely to your learning needs and you receive good guidance on how to improve the quality of your work. Your teachers are already working hard to improve the quality of teaching and assessment and are going to continue to develop good teaching strategies. You can do your part by taking more responsibility for your own learning and by arriving promptly to lessons.

We think that you and your teachers are creating a strong culture for learning which can continue to grow when you move into your new buildings.

We wish you a happy, healthy and productive time at Pendle Vale College and every success for the future.

Jean Kendall HMI

on behalf of all the inspectors