

Glenburn Sports College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119758
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	327124
Inspection dates	17–18 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Allan Torr 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)	808
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ray Waterhouse
Headteacher	Mrs Hilary Torpey
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2006
School address	Yewdale Southway Skelmersdale Lancashire WN8 6JB
Telephone number	01695 724381
Fax number	01695 557379

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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

Glenburn is a smaller than average secondary school in the centre of Skelmersdale next to a further education college. It gained specialist status as a sports college in 2004. Although the proportion of students eligible to take a free school meal has declined over the last three years it remains more than twice the national average. The number of students from a minority ethnic heritage is relatively small but increasing, as is the number of students for whom English is not their first language. The proportion of students with a learning difficulty and/or disability is around the national average but the number with a statement of special educational need is more than double the national average. The school has a number of awards including a Foundation International Schools Award, Sportsmark gold; Artsmark silver; Green Flag Eco-school and Basic Skills Award.

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 is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to the quality of teaching and learning, particularly in Key Stage 3; standards and achievement in English in Key Stage 3 and mathematics in Key Stage 4; and the use of assessment data to raise standards.

Glenburn lies at the heart of the community and is a resource which is used by many local groups and associations. The school has the confidence of the majority of parents who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire. The school has been successful in improving aspects of its provision. Attendance is increasing year on year; the sports department regularly exceeds its challenging targets; the curriculum at Key Stage 4 is good and provides students with interesting and relevant pathways and courses. Students make a good contribution to the school and wider community through raising funds for good causes, training primary students to be play leaders, and establishing links with schools nationally and internationally. The vast majority of students behave well and exclusions are decreasing. Many students report that they have increased their healthy eating and active lifestyle in and out of school because of the school's encouragement and teaching. Students have a good understanding of how to stay safe; many, for example, learn how to use first aid as a part of their BTEC course.

Students enter the school with attainment that is below average, but by the end of Key Stage 3, standards are well below average, particularly in English. Progress is particularly poor for different groups of students including girls who leave primary school with high test results; students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities whose needs are met by the school alone; and boys in general. This is due to ineffective teaching in Key Stage 3 where too many lessons are inadequate. There is a lack of challenge in lessons and teachers' expectations are too low. Insufficient use is made of academic information from primary schools and from lessons to plan work that meets students' needs and interests. As a consequence, too many students do not move on in their learning. There is inadequate use of targets to raise standards. Furthermore, the lack of progress in Key Stage 3 has been compounded by significant staffing turbulence and difficulties in English and mathematics over the last two years. This has now been resolved and the school is in a better position to put improvements into effect. In Year 7, the curriculum is improving and there are early indications that it is better suited to students' needs. Students with a statement of special educational needs, and students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities for whom the school receives additional resources, make satisfactory progress overall because they are well taught and supported by able teaching assistants.

Vocational subjects are a strength of the school. In 2007 standards rose markedly and were around the national average. Consistently good teaching in the sports department enables students to make good progress in vocational qualifications such as BTEC Sports. In 2007, for example, 94% of students attained a BTEC in physical education. The curriculum in areas such as sport, information and communications technology (ICT) and the expressive arts is suited to students' needs and interests. The majority of lessons in Key Stage 4 are good because teaching is challenging, expectations are higher and lessons are interesting. Students are involved in their learning. However, the proportion of students gaining five or more good passes at GCSE including English and mathematics is well below average. This is because students'

literacy and numeracy skills are persistently weak and the teaching is not of a high enough standard to tackle the legacy of underachievement. Students enter Years 10 and 11 below average in mathematics but by the time they take their GCSEs, they are well below average. Overall, achievement is inadequate for many groups of students.

The headteacher provides strong direction and leadership and is committed to raising educational achievement for the students at Glenburn. The school's leadership shows satisfactory capacity to improve and has had successes in improving attendance, strengthening the curriculum and raising standards in some areas. Difficulties for the school are compounded by poor school buildings which, in some cases, hinder students' learning and prevent accessibility for disabled students and visitors. For example, students taking the BTEC ICT course had their learning disrupted because of damage caused to the ICT suite as a consequence of poor weather conditions. This was closed for safety concerns.

