

# Walton-le-Dale Arts College and High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119743
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	319253
<b>Inspection dates</b>	20–21 May 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Garry Jones HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	580
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Tony Pickup
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Tony Hill
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 March 2007
<b>School address</b>	Brindle Road Bamber Bridge Preston Lancashire PR5 6RN
<b>Telephone number</b>	01772 335726
<b>Fax number</b>	01772 339494

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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school located to the south east of Preston. It serves a wide geographical area which has pockets of social and economic deprivation. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is slightly above average. The population is largely of White British origin and the number of students from minority ethnic groups is well below the national average. There is a small number of students with English as an additional language. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational need. The school is a specialist college for the arts. Its achievements have been recognised in a number of awards including Artsmark Silver Award, the Inclusion Quality Mark, the Healthy Schools Award and 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

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. This is a good school that has good capacity to improve further. The school's leadership has made important changes to the quality of the provision and this is impacting positively on students' achievements and standards.

The personal development and well-being of students are good. The majority of students attend school regularly and enjoy their education. In lessons and around school students behave well and there are good relationships between them and their teachers. Students' social, moral and cultural development is good but spiritual development is less well developed. There are many opportunities for students to contribute to the school community through the school council or by taking on positions of responsibility as prefects, mentors or monitors. In addition, students contribute to the wider community through raising funds for charities or by training pupils in local primary schools as mediators to support pupils facing difficulties. This strong personal development reflects pastoral care that is very good and ensures that students report that they have a range of people that they can turn to when they face difficulties. There is very effective support for the most vulnerable students that ensures they take a full part in the life of the school. The majority of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire valued the support the school provides and its impact on the well-being of their children.

The standards students attain are average. Pupils' attainment on entry is just below average but their skills in writing are considerably weaker. In the 2007 Key Stage 3 tests students made satisfactory progress to achieve average standards, although performance in mathematics was weaker than in English and science. The majority of students made above average progress in their GCSE examinations in 2007, although their performance in English and mathematics was well below average. Nonetheless, improvements in teaching and learning and the provision of extensive additional support and mentoring have resulted in students in the current Year 11 making good progress and being on track to achieve their challenging targets. Achievement overall is now good.

Although teaching is satisfactory there is a significant proportion of good and outstanding teaching that is ensuring that pupils now make good progress overall and particularly in Key Stage 4. The teaching in Key Stage 3 is improving but too much is no better than satisfactory. Academic guidance is robust with challenging targets and intensive support for pupils at risk of underachieving. However, when teachers are marking they do not consistently include helpful comments on what pupils need to do to improve their work. The curriculum is good. It meets the needs of students effectively in Key Stage 4 with a range of well planned pathways that allow students to access vocational courses and employment based routes. The development of an innovative course in Year 7 to develop students' skills in learning is at an early stage of development and it is too soon to evaluate its effectiveness in improving the rate of progress. The specialist status for the school has broadened the curriculum well at Key Stage 3 with the inclusion of dance and drama lessons and in Key Stage 4 an arts related subject has been included in the core of compulsory subjects. In 2007 the school met all but one of its specialist arts' targets.

The improvement of the school has been achieved through the clear sense of direction and purpose provided by the senior leadership team. The rigorous use of data to identify underachievement and set targets for improvement together with a drive to improve teaching

has resulted in improvement in the students' progress, particularly in Key Stage 4. The role of middle managers is developing and they are contributing well to monitoring and planning for improvement. The governing body is committed to the development of the school and is aware of the strengths and areas for improvement. It is effectively challenging the school to improve.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the rate of progress made by students and the standards they attain at Key Stage 3.
- Increase the proportion of good teaching, particularly in Key Stage 3.
- Improve the consistency of marking so that teachers provide guidance to pupils on how to improve their work.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards are average and achievement is good. Students currently make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3 but progress accelerates in Key Stage 4 and results in students making good progress during their time at the school.

Students enter the school with standards that are just below average but the performance in writing is significantly weaker. At the end of Key Stage 3 in 2007 standards were broadly average but the results in mathematics were weaker than in the other subjects. This represented satisfactory progress for these students. The school tracking data and the inspection evidence show that students are continuing to make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3.

At the end of Key Stage 4 in 2007 standards rose significantly and the proportion of students gaining five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE was in line with the national average. However, the proportion gaining five or more A\* to C grades including mathematics and English was well below that found nationally and attainment in these two subjects was particularly low. Data shows that the progress these students made in the school was above average overall but progress in English and mathematics was well below average. These weaknesses in achievement in English and mathematics at Key Stage 4 have been addressed rigorously and the school has compelling evidence that students' progress in Key Stage 4 is now good. Students in Year 11 are now on track to make good progress and reach challenging targets. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are making good progress.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Students' personal development and well being are good. They are polite and courteous and there are good relationships between students and with staff. The majority of students attend school regularly. Attendance has improved and is now satisfactory. They behave well in and around school and respect the recreational areas where they socialise in a responsible manner. Pupils report that incidents of bullying are rare and that these are dealt with well. They feel they are listened to and are able to make a contribution to the development of the school through the school council and to its smooth running by acting as prefects, monitors and mentors. Other students act as mediators to support those facing difficulties to reach positive solutions. Students also contribute to the wider community through extensive fund-raising and, for example, by helping to train mediators in other local schools. The social, moral and cultural development of the students is good but the opportunities for their spiritual

