

Carr Hill High School & Sixth Form Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119744
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	327120
Inspection dates	17–18 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Angela M Headon 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1247
Sixth form	92
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ian Marquis
Headteacher	Mrs Jean McGrath (Temporary Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2005
School address	Royal Avenue Kirkham Preston Lancashire PR4 2ST
Telephone number	01772 682008
Fax number	01772 673048

Age group	11–18
Inspection dates	17–18 September 2008
Inspection number	327120

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: 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 and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Carr Hill School and Sixth Form Centre is a larger than average secondary school, situated to the west of Preston. The number of students eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is similar to national figures. Few students are from minority ethnic groups. The school has achieved specialist engineering status and has secured a number of awards including Investors in People, the Financial Management Standard, Sportsmark, Artsmark Silver and Healthy Schools. Following the retirement of the previous headteacher, a temporary headteacher has been appointed by the school for one term. A permanent headteacher will be in post from January 2009.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13(3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all circumstances it could be reasonably expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to students' achievement and standards.

Although standards are broadly in line with the national average, students do not achieve as well as they could in relation to their levels of attainment on entry to the school. The progress students make between Years 7 to 11 has continued to decline significantly over the past three years and is unsatisfactory overall.

In 2007, the percentage of students attaining five or more GCSE grades at C or above increased, with students continuing to make good progress in design technology, history, physical education and general studies. Nonetheless, there was no improvement when English and mathematics results were included in this measure. Standards in both English and mathematics declined, as did the percentage of students attaining A* to A grades in all subjects. At Key Stage 3, however, there were improvements in national test results in English and mathematics with a significantly higher percentage of students attaining expected and higher levels in science. This overall improvement has started to address the previous levels of significant underachievement between Years 7 and 9.

Unvalidated GCSE results in 2008 presently indicate a decline in a number of performance measures including the percentage of students achieving five A* to C grades including English and mathematics and the proportion of students achieving a C grade or above in all core subjects. In the specialist curriculum areas, including design technology, mathematics and science, not all targets have been met.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Although inspectors observed both good and outstanding practice, the proportion of satisfactory and inadequate lessons is too high to enable students to make sufficient progress overall. Systems for monitoring teaching and learning and tracking student performance are in place, but the school recognises that these are not yet rigorous enough to impact significantly on student performance.

Both students' personal development and well-being and the quality of the curriculum are good. These contribute well to students' achievements. Pastoral care is also good and students feel safe and well supported within the school. Students have positive attitudes to learning, with good and improved levels of attendance. Good relationships are evident throughout the school community. Parents are both positive and supportive although, for a small number, students' academic progress and the quality of follow-up communication are a concern.

The recently appointed temporary headteacher is acutely aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and is responding swiftly to the challenge of tackling underachievement and raising standards. Staff and governors are wholly supportive and are working hard to bring about rapid improvement. There are already some signs of success. Improved progress between Years 7 and 9, increased attendance and the continuing personalisation of the curriculum, demonstrate a satisfactory capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Students enjoy their time in the sixth form and show maturity and commitment to their studies. Although there has been some decline in student progress measures, presently standards are satisfactory, as is achievement. The school is aware that the proportion of students achieving the highest grades at A-level needs to improve. Students on A-level courses in product design, physical education and sociology make good progress.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall with examples of good teaching. The curriculum offers a broad range of traditional level three courses, with vocational provision in engineering and health and social care.

Students speak highly of the pastoral support they receive and regard the excellent relationships with staff as a key strength. Attendance is closely monitored by both tutorial staff and the head of the sixth form. Guidance and advice, particularly regarding future learning and work opportunities, is also effective. Destination information shows that all students enter higher education, join apprenticeships or take up employment.

Leadership of the sixth form is satisfactory. The school is actively focused on strategies to raise achievement and increase student numbers in both year groups.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, particularly in English and mathematics, to enable students to achieve the outcomes of which they are capable.
- Ensure the monitoring of teaching and learning is more robust so that a much higher proportion of teaching is good or outstanding
- Use assessment and tracking information consistently across the school to ensure all students are sufficiently challenged.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

In 2007, although the percentage of students achieving five or more GCSE grades at C or above increased, the number of students attaining both five A* to C grades, with English and mathematics and five A* to G grades remained static.

GCSE results at grade C or above improved in English, after a dip in 2006, but declined in both mathematics and science. Standards in both English and mathematics also declined in 2007. The percentage of students attaining A* to A grades in all subjects fell below the national average. Attainment, however, in both GCSE design technology and history continued to improve and, with PE and general studies, was significantly above the national figure.

At Key Stage 3, national test results improved in English at expected levels and at higher levels in mathematics, with a significant increase in science at both expected and higher levels. However, given students' average starting points, progress between Years 7 and 9 remained in the lowest quartile nationally. Achievement overall, between Years 7 to 11, is unsatisfactory.

The 2008 unvalidated GCSE examination results indicate that the number of students attaining five A* to C grades and grades C or above in English, mathematics and science has declined.

The school recognises the need to raise standards across the curriculum and improvement strategies are being introduced. However, there has been insufficient time for any impact to be fully evident.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Within lessons, students generally enjoy their education and show positive attitudes to learning. Movement between classrooms is orderly and students behave in a safe and responsible manner. They report that bullying incidents are rare and are dealt with quickly and effectively.

