

# Montgomery High School: A Language College and Full Service School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119735
<b>Local Authority</b>	Blackpool
<b>Inspection number</b>	327119
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 October 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Sonya Williamson 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>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Simon Cox
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Paul Moss
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 September 2005
<b>School address</b>	All Hallows Road Bispham Blackpool Lancashire FY2 0AZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01253 356271
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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

The school serves a coastal community and is much larger than similar schools nationally. The proportion of students who receive free school meals is average, as is the proportion with a statement of special educational need. The proportions of students from minority ethnic groups and who do not have English as their first language are very low and lower proportions than found nationally have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, all these proportions are on a rising trend. The student population is highly stable and the socio-economic characteristics of the area are mixed and similar to those across the country. The school holds several awards including Healthy Schools, Investors in People and the Football Association Charter Secondary Development award.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a popular and oversubscribed school. Parents value the happy and caring ethos in which their children learn; they say it has a 'feel good factor'. The school has benefited from its specialist status, from its extended services facilities and from its extensive use of partnership working to extend and improve the opportunities it offers for students and the wider Blackpool community. Leaders and managers of the school ensure that students stay safe; they encourage them to be healthy, to take responsibility and to help others. The wide range of vocational provision, alongside satisfactory overall achievement, prepares them well for their future lives with almost all students continuing with education or going into employment and training.

Students reach above average standards by the time they leave the school. Teaching and learning and achievement are satisfactory overall, but students make better progress during Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3 as a result of more challenging and varied teaching that is better matched to their differing needs. However, too many students overall do not understand what they need to do to improve their work to enable them to raise their standards and the higher attaining students are not sufficiently challenged by their work. The small proportions of outstanding teaching are not being used enough to spread best practice. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, and this is evidenced by improving levels of achievement and faster progress towards challenging targets after a period of decline at Key Stage 3 following the previous inspection. Checking and evaluation are not yet sufficiently well embedded to inform decision-making and ensure that key messages are heard and understood by all staff. Governors increasingly challenge as well as support the school but have not ensured that all policies are regularly reviewed.

Attendance and behaviour are good since students enjoy their school experience. They appreciate the outstanding levels of care and support and the exciting and creative opportunities offered by the good curriculum. These all contribute to students' good personal development and well-being in which social and moral development are particular strengths. However, the curriculum provides fewer opportunities for students' spiritual and cultural development and arrangements to deliver citizenship are not fully established. Vulnerable students are particularly well looked after and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Raise levels of achievement, particularly at Key Stage 3 and for the higher attaining students.
- Improve the proportion of good or better teaching and disseminate best practice more widely.
- Increase the rigour of monitoring and self-evaluation so that it better informs decision making.
- Ensure the quality and consistency of students' academic support so that they all know clearly how to secure improvement.

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

Standards are above average and achievement is satisfactory.

Standards at Key Stage 3 are broadly in line with national averages and students make satisfactory progress in their learning from their starting points which are typical of those found nationally. Trends over time and inspection evidence from lesson observations and students' work show that standards have risen further in the core subjects. The challenging targets set by the school have not been met, although there is a rising trend towards them, particularly in English and mathematics. There are pockets of underachievement which have been recognised by the school. For example, students in science and higher attaining students do not make the progress expected of them by the end of Year 9. Higher attaining students generally do not achieve as well as they should because lessons are insufficiently challenging.

The percentage of students attaining five A\* to C GCSE grades at Key Stage 4 is consistently higher than the national average and the trend is rising further. The percentage of students attaining five A\* to C grades including English and mathematics is also rising so that these standards are increasingly above those attained nationally. Progress of students speeds up between Years 10 and 11 and is good. Intervention strategies designed to help students attain expected grades have been particularly successful in English.

All groups of students make progress at least similar to that of their peers. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well because they are supported well. The school has been able to narrow the gap in achievement between students who receive free school meals and those who do not. Looked-after students also make progress in line with that of their peers. However, there is some variation in performance across subjects.

