

Rivington and Blackrod High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105261
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	336464
Inspection dates	21–22 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Janet Palmer HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1884
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	317
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Judith Marsden
Headteacher	Mr Anthony Purcell
Date of previous school inspection	6 December 2006
School address	Rivington Lane Horwich Bolton BL6 7RU
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 58 part-lessons and 53 teachers. They held meetings with governors, staff, groups of students and the School Improvement Partner. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including policies and records relating to the safeguarding of students. They analysed the responses to questionnaires from 615 parents and carers, 143 students and 89 members of staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- attainment and progress at Key Stage 4
- attainment and progress of the more able students
- strategies for improving the progress of lower ability girls
- the quality of teaching and learning and how well teachers plan to meet students' individual needs
- attainment and progress in the sixth form.

Information about the school

Rivington and Blackrod High School is a larger-than-average comprehensive school with a large sixth form. The school was awarded specialist technology college status in 2000. Learning is based on four sites; at the lower school, upper school and at two centres for the study of construction and the built environment trades. The school is federated with Ladybridge High School, sharing a governing body and a deputy headteacher. The school has a stable student population, with a lower than average percentage of students known to be eligible for a free school meal. There are few students from minority ethnic backgrounds or with English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than the national average. The school has achieved a number of awards including Sportsmark, Artsmark, Investors in People status, and the Inclusion Quality Mark.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Rivington and Blackrod is a good school. It is improving and is characterised by outstanding care, guidance and support. The school is held in high regard by parents and carers. Comments such as, 'my child has really blossomed since coming to Rivington and, 'a truly wonderful school that aims to bring the best out of every pupil', are typical of the positive views expressed to inspectors. Students' success in gaining five A* to C grades at GCSE level (including English and mathematics) has increased year on year and is consistently just above the national average. This improving trend is also evident at Key Stage 3 where the proportion of students achieving higher levels in the core subjects has improved every year. When students enter the school in Year 7, their attainment is below the national average and they leave the school in Year 11 with attainment that is just above. This is one of the measures that indicates students are making good progress overall.

The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection and is now good. In most lessons, students make good progress because of the good relationships in the classroom, the wide range of engaging activities and teachers' good subject knowledge. In the less successful lessons, lack of challenge and slow pace prevents students, particularly the most able, from making the progress of which they are capable. The use of assessment data to support learning is good in the majority of lessons. In the best lessons, teachers know their students well and have a good understanding of their prior learning; they use this knowledge to plan lessons to meet individual needs and use questioning effectively within lessons to ascertain further understanding. However, these strengths are not sufficiently well embedded in all classes. Vulnerable and disadvantaged students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress because of the outstanding care and support they receive.

The school provides a strong curriculum. Options have been extended and improved through extensive collaboration with other schools and organisations.

Students enjoy school. They demonstrate good attitudes to learning, are polite and manage their own behaviour without high levels of adult supervision. A very large majority of students, and their parents and carers, reported that the school is a safe and secure environment. The extent to which students adopt healthy lifestyles is good. The Teenage Health Project provides advice to students across a wide range of issues including stress and mental health. Excellent transition arrangements and careers advice help them prepare well for the next steps in their education, training and employment. The headteacher, senior and middle leaders have a shared vision about the 'journey' the school is on. Rigorous monitoring of teaching and robust tracking of students' progress

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has had a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. The school has developed a range of effective partnerships to promote learning and contribute to students' well-being. Senior leaders and governors are competent in analysing data concerning the school's performance and are aware of its strengths and weaknesses. Links with a range of local and international communities enable the school to make a good contribution to community cohesion.

