

Fearns Community Sports College

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 119745 |
| Local Authority | Lancashire |
| Inspection number | 327121 |
| Inspection dates | 8–9 October 2008 |
| Reporting inspector | Angela Milner HMI |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 11–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 0 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr David Baron |
| Headteacher | Mr Mark Smallwood |
| Date of previous school inspection | 1 November 2005 |
| School address | Fearns Moss Bacup Lancashire OL13 0TG |
| Telephone number | 01706 873896 |
| Fax number | 01706 875029 |

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|--------------------------|------------------|
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Fearn Community Sports College is a smaller than average comprehensive school. The area has higher than average levels of socio-economic deprivation. The percentage of students entitled to free school meals is below the national average but above the local authority average. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than that found nationally and the proportion of students with statements is more than double the national average. The students are predominantly of White British heritage. The school is a specialist sports college. It has attained Investors in People, Healthy Schools, International Schools, Sportsmark and Artsmark awards and is a Partnership Promotion School.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Fearn Community Sports College provides a satisfactory education. It is an improving school with many good features. Mutual respect and good relationships create an inclusive learning environment and a friendly, community atmosphere. The school provides good quality care, guidance and support for its students. It has taken the initiative to forge outstanding partnerships with a range of agencies to promote effectively the five Every Child Matters outcomes for students at the school. As a result, there is excellent on-site access to health care and careers and guidance professionals. There is particularly strong support for vulnerable students and those most at risk of disaffection. Adults work as part of an effective team to raise aspirations and develop the potential of each student. Students and staff feel valued. They enjoy and appreciate what the school has to offer. Parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire were positive in their views of the school and comment favourably on recent improvements.

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Students develop clear values about respect and fair play, as well as appropriate skills for their adult lives. Although attendance is improving, it remains slightly below the national average. Students' behaviour is good, both in and out of lessons. They enjoy school, develop positive attitudes to learning and participate in the life of the school and the local community.

Students enter the school with standards of attainment that are below average. They make slower than expected progress from Years 7 to 9. Standards at the end of Year 9 remain below average in English and science, where there have been a number of staffing issues. These have now been addressed. Students make better progress in Years 10 to 11. Although standards are improving, they remain below the national average at the end of Year 11. In the drive to improve standards, the school sets itself challenging targets, based on a detailed analysis of students' attainment and progress. Effective learning support ensures that lower attaining students make satisfactory progress.

The satisfactory achievement of students reflects teaching that is satisfactory overall. Although the quality of teaching is improving and the majority of teaching observed during the inspection was good or better, the significant proportion of satisfactory teaching is preventing students from making good progress and achieving their potential. The use of assessment data and individual education plans for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to inform planning and provide well-matched learning activities is inconsistent. There is some variation in the quality of marking between and within subjects. This means that feedback from teachers does not always inform students exactly how to improve their work.

The curriculum is good. It has a balance of academic and vocational courses and is carefully matched to the individual needs of students. Work-related learning opportunities and effective careers guidance prepare students for their life beyond school. An extensive range of extra-curricular activities contributes well to students' personal development and well-being. Sports college status permeates the life of the school. It has been used very effectively to move the school forward, enrich the curriculum, raise achievement, promote motivational approaches to teaching, learning and assessment, and develop community links and students' self-esteem.

The headteacher and leadership team provide good leadership and management of the school. They have successfully promoted an aspirational ethos, a real sense of community and positive relationships amongst staff and students. The school is focused on raising standards and

providing quality care and support. The governing body of the school is committed to its development. Use of systematic monitoring and effective self-evaluation means the school can identify its strengths and the areas it needs to improve. The school has dealt well with the issues raised in the last inspection report and there is good capacity to improve at all management levels.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the progress students make in their learning at Key Stage 3 in English and science.
- Use assessment information more effectively when planning activities to meet the learning needs of all students.
- Improve the consistency of the marking of students' work so that they are clear what they have to do to improve.

