

# Carnforth High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119748
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	327122
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 February 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Paul Chambers 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 (total)	502
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Mike Dudfield
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr John Shannon
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 February 2006
<b>School address</b>	Kellet Road Carnforth Lancashire LA5 9LS
<b>Telephone number</b>	01524 732424
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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

Carnforth High School is a small secondary school that serves the town of Carnforth and the surrounding districts in north Lancashire. There are more boys than girls and more student mobility in and out of the school than in most schools. Most students are of White British heritage. The proportion of students for whom English is an additional language is broadly average; out of these students, several are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average, but the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The proportion of students who are entitled to a free school meal is in line with the national average. The school has specialist status in science and holds a number of awards, including Investors in People, Healthy School, Sportsmark and Eco-school awards.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Carnforth High School is a good and improving school, providing a good level of education for its students. The school's mission is to provide a world class education where all students are ambitious to achieve, have high aspirations for their future and play an integral part in the community that they serve. The school is making significant progress towards delivering this. Standards are on a clear upward trend and the school has successfully tackled a range of issues that were previously slowing students' progress. Parents agree that this is a good and improving school; out of the unusually large number of replies to the inspection questionnaire, the overwhelming majority were very supportive. Typically positive comments were 'the school goes from strength to strength' and 'I would recommend this school to anyone'.

Students join the school with attainment that is in line with national expectation for their age; by the time they leave the school they attain standards that are above average. This represents good achievement. Students achieve well because of good teaching, supported by strong academic guidance that includes setting challenging targets and effective advice on how to improve. Many students, particularly those on applied learning courses, make outstanding progress in Key Stage 4.

Students benefit from outstanding levels of care and support. As a result of this and their good relationships with staff, students enjoy school, attend regularly and behave well. Students feel safe and show a good awareness of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. They make a positive contribution in school, for example through the school council, and also in the local community.

Teaching is good because teachers have high expectations and plan work that captures students' interest. Appropriate strategies to improve teaching are concentrating on making learning memorable and encouraging students to think for themselves. However, in the less effective lessons, students are too dependent on the teacher's input and do not take sufficient responsibility for their own learning. Students benefit from a good curriculum, which helps them to develop strong team-working skills, and from good guidance on pathways for their futures that are well tailored to their interests and aptitudes.

Leadership and management are good. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher has helped to create a team of staff who work together effectively and who focus relentlessly on improving students' achievements. His high aspirations are shared by staff and students. The school's specialist status has played its part in the recent rise in standards. The introduction of an applied learning course has contributed to high numbers of students achieving GCSE-equivalent qualifications in science, and has encouraged other areas of the school to introduce applied learning opportunities. The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory and is focused mainly on the local community; more work is needed on increasing students' understanding of the wider global community and monitoring and evaluating the impact of the school's actions. The school's good capacity for further improvement is demonstrated by generally accurate self-evaluation, the progress made since the last inspection and the improved standards attained by the students.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve its contribution to community cohesion, including monitoring and evaluating the impact of its actions.
- Provide more opportunities for students to develop as independent learners.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Students join the school with attainment that is in line with the expectation for their age. By the end of Key Stage 3 standards remain close to the national average. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards are above average. For example, in 2008 the proportion of students with five or more good passes at GCSE including English and mathematics was 55%, compared with the national average of 48%. This was a significant improvement on the two previous years. Well-founded data provided by the school suggests that these higher standards are being maintained and improved upon by current students. Standards in the key subjects of English and mathematics are broadly average.

Inspection evidence confirms that current students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language, make good progress. The achievement of students is good overall and many make outstanding progress in Key Stage 4, particularly in applied learning subjects. Students' achievements were particularly impressive in 2008. Data confirm that students made significantly greater gains in their learning than similar students in other schools. Students generally meet the demanding targets set for them, including in the school's specialist subjects.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good and has a notable impact on their academic progress. Students feel safe and believe that any problems such as bullying are dealt with quickly. They appreciate that the school provides them with a balanced insight into healthy and responsible lifestyles and this contributes to their good social skills. Many take advantage of the variety of healthy food options that are available in the school canteen. Attendance has improved and is now good, confirming that students enjoy being at school. They say one reason why they like coming to school is because teachers listen to them. In addition, the school council plays an active part in promoting the students' views. Behaviour is good. During lessons students work together well and show respect for teachers and other adults in the classroom. Students undertake a wide range of responsibilities that enhance their personal development, from training to become 'buddies' for younger students to delivering assemblies and being responsible for and maintaining, the eco-garden. Many students participate in extra-curricular activities such as music, the astronomy club or mixed football. Students also make good contributions to the local community through, for example, fundraising activities, litter-picking and participating in a project to redesign Lancaster Square. The preparation of students for future economic well-being is satisfactory. Students develop the qualities for adult working life through their life skills course and work experience, but opportunities for developing some key skills, particularly independent learning, are limited.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

The school accurately judges the quality of teaching and learning as good. Students' strong relationships with staff and positive attitudes contribute considerably to their enjoyment of school. The praise and encouragement they receive motivates them and raises their aspirations.