In the sixth form the provision for education and the quality of leadership are satisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory with some that is good. Achievement is satisfactory overall, with attainment broadly average to below average. Students appreciate the good support and careers guidance they receive and most achieve their goal of progressing to further or higher education.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, by:
 - ensuring that the more able students have work that stretches them sufficiently
 - monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of assessment strategies.
- Improve outcomes in the sixth form, by:
 - developing greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning through the sharing of good practice.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Overall, achievement is good and improving. In the lessons observed by inspectors, most students progressed well and engaged enthusiastically with their learning. For example, in a lower ability English lesson, students excitedly developed their understanding of the concept of personification through role play, drawing and writing their own short poems. In 2009, the more able students and a group of lower ability girls progressed less well than might be expected. In response to this, the school has introduced a range of intervention strategies for these groups but it is too early to ascertain the impact of these initiatives. No groups of students significantly underachieve.

The outcomes for students' personal development and well-being are good with elements that are outstanding. Attendance is consistently above average and rising and students are punctual throughout the day. There is high participation in extra-curricular sports, encouraged by student 'health ambassadors' and students are aware of the importance of healthy eating. The extent to which students feel safe in the school is outstanding. Students, including the most vulnerable, reported that they are relaxed in school; bullying is not tolerated and the very few incidents that occur are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Students demonstrate a strong commitment to improving the school with up to 100 participating in the school senate, year councils and focus groups. Others offer support to younger and more vulnerable students through peer mentoring, buddying and by acting as play and sports leaders. Students' good social, moral and

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spiritual development is demonstrated by their ability to relate well in teams and their readiness to take responsibility for themselves and others. Their good cultural understanding is developed through the strong tradition of drama, music and dance. Their global awareness is enhanced by the 'connecting classrooms' project with schools in Gambia and Sweden. Students are well prepared for their future economic well-being. Activities such as 'European' and 'enterprise' weeks encourage new ways of working to broaden their horizons.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good overall. The best lessons are planned well and meet students' differing needs. Many teachers make good use of information and communication technology to add pace and interest to lessons. However, a minority of teachers miss the chance to help students make more rapid progress by not effectively assessing their understanding and using this information to plan work that is appropriately challenging, particularly for the more able students. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is broad and balanced with opportunities for all to study the full range of performing arts subjects and, for most, to

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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study two modern foreign languages. The Access Curriculum for more vulnerable students at Key Stage 3 enables them to develop well their numeracy, literacy and social skills in classrooms with smaller numbers, working with the same teacher for 50% of the time. Key Stage 4 offers four different curriculum pathways with enough flexibility to meet individual needs. The technology specialism plays an important role in widening curriculum opportunities and the school leads the local consortium for the diploma in construction and the built environment.

The effectiveness of care, guidance and support is outstanding because all aspects of students' development are carefully monitored to ensure that any required interventions are swift and effective. The school provides excellent support for its most vulnerable students and makes good use of other agencies when required. Teachers, students, parents and carers all describe examples of how the school has improved the life chances of many individuals. The parent of a child with social and emotional difficulties commented, 'not only are they brilliant at managing his behaviour but they have also managed to get him to produce work demonstrating his abilities'. The school balances well the setting of high expectations with the provision of good support. Examples of its impact are seen in good behaviour, students' engagement in the school community at all levels and improving attainment.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior team focuses effectively on improving the quality of teaching and learning to ensure improved outcomes. Target setting is realistic demonstrating a strong vision and ambition for the school and challenging targets for the specialism are consistently met or exceeded. Planning for improvement is increasingly based on secure data from robust tracking systems. Governors know the school well because they are individually associated with departments and visit on a regular basis. Governors' wide range of skills and expertise has been successfully drawn on to manage the school's budget well. Parents and carers are highly supportive of the school's leadership team. Systems and procedures for the safeguarding of students are strong. Staff at all levels have a comprehensive awareness of safeguarding issues which is regularly updated. The school is a leader in high quality practice with respect to risk assessments and safer recruitment practices. The school's recent success in being awarded the Inclusion Quality Mark reflects the way it values and celebrates diversity