Students have a good understanding of their own well-being and the school has achieved the Healthy Schools award. The year councils and school council are well established and the prefect system enables students to take on responsibility, help with the day-to-day running of the school and support younger students. The school has developed strong links with both local schools and employers within the community and students are actively involved in a range of activities. For example, some have helped in a nearby special school and others have worked in partnership with a local housing association to refurbish gardens and decorate homes.

The appointment of an attendance officer in 2007 and improved monitoring procedures have improved attendance, which is now good. Student exclusions have reduced and rewards are used well, to celebrate achievement and promote positive attitudes to learning. Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is sound. Effective careers education, along with good opportunities to develop their business and enterprise skills enable students to equip themselves for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. In most lessons relationships are good and students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are positive.

In the best lessons, teachers' expectations are high and there is a variety of interesting activities which engage and challenge students of all ability levels. Challenging questioning is a key feature and students enjoy these lessons. Less successful lessons are overly dominated by the teacher with little opportunity for independent learning. In some lessons observed, where teaching did not engage or sufficiently challenge students, low-level disruption was also evident.

Generally lessons are well prepared using a common format and students understand what they are expected to learn. However, in a number of subjects, assessment information is not yet precise enough to ensure planned tasks are well matched to students' abilities.

Although many students know their target levels and grades, they are unsure how to improve their work to achieve them. The use of marking to provide guidance on how to improve varies between subjects and classes. The school has recognised the need to strengthen teaching and learning and a programme of professional development to support, inform and coach staff is now in place.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The breadth of the curriculum at Key Stage 3 and 4 is good with statutory requirements, including those for citizenship, being met. The range of courses available to students in Years 10 and 11 has increased and is further enhanced through the use of enterprise activities and the school's specialist status. These cater well for a wide variety of interests and capabilities.

Partnership work with both business and the local college has helped students to access and gain accreditation, in both vocational and work-related courses. For example, a number of students are presently following the 'young apprenticeship' route with Age Concern. Personal, social and health education is well established within the main school, contributing well to students' good personal development. All students are involved in work experience in Year 10.

Outside the classroom, students enthusiastically engage in a wide variety of extra-curricular activities, especially in sport and drama, and they participate in a variety of visits and trips. Students say that they enjoy these opportunities and this is reflected in participation rates.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory with good features. Students are well known to staff and the quality of pastoral care throughout the school is good.

The 'achievement centre' provides valuable support and guidance for those at risk and the school works well with a wide range of outside agencies. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive appropriate pastoral support and their academic progress is similar to their peers.

Effective links with primary schools help to ensure that students are well-prepared for their transition into Year 7. Similarly, good guidance on GCSE and post-16 options helps students to make relevant and informed choices.

Safeguarding and child protection procedures are in place and meet requirements. All necessary health and safety procedures are followed and risk assessments are completed, where appropriate. Academic guidance is satisfactory. All students have target grades and levels, but are not consistently informed of what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. In a short period of time the temporary headteacher's good and focused leadership has provided the school with a clear strategic direction firmly focused on raising student performance.

The extent of students' underachievement has been fully shared and is understood by all staff and school leaders. This is now resulting in productive dialogue and enabling the school to take the necessary steps to address areas requiring improvement, including teaching and learning and the use of assessment information.

The headteacher is strengthening the effectiveness of all leaders, enabling them to become more fully involved in evaluating the work of the school. This includes developing closer links

between senior and middle leaders, with increasing collective accountability for students' results. School leaders are aware that, at present, the monitoring of teaching and learning lacks rigour and that too much teaching is no better than satisfactory. The analysis of performance data and the use of targets are also not yet sharp enough to guide teachers and ensure high expectations and levels of challenge in all lessons. The focus on increasing the proportion of good or better teaching remains a high priority.

Through vocational programmes and extended partnership work with schools, business, further and higher education institutions, the school has used its specialist status well to enhance students' understanding and involvement with the local and wider community.

Governors are very supportive and are fully committed to the school. They are now well informed and confident to ask the necessary critical questions to fully hold leaders to account. However, the school has not made adequate progress since the previous inspection and presently does not provide satisfactory value for money.

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?	4	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	4	

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	2
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	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	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	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	4	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
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?	Yes	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

19 September 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Carr Hill High School & Sixth Form Centre, Lancashire, PR4 2ST

Following our inspection of your school, we would like to thank you for speaking to us in meetings, around the school and in lessons about your experiences. This proved very helpful.

You were complimentary about your school and are pleased to have specialist status. You appreciated the range of extra-curricular activities available and you told us that generally you enjoyed school and felt safe.

Inspectors agreed with much of what you said. However, we also think that the school needs to improve in some important areas. At present, you are not making the progress you should and this shows in your test and examination results. You are capable of achieving so much more.

For this reason, your school has been given a 'Notice to Improve', which means that we will visit your school again during the next year. These are the improvements we have asked the school to make.

Raise standards, particularly in English and mathematics, to enable students to achieve the outcomes they are capable of.

Ensure the monitoring of teaching and learning is more robust so that a much higher proportion of teaching is good or outstanding

Use assessment and tracking information consistently across the school to ensure all students are sufficiently challenged.

We know that your headteacher, governors and all the staff at your school have your best interests at heart and we wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Angela M Headon

Her Majesty's Inspector