

Cansfield High Specialist Language College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106521
Local Authority	Wigan
Inspection number	324420
Inspection dates	5–6 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Patrick Geraghty 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 (total)	960
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Eric Foster Alderman
Headteacher	Mr M Southworth
Date of previous school inspection	28 September 2005
School address	Old Road Ashton-in-Makerfield Wigan Lancashire WN4 9TP
Telephone number	01942 727391
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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 school is situated in Ashton-in-Makerfield with 64% of students coming from Ashton primary schools. The school is oversubscribed despite falling rolls locally. Cansfield serves a community drawing from the boroughs of Wigan and St Helens. Both boroughs are designated in the top 25% of most disadvantaged local authorities. Attainment on entry is just below the national average. Few students are from minority ethnic groups and the number with a first language other than English is small. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is just below the national average, while the percentage of students with a statement of special educational need is well above. Free school meal entitlement is currently at the national average. The school became a Specialist Language College in 2002 and a Training School in 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with a number of strong features. A purposeful and harmonious atmosphere exists throughout the school. Achievement and standards are good. Students make good progress from Year 7 to 11. Over a sustained period from 2004 to 2007, examination results at Key Stage 4 demonstrate year-on-year improvement to above national averages. The headteacher has established a strong aspirational culture where success is celebrated. The school acknowledges underperformance in a small minority of subjects and especially mathematics at Key Stage 4. Robust strategies are in place to promote improvement.

Students' personal development and well-being are good. The school provides an environment where students are safe and in which their self-confidence and motivation increases. Behaviour overall is good. Students enjoy school. Teaching is good with examples of outstanding practice. However, there is some inconsistency in the quality of marking and detailed feedback and in the challenge and participation offered to students in a minority of lessons. An improving curriculum is now linked to a wide range of external partnerships and opportunities for students. Progress to further education is very good. The school offers good care, guidance and support.

Senior leaders fully understand the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The school has effectively tackled the issues raised at the last inspection. There is excellent leadership from the headteacher and his senior management team, particularly in driving the improvement agenda and promoting the aspirations and self-esteem of students. Middle managers are effective and they effectively tackle underachievement through robust action plans and evaluations. Governance is good and committed to developing improvement in standards. There are good and developing links between the school and its community, as well as strong support from parents. The language specialism is well managed and has promoted a fuller understanding of community, national and global diversity. Because of measured and sustained improvement over the last four years, inspectors judged that the school has good capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the percentage of students gaining good grades at GCSE in mathematics.
- Ensure that teachers' marking in all subjects gives a clear indication to students about how to improve.
- Make sure that all lessons provide challenging opportunities for students to stretch their learning and enable further progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards are good. The majority of students enter the school in Year 7 having achieved standards that are just below the national average. Overall from Years 7 to 11 students make good progress, although boys do less well than girls. Test results in 2007 show that the rate of progress between Years 7 to 9 was at the national average. Tracking of students' work in Year 7 to 9 indicates sustained improvement and inspectors observed good and sometimes outstanding work in English, science, mathematics, modern foreign languages and geography.

Over a sustained period the school has demonstrated a good trend of improvement at Key Stage 4. The proportion of students obtaining five or more GCSE passes at grade C or above, including English and mathematics, has risen by 16% between 2004 and 2007 to just above

the national average. The percentage of students gaining 5 GCSE A* to C grades has improved from 42% in 2004 to 63% in 2007. Provisional data for 2008 indicates that this improvement has been maintained. However, this data also indicates a significant decline in the percentage of students gaining grades A* to C in mathematics. The school has identified the reasons for this underachievement and appropriate strategies are now in place to secure improvement. Inspectors found that students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are now making at least satisfactory progress. Evidence from lesson observations and the school's tracking procedures indicate it is on course to meet the challenging targets set. Good and sometimes outstanding progress was observed in English, science, history, modern foreign languages, physical education and art at Key Stage 4.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being is good and makes a significant contribution to the progress students make. Students enjoy school and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is enriched by a range of opportunities. Specialist language status is used to support international links and students have an increasing awareness of the diversity of different cultures. Students feel safe and say that the few incidents of bullying that occur are dealt with effectively. Students feel valued. Behaviour is good around the school and in those lessons where activities meet individual needs.

Students understand the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles and feel well informed on the importance of exercise and factors that have an adverse effect on health. This is reflected in the high level of participation in the wide range of

extra-curricular opportunities available to them, including sport. Students take on additional responsibilities, including school council representation and as language and training school leaders. Older students act as prefects, play an important mentoring role for Years 7 and 8 students and help with the supervision of extra-curricular activities. Students contribute to the wider community through fund raising activities for an extensive range of local, national and international charities. There is good preparation for their future education and employment through citizenship programmes and enterprise activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Good relationships between teachers and students enhance a positive and enjoyable approach to learning. The majority of lessons are well structured and planned. In the best lessons, the teacher's enthusiasm is infectious and results in students making very good progress and enjoying their work. Praise is successfully used to encourage and motivate students through the use of skilled questioning techniques that extend their answers and engage them in discussion. In less effective lessons, opportunities to develop understanding are missed because students are not given enough time to give considered responses. In these lessons teachers tend to talk too much, this stifles the pace of learning and tasks become laboured. In a small minority of lessons low level disruptive behaviour hinders progress; usually when classroom management is less effective.