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and rewards the very strong multi-agency work which supports vulnerable students so effectively. The school has successfully addressed the areas for improvement at the last inspection. Several strategic appointments have been made to tackle areas of identified weakness and the governing body is very effective in challenging the leadership; hence, capacity for further improvement is good.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

The progress made by students on A- and AS-level courses is satisfactory and improving; in a small number of AS-level subjects, achievement is high. Recent strategies have focussed on broadening the curriculum and tackling inconsistencies in teaching and learning. There are signs that this is having a positive impact. Reliable school data and observation of lessons show that current A-level students are now making satisfactory progress. In collaboration with other educational partners, students access a good and improving range of academic and vocational courses on and off the school site. Sixth formers contribute well by providing reading support for younger students and supporting activities in local primary schools.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

Just under one third of parents and carers gave their views and a very large majority of responses were supportive of the school and its management. Although inspectors judged the extent to which students adopted healthy lifestyles to be good overall, a few of those who responded did not feel that the school helped their child have a healthy lifestyle and their comments most often referred to the quality of the school lunches. A small minority of parents and carers were unhappy with the way in which the school informed them of their child's progress and did not feel that the school took sufficient account of their suggestions and concerns, nor helped them enough in supporting their child's learning; inspectors recognised these concerns but judged engagement with parents and carers to be good overall. Inspection evidence judged students' behaviour to be good overall; however, the effectiveness with which the school dealt with unacceptable behaviour concerned 15% of those who responded. A very large majority of parents and carers (91%) told us that their child enjoyed their time at school and a similar proportion were happy overall with their child's experience at school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of students registered at Rivington and Blackrod High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 615 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,884 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	175	28	392	63	41	7	3	0
The school keeps my child safe	190	31	406	66	17	3	2	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	161	26	355	57	81	13	9	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	175	28	363	59	59	10	7	1
The teaching is good at this school	118	19	445	72	32	5	4	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	115	19	419	68	67	11	10	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	86	14	404	65	104	17	8	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	152	25	380	61	40	6	6	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	144	23	411	67	47	8	5	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	123	20	379	61	79	13	15	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	97	16	392	63	75	12	17	3
The school is led and managed effectively	134	22	426	69	27	4	6	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	199	32	363	59	36	6	11	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



23 April 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Rivington and Blackrod High School, Bolton, BL6 7RU

After our visit to your school, I would like to share our findings with you and thank you for your friendly welcome and for taking time to talk to us. Rivington and Blackrod is a good school with outstanding care, guidance and support. It is well led by the headteacher, senior leaders and governors. Your success in gaining five good GCSE grades (with English and mathematics) has improved year-on-year. Your attainment is just above the national average and you make good progress during your time at the school. You told us that as a result of the excellent care, guidance and support you receive, you feel very safe and secure in school; the school does not tolerate bullying and the few incidents that occur are dealt with swiftly and effectively. You have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. We were impressed by your good behaviour in lessons and many contributions to the community through the school senate, the performing arts and charity fund-raising. You told us you enjoy school and we noticed that you attend well and are punctual. Your teachers have good subject knowledge and there are very good strategies in place to identify those who need extra help. Most lessons are challenging but not always for those of you who are more able. You have a very good range of options at Key Stage 4 and the curriculum is being regularly reviewed to meet your needs and interests. The achievement of sixth form students on AS-level courses is satisfactory and improving and in a small number of subjects sixth formers achieve well. However, you achieve less well in year 2 of A-level courses, although there are signs of improvement here too. Sixth formers can access good courses on and off the school site and you appreciate the good support and careers guidance you receive. In order that staff can help you to continue to progress and reach higher standards we have recommended that the school:

- ensures that lessons are sufficiently challenging, to enable those who are capable of getting the highest grades to do so
- makes sure that the way teachers check students' understanding also helps them to learn
- develops greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form by sharing good practice.

You are rightly proud to be members of Rivington and Blackrod High School. I wish you

all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Janet Palmer

Her Majesty's Inspector

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