A period of staffing instability led to a decline in modern foreign language attainment but standards are now rising, particularly in French and German.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Students' personal development and well-being are good. The school is a warm, friendly and welcoming community. Students have positive relationships with each other, their teachers and other adults they meet in the school. Visitors are made to feel welcome. Behaviour around the school and in classrooms is good. The relatively recent reorganisation of lunchtime arrangements has contributed to the calm orderly atmosphere which prevails at this time. Students respect and are proud of their school environment. They know how to work safely. Students, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds and vulnerable groups, feel safe in school. They are confident that on the relatively few occasions when poor behaviour or bullying occur these will be effectively resolved.

Students are keen to come to school and be involved in activities, so pupils' attendance is above average and the proportion of students involved in extra-curricular activities is high. Boys and girls from across the age range relate to and work well with each other in the wide, interesting variety of activities which the school provides for them in the well devised Wednesday afternoon enrichment programme. The school's commitment to healthy eating has been recognised in its achieving the Healthy Schools Award with the effective school council taking a lead in promoting some of the improvements which have taken place in this area. Students enjoy taking responsibility and being part of the decision making process. Consequently, the social and moral development of students is strong. Their spiritual development is satisfactory. Links with schools in a number of countries in Europe and beyond, including a commendable commitment to help those less well off than themselves, contribute well to their cultural development. However, their understanding of the cultural diversity of modern Britain is relatively limited.

The developing range of opportunities to be involved in vocational courses is contributing effectively to students' understanding of the world of work and acquisition of workplace skills.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In Key Stage 4 it is good and satisfactory in Key Stage 3. There are small proportions of outstanding teaching, especially in Key Stage 4. There are strong working relationships between teachers and students which contribute to the learning. Students learn well when lessons are delivered with flair, planned with an understanding of their individual capabilities and structured around interesting tasks which capture their interest and imagination. In these lessons knowledge is gained quickly alongside good understanding. In one particularly good lesson open ended questioning enabled the students to think about their application of knowledge by having to make links between how tears prevent infection and the killing of slugs. The Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) courses make a significant contribution to effective coaching and the thorough exploration of key learning points.

However, not all teachers consistently check that students have understood the work covered in the lesson. In some lessons, not enough is expected of higher attaining students, whilst lower attaining students struggle to understand the work set. Activities are not always well matched to learners' needs. There are missed opportunities in some lessons for students to grasp and understand how to achieve higher standards, such as by discussing examples of higher quality work. In these lessons there is too much teacher direction with students being inactive. The inconsistent quality of marking also hinders students' progress because they are unable to understand how to improve and reach the next level in their work.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good with some outstanding features. At Key Stage 4 there is a rich menu of options with significant vocational provision. This provides students with access to learning pathways tailored to individual needs, which is a strength of the school. The BTEC programmes make a significant contribution to standards for Key Stage 4. They also contribute to students' sense and understanding of the world of work. The school has taken some brave and creative decisions with the Key Stage 3 curriculum. There are now five established pathways of choice with English, mathematics and science taught separately so that they can concentrate more effectively on raising achievement in Key Stage 3. However, the impact of these revised pathways programmes on standards in Key Stage 3 is as yet unproven.

The specialist college status is reflected in student access to the main languages of French, German and Spanish, with twilight provision for Italian, Arabic and Japanese. The number of students taking one language is high and many take two. The specialist status is also strengthening local and international partnerships which widen students' experiences.

A programme of personal, social and health education is offered which helps to promote awareness of safety, health and well-being. However, this is not delivered consistently across both key stages and learning opportunities can be missed for those students who are not in school for the 'Super Learning Days'. Citizenship is not yet reported to parents and has only

just been included in Year 7 provision and therefore does not meet statutory requirements. In Key Stage 4, students receive just one hour of physical education which is below recommended guidance.