In the most successful lessons teachers enable students to take responsibility for their own learning and assessment. For example, in many of the lessons seen, students were challenged to reflect on 'what went well' and how their work could be 'even better if', and this helped them to understand how they could improve in the future. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge and well-targeted questioning successfully to deepen students' understanding and extend their thinking. Good levels of collaborative working are evident in many lessons. In a small number of lessons teaching is less effective. These lessons lack pace or challenge and opportunities for students to develop their key skills, particularly in speaking and listening, and for independent learning are limited. The school has effective professional development arrangements for sharing good practice and is working to increase the proportion of outstanding lessons.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good and contributes to students making good progress both academically and in their personal development. It meets statutory requirements and is increasingly tailored to the needs of the individual. All subjects promote wider cross-curricular personal learning and problem solving skills. Effective links with the local college and other organisations enable the school to offer more applied learning courses, including individual work placements and young apprenticeships. An extensive range of extra-curricular activities, some driven by the school's specialism, further enhances the students' experiences. Enrichment opportunities in many subjects and particularly in science, sport and the arts support the inclusive ethos of the school. Able students have opportunities to study for additional GCSEs in general studies and media studies, and a summer school for gifted and talented students is well established. An increasing number of trips and enrichment days provide good opportunities for students to develop their talents and interests.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Teachers work very closely with an extensive number of outside agencies to ensure that the care and support of all students is of the highest standard and meets their specific needs. Students expressed particular appreciation of the support they receive in the 'Y Pod' drop-in centre and from staff when they want to discuss problems. Measures to improve attendance and punctuality have recently had a marked impact. An excellent induction process helps teachers to monitor the progress and well-being of students new to the school and identifies specific needs very well. As a result of the school's secure monitoring systems and the strong relationships with staff, all students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, benefit from extremely effective support. All statutory requirements for the safeguarding of students are met.

Academic guidance is good. Students know their target grades and some can explain what they need to do to reach even higher grades. Parents value the extra guidance provided in revision classes and the commitment shown by all staff. A typical response in the inspection questionnaire states that 'the school develops the individual by nurturing talent and stretching them academically'. Students can make informed choices about their future as a result of their work placements and good careers education and guidance.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed and provides good value for money. The headteacher has successfully built a positive approach among staff across the school and has raised aspirations among both staff and students. His drive and enthusiasm are at the heart of the school's good and improving reputation locally. Parents are highly supportive of the school and appreciate the recent improvements in standards and achievement.

This is an inclusive school, where equality of opportunity is promoted well. For example, students' good achievement has been maintained even though more students than expected join the school after the beginning of Year 7. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion; leaders have a good understanding of the local context and are beginning to provide more opportunities for students to understand all aspects of the wider national and global communities.

Governors provide a good level of support and challenge, and hold the school to account well. The school's specialist status has contributed to the improving trends in the school and has had an impact on the community through strengthening links with local primary schools. For example, a primary school science club has attracted growing numbers of participants and a similar mathematics club has been recently established. There have been improvements since the last inspection in a number of important areas. For example, standards have risen consistently, behaviour has improved and recent figures show an impressive rise in attendance rates. Self-evaluation, at both whole-school and departmental level, is good. The school knows itself well, although on occasions, monitoring of performance is not sufficiently focused on impact. With its recent record of improvement and appropriate plans for further development, the school has good capacity to improve further.

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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	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

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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	3

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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?	1

## 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	1
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	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**

27 February 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Carnforth High School, Lancashire, LA5 9LS

You will recall that recently, together with two other colleagues, I inspected your school. We enjoyed seeing your school and talking with those of you that we met. This letter is to tell you about what we found.

We judged Carnforth High School to be a good and improving school, where you receive a good level of education. Standards are on a clear upward trend and many aspects of the school's provision have improved since the last inspection.

You make good gains in your learning because of good teaching, together with additional guidance such as the advice you get on how to improve. Those of you on the applied learning courses in Key Stage 4 make outstanding progress.

You benefit from outstanding levels of care and support, which help you to enjoy school. We were impressed that your attendance has improved so much – keep it up! You show a good awareness of how to lead a healthy lifestyle and we noted how many of you were choosing healthy options at lunchtime and break. You told us that you feel safe and that any bullying is quickly dealt with.

Your school is well led and managed. Mr Shannon has high aspirations for the school and for your achievement and these are helping the school to become more and more successful. In order to improve the school further we have asked him, the staff and governors to:

- broaden your understanding of communities beyond your local area and to check how successful the school is in doing this
- help you more to develop as independent learners.

You can play your part in making Carnforth a better school. Continue to aim high and to believe that you can achieve those really high targets – the school's mantra, 'I believe', really can work!

Paul Chambers

Her Majesty's Inspector