Good quality resources and visual aids engage learners. Teachers use interactive whiteboards effectively to provide information, support explanations and in the best lessons students use the whiteboard to develop their learning. There are excellent displays of students' work around the school which celebrate achievement and create vibrant learning environments. Training School status has strengthened already strong continuing professional development programmes for staff.

Students know their targets and in some subjects receive very good written and oral feedback on progress. Students' evaluations of their own and others' work is used effectively to develop their understanding of how to improve. When teachers' marking is good it results in students' acting on the advice given and making changes. However, the quality of marking is not consistent across the school and some feedback does not provide enough detail for students to make the necessary progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Curricular provision is good and increasingly well matched to the wide range of different students' needs. The school has been innovative in introducing a fresh approach to its Year 7 curriculum. The Key Stage 4 curriculum has improved since the last report and there is now a good balance between academic and vocational courses. The provision of information and communication technology (ICT) in support of teaching and learning is good. Flexibility and effective collaborative arrangements with other institutions enable the curriculum to be more closely tailored to individual requirements. There is good provision for the minority of students at risk of disaffection. Effective strategies are in place to help students who experience difficulties with literacy and numeracy skills. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in sport and in the provision of additional learning support sessions. Increasing numbers are continuing formal education beyond Year 11, with those going into further education and training increasing from 74% in 2005 to 88% in 2007.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support for students are good. Partnerships with primary schools are enhanced by language college and sports leadership connections. Students settle quickly in Year 7. They know who to turn to for support and appreciate the care provided. Students receive good guidance to make informed decisions. Parents are fully involved in option choices and further education and training opportunities. Use of data to enable academic progress to be checked effectively is well established in Years 10 and 11; this is now being extended to Years 7 to 9. Those students who are underachieving or who are at risk of disaffection are supported well by teaching assistants and mentoring programmes. Good partnerships with external agencies increase support for vulnerable students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Child protection requirements and health and safety procedures are in place.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The overall quality of leadership and management is good, with many strong features. The headteacher's leadership is inspirational. Parents recognise his passionate commitment to the

welfare and development of the school. He has a clear vision for the future of the school which is manifested by a determination to strive for higher levels of achievement and to promote the aspirations, self-esteem and enjoyment of students in learning. He is ably supported by a senior team that ensures that the vision is shared by all staff and students. There are effective lines of communication and accountability. Governors enhance this accountability through good support coupled with a challenging approach to school management at all levels. Development planning is sharp and compiled with a high degree of consensus. Quality assurance systems are robust. Heads of faculty and middle managers are of high quality. Consequently, any areas for concern are speedily identified and acted upon. The school's specialist language status is well managed and used effectively to enhance the curriculum and share good practice. The school sets challenging targets for future performance and uses its resources well. It runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis and enjoys a very high degree of harmony. There is a strong commitment to inclusion and developing a greater involvement with the wider community. Overall, structures are in place to ensure a good capacity to bring about further improvements. The school gives good 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 ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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 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

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	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 eliminated	2
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
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**

Inspection of Cansfield High Specialist Language College, Wigan, WN4 9TP

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team into your school recently. We thoroughly enjoyed our two days with you. We particularly enjoyed talking to so many of you about your work, interests and how much you enjoy and give to the school.

Your school is a good school and is very well led. The headteacher, staff and governors are working hard because they want you to do the very best you can.

Most importantly your achievement and examination results have improved over the last few years. You enjoy many of your lessons, particularly when you know that you are improving and learning. However, recent results in mathematics have dipped; the headteacher and teachers are working hard to tackle this because they know how important it is for you.

There is much good and some outstanding teaching in the school and in these lessons you respond well to the teachers' high expectations and you make good progress. However, this is not the case across all the school. In some lessons you are not being given work which really stretches you or encourages you to enjoy learning, achieve well and progress. Your curriculum options are good. You enjoy a wide range of extra activities. We were particularly impressed with how many of you take part in sport and the creative arts subjects such as music, art and drama. The teachers and support staff care for you and give you good guidance.

We have asked your school to:

- increase the percentage of students gaining good grades at GCSE in mathematics
- make sure that marking in all subjects gives a clear indication to you about how to improve
- make sure that all lessons provide challenging opportunities for you to stretch your learning and enable you to progress even further.

We are sure that you will keep up your growing enthusiasm for learning and will make even better progress in the future.

All the inspection team wish you well for your future education.