development are more limited. Students make mature and informed judgements about staying healthy and safe. Students are well prepared for adult life by a focus on the development of basic skills and the development of social skills to become mature and articulate young people.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory but there is a significant proportion of good and outstanding teaching. Teaching is stronger at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3 and this is reflected in the greater progress students make in their examination courses. Teachers have good subject knowledge and most lessons are well planned with a clear structure. In the best lessons students are actively engaged in a good range of activities that match their needs well. Students behave well, enjoy these lessons and make good progress. A strong feature of some of these lessons is when students are involved in assessing their own work. Other lessons lack sufficient variety and pace and there are fewer opportunities for independent learning. In some lessons work is not sufficiently matched to the full range of abilities and higher achieving students are not always effectively challenged. Teachers assess students regularly and provide feedback on their progress against their targets but the use of written comments in marking is inconsistent and as a result some students in Key Stage 3 are not always sufficiently clear on what they must do to improve. In the classes where students are involved in their own assessment they have a better understanding of what they need to do to improve their work and reach their targets.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good and meets the needs of learners and the local community well. It contributes effectively to students' good achievement at Key Stage 4 and as a result they enjoy school. Information and communication technology (ICT) is being used increasingly to support learning within lessons. The provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very good but for gifted and talented students it is not as well developed. The restructuring of the Year 7 curriculum to include the 'Opening Minds' programme to develop students' learning skills across a range of subjects is a major development. Year 7 pupils speak enthusiastically of how it is helping them to learn. However, it is too early to evaluate its impact fully.

At Key Stage 4 the provision has been revised to provide more flexibility and greater opportunities for more personalised learning and programmes of study. Students are able to follow a wider range of vocational courses and there are good links with outside providers such as the South Ribble Vocational Centre to provide work related opportunities. Specialist Arts status has resulted in a greater variety of arts related courses being studied and this makes a positive contribution to students' personal development. Students are enthusiastic about and participate well in the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities, including sport, drama and dance.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. This is a caring school which works hard to provide a 'safe haven' for all students, including the most vulnerable. The welfare of students is a high priority and all aspects of safeguarding are in place. The arrangements for child protection are excellent. The school has good links with other professionals to provide good quality care in and beyond the school day. A good example of this is the links with the police force which are already having a positive impact on the curriculum and how students understand the wider community. The school is justifiably proud of its mediation service. Students have been trained to assist with peer mediation in other schools. Parents and students say it has helped them reflect upon how their behaviour affects others. The support for students with learning, emotional and behavioural difficulties is very good. The early identification of students' underachievement or disaffection has led to highly successful alternative courses and additional guidance being provided. This has enabled them to be fully integrated into all elements of school life.

Academic guidance is robust. Challenging targets are set for all subjects and students' progress is tracked each half term which means that underachievement is identified early and a wide range of additional support, including mentoring, provided.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher is well supported by a senior management team which has been strengthened by new appointments and through the clarification of roles and responsibilities. There is a clear focus on raising achievement and providing a caring and supportive environment for all students. The school has made good use of data to set challenging targets and raise achievement and this has been particularly successful at Key Stage 4. The impact of this work in Key Stage 3 is beginning to bring about improvement but at a slower rate than in Key Stage 4. The role of middle managers is developing well and leaders of core subjects are contributing to the drive for improvement. The processes for self-evaluation are robust and the self evaluation document provided a clear overview of the strengths and areas for development in the school. The process of self-evaluation informs planning for school improvement at all levels. The governing body has developed well and effectively holds the school to account for its achievements. The governors are well aware of the strengths and areas for development and are committed to bringing about further improvement. The school uses its resources well to ensure that the school provides value for money.

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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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	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

<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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
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	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**

22 May 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Walton-le-Dale High School, Lancashire, PR5 6RN

May I on behalf of the inspection team thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we recently inspected your school. We enjoyed talking to you about your work and listening to your views on the school. May we also thank those of your parents or carers who completed the inspection questionnaire?

You told us that you felt that your school was a good school and we agree. At the last inspection your school was given a notice to improve as the progress that the students were making was not good enough. You are now making good progress during the time you spend at the school. Most of you make better progress in Years 10 and 11 than you do in Key Stage 3. The teaching you receive is satisfactory overall although there is also good and outstanding teaching. We were impressed by the range of subjects you study including dance and drama at Key Stage 3 and the opportunities for students in Key Stage 4 to follow vocational courses to prepare them for their future work. We were particularly pleased by how well you behave and your sensible approach to living and working together. You develop well as individuals into mature and confident young people and it was clear that you enjoy school and get on well with each other and the staff. The staff in the school know you well and work hard to ensure that you are looked after and are kept safe.

The school is well led by the senior staff and the governors. They know the school well and have clear plans to make the school even better. We have asked them to make sure that you make even better progress in your studies and particularly in Key Stage 3 by ensuring that more of the teaching is as good as the best. You can help them by continuing to work hard and to attend regularly.

Best wishes for the future.

Garry Jones HMI

On Behalf of the inspection team