A small proportion of 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 broadly average and overall achievement is satisfactory. Students' attainment on entry to the school is typically below average, with some variation from one year group to another. In 2007, standards at the end of Year 9 were well below the national average in English, below the national average in science and above the national average in mathematics. Standards at Key Stage 4 have improved steadily over the last five years. While they remain below the national average, the school had its best ever GCSE results in 2007. In 2008, at the end of Year 11, the provisional results show that 36% of pupils gained five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics. Few students leave the school without a qualification.

Progress is slower between Years 7 and 9 than between Years 10 and 11, especially in English and science, and for boys with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Inspection evidence shows that current students are making satisfactory progress when measured against their starting points. Underachievement is identified and steps are taken to address it through the use of appropriate intervention strategies. Students with additional learning needs are well supported and make progress in line with their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The personal development and well-being of students are good. Religious education short course GCSE provision, which emphasises philosophy and ethics, personal development sessions and assemblies make a strong contribution to the spiritual, moral and social development of students. The cultural development of students is less well developed and more could be done to ensure students have a better understanding of Britain as a diverse society. Students say they feel safe and are confident that rare incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively. Students benefit from the adoption of safe practices and healthy lifestyles and know where to go to receive help and advice. The majority of students behave well, treating each other and adults with respect and demonstrating sensitivity to each other's needs. The school has worked effectively on a number of initiatives to consolidate and improve attendance since the last inspection. Despite these improvements attendance rates remain slightly below the national

average. Students make a positive contribution to their community through their work as prefects, peer mentors and their membership of school focus groups. They participate in fund raising activities to support charities, international links and visits and 'Team Challenges', involving them in activities such as pond clearing and tree planting to improve the local environment. As a result of the school's strategies to raise educational aspirations, increasing numbers of students aim to participate in continuing education, training or employment. The school is working hard to ensure students develop the key skills and personal qualities required for future study and the world of work and to overcome barriers to learning. Students' opinions and suggestions are regularly sought through the use of detailed questionnaires, focus groups and the school's virtual learning environment.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school's judgements that overall teaching and learning are satisfactory. The school is clear about what constitutes effective teaching and learning. Professional working groups and a comprehensive staff training programme are bringing about improvements. The majority of the teaching observed during the inspection was good or better and the rest was satisfactory. Good staff/student relationships are a hallmark of most lessons. Students enjoy and make the greatest progress in lessons where they are fully involved in a range of challenging and purposeful teaching and learning activities. The best lessons are well planned and focused on learners' needs. They are conducted at a brisk and challenging pace. Occasionally, pupils do not make enough progress because the lesson lacks pace or there is insufficient challenge. Teachers are provided with detailed assessment tracking information and useful individual educational plans for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, these are not used consistently by teachers to ensure lesson activities are sufficiently well matched to students' needs. There are inconsistencies in the quality of marking. Although work is marked regularly and there are examples of good practice, not all marking helps students to identify their strengths and ensure they know how to improve their work. This variability of practice in teaching, learning and assessment means that not all students make the progress they should in every lesson.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides its students with a good curriculum that meets statutory requirements and is responsive to local needs. Students of all ages have the opportunity to meet interesting visitors and take part in exciting residential visits, which enrich the curriculum well. Having identified the need to develop its provision further, the school is devising a broader, more creative and inclusive curriculum in Years 7 to 9. The school works very well with a number of educational and training partners to provide an extensive range of academic and vocational courses in Years 10 to 11. These opportunities for older students are carefully tailored to meet their needs, increase their enjoyment of learning, enhance their achievements and help them access education, training and employment opportunities when they leave school. All students undertake work-related learning experiences in Year 10. The school is tackling the need to improve students' basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. Sports college status has enriched the curriculum and extended the opportunities for students to play an active part in an extensive range of voluntary activities. A strength of