Students have access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities. They participate in charity work and their engagement is a reflection of the school's commitment to the local and wider community. Students enjoy their education and are active participants in the school community.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Montgomery is a very inclusive school. A Year 11 student said, 'every child does matter here'. There is a very strong commitment to equality and opportunity. Great emphasis is placed on ensuring that every student's personal needs are met. Inspectors agree with the school's judgement that the pastoral support students receive, in particular those who are vulnerable and those with learning disabilities and/or disabilities, is outstanding. Students speak very highly of the support that they receive. One student said, 'They don't give up on anybody'. Students' care, guidance and support are enhanced by very strong and effective links with outside agencies. These links are further enhanced through the Full Service School. Students say that they feel safe and parents agree. Careers education is underdeveloped. Partnership links help smooth the transition at each stage of the student's education. Child protection and safeguarding arrangements are in place and understood by staff. Systems for tracking students' academic progress are developing. The school is beginning to provide appropriate support where students are identified as underachieving. This support is more effective for students in Years 10 and 11 where underachievement is identified by grades. However, it is not always identified and acted upon in lessons. Many students know their personal target levels or grades but few, other than in general terms, know how to improve their work and take ownership of their learning. Inconsistencies in marking to inform learning across and within departments, does not support students' ownership of their learning.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory and there is satisfactory capacity to improve further. The impact of leadership and management on raising achievement and supporting all learners has not been consistently good. The school went through a period after the previous inspection when energies were focused on a range of initiatives intended to improve the way students' differing needs were met. However, the outcomes from these initiatives were not monitored sufficiently closely to ensure that they resulted in raising achievement for all students. The extended services provision provided by the 'QA' centre, alongside the outstanding care and support systems within the school, have helped to secure further the happy and positive ethos. The school has made good efforts to promote community cohesion and ensure equality of opportunity but opportunities are missed to raise students' awareness of living in a multicultural society. The curriculum became increasingly flexible and creative to meet students' needs and this helped to improve results at five A\* to C GCSE grades. Insufficient emphasis was given to improving teaching and learning in Key Stage 3 and underachievement that had been identified during the previous inspection remained.

Since autumn 2007 senior leaders have begun to address the outstanding areas for improvement by setting clearer priorities. They have had good support and challenge from the local authority. Strategic decision-making has been strengthened and key posts are better matched to staff's areas of expertise. In particular, the school is developing systems to enable them to track student progress more robustly and use the information as part of more rigorous self-evaluation. The school's evaluation of its work overall is too high. Its methods for checking and evaluating are improving and are gradually being used by leaders and managers at all levels but the key messages are not communicated sufficiently clearly to promote accountability. Nevertheless, progress is being made towards challenging targets. Governance is inadequate overall since not all policies have been appropriately reviewed. Governors are improving their ability to challenge as well as to provide support. They have successfully tackled weaknesses in financial management.



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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 <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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<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>	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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 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	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
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**

Dear Students

Inspection of Montgomery High School: A Language College and Full Service School, Blackpool, FY2 0AZ

Thank you very much for the exceptionally warm welcome you gave to us when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you because you were so well-mannered and confident in explaining your views.

Montgomery is a satisfactory school which has particular strengths in the outstanding way you are cared for and supported and in the ways it helps you to achieve good personal development and well-being. Those of you who are a little more vulnerable are especially well looked after and achieve well. The curriculum is creative and you have a wider range of opportunities to choose courses you want to study than in many other schools. These points, and the wide-ranging extra-curricular activities, help explain why you told us that you enjoy being at school. The language college status and the extended services your school provides bring you many benefits.

Students leave your school with above average standards but at the moment you make better progress in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. This is because of more challenging and varied teaching in Key Stage 4 that is better matched to your differing needs. We want the school to make sure you do as well as you can throughout school. We also think that teachers' marking and the academic guidance you receive does not give you a good enough idea about how to improve your grades. Teaching is satisfactory overall but some is outstandingly good so we have asked the teachers to improve the ways they share their ideas about how to teach most effectively and to challenge those of you who usually get high grades even more.

Your school is very popular and your parents are happy with the way it is run. They say it has a 'feel good factor'. We judged that leadership and management are satisfactory because after a period when students' progress in Key Stage 3 was not good enough, your achievement is now improving. We have asked leaders and managers to be more rigorous in the way they check on how well things are going and whether their new ideas continue to bring about improvement.

You can help by continuing to work hard and attend as well as you do. Let your teachers know if you are not sure about how to improve your work and rise to the challenge if you are given harder tasks to do.

We hope you will continue the tradition in your school that almost everyone goes on to further education, training or employment. Have a happy future.

Best wishes on behalf of the inspection team.

Sonya Williamson

Her Majesty's Inspector