Specialist status of the school has impacted positively on the development of the curriculum, the quality of teaching in some departments, and the promotion of community cohesion. The sports department has influenced the curriculum and some teaching and learning in a positive way, particularly at Key Stage 4. The specialist status is used well to enrich provision in partner primary schools.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English in Key Stage 3 and mathematics in Key Stage 4.
- Increase the proportion of good or better teaching, particularly at Key Stage 3
- Make rigorous use of assessment data to check students' progress and to challenge students in lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Students' attainment on entry into Year 7 is below average. By the end of Year 9, standards are exceptionally low. In the last few years, standards in English have deteriorated. In 2007, only just over half of students attained the expected Level 5 and over one in five students were at least two years behind for their age. In the core subjects of mathematics, English and science, a large proportion of girls who achieved well at age 11 do not reach the expected standard by the end of Year 9 and similarly, boys do not make enough progress. Evidence from lesson observations and teacher assessments reinforce this picture of underachievement at Key Stage 3, although there are some signs of rising standards in mathematics.

Standards at Key Stage 4 are in line with the national average and most students make good progress in non-core subjects. This is due to the impact of the vocational and alternative curriculum which underpins the overall GCSE success rate. When English and mathematics are included, the proportion achieving five or more good GCSE passes is well below average, although it rose markedly in 2007 to reach 27%. Progress in mathematics in this Key Stage is inadequate. Students enter Year 10 below average and end Year 11 well below average. Students with a statement of special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make satisfactory progress overall because they receive well-tailored support and teaching.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students' moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Students relate well to each other, share views and opinions and are keen to do well. Their spirituality however, is underdeveloped. This is in part because there is no daily act of collective worship and tutor groups and teachers in lessons often miss the opportunity to encourage students to think and to reflect. The majority of students enjoy coming to school and have satisfactory attitudes to learning. Attendance is slightly below average but is improving year on year. The number of persistent non-attenders is reducing. Students consider that the school is a safe environment and that incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly. Behaviour is satisfactory and the number of exclusions has fallen. Students are aware of how to live a healthy lifestyle and participation rates in the wide range of out of school activities are high. Students readily support community events such as fund-raising and dance shows and instigate some of these themselves. Students have the opportunity to develop work- related skills through opportunities to work in teams, work experience and the work- related curriculum in Key Stage 4. Despite this, their preparation for their future well-being is only satisfactory overall because their key literacy and numeracy skills are weak.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

Teaching and learning is inadequate overall although it is stronger at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3. This is because a greater proportion of lessons are more challenging and tasks are personalised to motivate individuals on a range of well devised academic, alternative and vocational courses. Teaching in vocational subjects and in some departments such as modern foreign languages and sports is often good. As a result, students are more interested and make better progress. Targets are used more effectively to raise standards and students are more involved in their learning. They have more opportunities to use their skills, to be active learners and to extend their own thinking. In too many lessons, particularly at Key Stage 3, students listen for too long to teachers without being fully involved and active in their learning. A real weakness, especially at Key Stage 3, is the lack of use of assessment information to plan lessons and to give targets to students with clear guidance about what they need to do to improve. In English, for example, students' targets for the end of Year 8 were often the same as the level reached at the end of primary school. Too many lessons repeat what students already know and there is little continuity or progression in learning.

Resources, such as interactive whiteboards are generally used well to motivate students. Teaching assistants provide students with good encouragement and advice. They are not always deployed well enough to help those students that are under-achieving. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, whose needs are met by the school alone, are often expected to do exactly the same as other students without support. Teaching assistants provide good support, however, for students with a statement of special educational needs and those students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities for whom the school receives additional resources.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory with a number of good features. There is a wide choice of academic and vocational subjects for students at Key Stage 4 with clear progression routes enhanced by good links with outside providers and partner organisations. The four pathways match the needs and meet the interests of most students. The VOICE programme, for example, develops key skills as well as students' personal and social awareness and is a particularly strong feature.