the curriculum is the range of extra-curricular activities offered. These include the many sporting opportunities, art and the performing arts and the use of computers for leisure activities. Good participation rates indicate these activities make a valuable contribution to students' personal development and well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The care, guidance and support of students are good. Students say staff are friendly, caring and approachable regarding study or personal problems. The welfare of students lies at the heart of the school. This strong emphasis on care is reflected in the positive relationships which exist between teachers, support staff and students and the very strong sense of community within the school. Effective transition arrangements, including the use of prefects to work with tutor groups in Year 7, ensure those new to the school settle in quickly. Safeguarding, child protection, health and safety and risk assessment systems exist and are well managed. The school actively promotes inclusion and equality. Students at risk and vulnerable students are identified and well supported. Effective liaison takes place with a number of external agencies involved in supporting students with a range of complex needs. The provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. The long established support systems for student welfare have been enhanced to provide a greater focus on improving standards and the provision of effective academic guidance. All staff are committed to encouraging enjoyment and achievement and raising educational aspirations. Students know their current assessment levels and the targets they are working towards. The school works hard with parents and carers to make them feel welcome and to involve them in their child's education. Regular and informative reports are sent to parents. The school works in partnership with a range of training and educational providers and the Connexions Service to provide effective support and advice about career progression.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The quality of leadership and management is good at all levels. The school is well led and managed by a headteacher and leadership team who provide a clear vision for its development and improvement and work effectively together in translating this vision into reality. The school has moved forwards on a number of fronts since the previous inspection: standards are rising, attendance rates and behaviour have improved, the number of exclusions has reduced, the curriculum has been developed and substantial efforts have been made to improve the quality of teaching and assessment practice. Staff feel valued. They speak enthusiastically about the clarity in the roles and responsibilities of senior and middle managers and the expert guidance and support they provide for the school's improvement. Effective training, support and professional development are helping to strengthen self-evaluation, self-review and teaching quality. Well conceived systems are in place to monitor the work of the school. As a result, the school's self-evaluation is honest and accurate. School development plans have appropriate priorities for improvement, based on raising standards and meeting the needs of all students. An effective team of middle leaders takes responsibility for the quality of provision in their subject and pastoral areas.

Specialist school status is led and managed well to the school's advantage. The excellent sporting facilities are well used by the local community. The school has a clear understanding of what

is required to promote community cohesion. This is based on a sound analysis of its own community's and local needs. It is moving forwards well on the extended schools agenda. Outstanding partnerships with a range of external agencies have been used to make the school distinctive and have had an extremely positive impact on students' personal development and well-being. However, there are currently too few opportunities for students to develop an understanding of cultural diversity and prepare them for life in multicultural Britain.

Governors know the school and its community very well. They monitor the school's progress carefully. They receive good information from the headteacher and are aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. This, together with their high level of commitment, enables them to carry out their duties successfully. Resources are well managed and deployed. However, the school provides satisfactory rather than good value for money, because currently there is still room for improvement in teaching and learning and students' achievement. Given its progress since the last inspection, the school is well placed to tackle these improvements and demonstrates a good capacity to improve.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

| | |
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| 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? | 1 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 |

Achievement and standards

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|--|---|
| 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/or disabilities make progress | 3 |

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 | 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 | 3 |

The quality of provision

| | |
|--|---|
| How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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 |

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? | 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 |

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

10 October 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Fearn Community Sports College, Lancashire, OL13 0TG

Thank you for the contribution you made to the recent inspection of your school. We enjoyed being at your school and talking with many of you and were impressed by your friendliness, courtesy and honesty. Many of your parents completed questionnaires. This meant we were able to consider their views during the inspection.

We found that your school provides you with a satisfactory education. It is working very hard to encourage you to believe in your abilities and enjoy your education. The headteacher, staff and governors are raising standards and continually improving the school. There are good relationships between yourselves and members of staff. You are well cared for and provided with opportunities to become prepared for life beyond school. Many of you take advantage of the opportunities provided to engage in a wide range of activities within and beyond the school, especially those connected with its specialism as a sports college. We were particularly impressed by the way you have helped to improve your school through your work on school focus groups. You behave well and told us you enjoy your time in school.

Whilst we judged your school to be satisfactory with many good features there are three areas we have asked the school to improve further. These are to:

- help you to make more progress in your learning at Key Stage 3 and in English and science
- make sure teachers use the information they collect on your progress to plan their lessons
- make sure teachers provide clear advice on how to improve your work.

Of course you can all help to continue to improve your school by behaving well, working as hard as you can to achieve your best in tests and examinations and by continuing to share your views about the school with the staff.

Thank you again for your help in this inspection and we would like to wish you all the very best in your studies and every success in the future.

Angela Milner

Her Majesty's Inspector