The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is improving. Through the introduction of new taught programmes and interesting topics in Year 7, lessons are beginning to meet the needs and interests of students by, for example, teaching interesting topics. However, provision for citizenship is underdeveloped.

The broad range of extra-curricular activities on offer is a real strength as is the number of visits and visiting speakers. There are good opportunities for residential visits which students appreciate greatly.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The quality of pastoral care, guidance and support is good. Health and safety systems are in place and are robustly checked. Safeguarding is a high priority in the school and staff work well with other agencies to protect and support students, particularly vulnerable learners. Students speak highly of the effective learning mentors who provide valuable advice and assistance. Rigorous procedures put in place for improving attendance are having a positive impact.

Academic guidance is satisfactory overall but there are some aspects that are inadequate. Appropriate advice and guidance is provided to students when making option and career choices. Too little attention is given to students' work in primary schools to ensure a smooth transition in students' learning. As a result their progress stalls and students only make limited progress. Transition from Glenburn is handled well. The number of students who transfer into education, training or employment is rising and is almost 100%. In some subjects, students know their targets and their progress is tracked effectively. In English, mathematics and science however, there is insufficient monitoring and tracking of individuals and groups of students. Students with a statement of special educational needs and those who are looked after by the local authority receive effective support, particularly in Key Stage 4.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides strong and purposeful leadership based on improving the life chances of students through improved achievement. With the assistance of the senior leadership team and some effective middle managers, she is gradually bringing about positive change, but the pace has been slow due to a number of factors, including significant staffing and recruitment difficulties. Staff understand the school's strengths and weaknesses. Priorities for improvement are well defined and there are signs of progress being made, for example, in improved pupil behaviour and attendance and slowly improving mathematics standards in Key Stage 3. This

record of improvement linked to sound self-evaluation indicates satisfactory capacity to make further improvements.

The use of data from tests and assessments is inadequate. Although most departments set realistic and challenging targets, not enough use is made of them throughout the school to boost achievement and to enable students to make rapid progress. Governors support and challenge the school. They have an awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses and they are involved in school life.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
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?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
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?	3
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	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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?	4
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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
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**

18 September 2008

Inspection of Glenburn Sports College, Skelmersdale, Lancashire, WN8 6JB

Dear Students,

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team and for speaking to us so honestly in lessons and around school. In many respects, the school is doing a good job. Staff take good care of you and provide a safe and secure environment. The curriculum is good in Key Stage 4 and we agree with you that there is a good range of vocational courses now available and a wide range of out-of-school activities. The sports department is particularly good. The courses they provide enable you to make a good contribution to the community, to live a healthy lifestyle and to know how to stay safe. A particularly good feature is the leadership training you give to primary age students.

We found however, the quality of teaching is not good enough in some subjects. Although some of it is good, particularly in Key Stage 4, not all is good enough to ensure that you all achieve the best you can. We think a large proportion of you could make better progress and achieve higher standards, particularly in English and mathematics. As a result, we have given the school a Notice to Improve. This will mean that another inspector will visit you again in about six to eight months time to check how well the school is making progress against the areas for improvement we have identified. These are: to raise standards and achievement in Key Stage 3; increase the proportion of good or better teaching; improve the use of assessment data to ensure you are all able to achieve the best you can; and ensure the school complies with all legislation.

We were also grateful to your parents who returned the pre-inspection questionnaire. Most parents consider that you enjoy school; make good progress, particularly in sport and the expressive arts; and are well cared for. Some parents consider behaviour in school not to be as good as it could be and that staff do not take enough account of the views of parents and students. We judged these aspects to be satisfactory and improving. Most students believe that staff take quick action to resolve any behaviour issues and are able to express their views through the school, sports and eco councils as well as in tutor groups and in private to the learning mentors.

Thank you again for your welcome and, on behalf of the team, I wish you well during your time in school and when you leave school.

Allan Torr

Her Majesty's Inspector