

# The Elton High School Specialist Arts College

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	105354
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bury
<b>Inspection number</b>	336481
<b>Inspection dates</b>	21–22 September 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	James Kidd

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 of pupils on the school roll</b>	960
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr J Coles
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr N Scruton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	0 September 2006
<b>School address</b>	Walshaw Road Bury Lancashire BL8 1RN
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 7631434
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 34 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including relevant policies, the school improvement plan, analyses of students' attainment and progress and specialist visual arts reports. Inspectors analysed 374 questionnaires returned by parents, 53 returned by staff and 152 returned by students.

- the impact of the school's work in raising the achievement of more able students, particularly boys
- the challenge in lessons for students, particularly in Key Stage 3, to ascertain whether it is high enough to foster good levels of progress for all students
- teachers' use of assessment data to inform their planning
- the extent and accuracy of school self-evaluation at all levels
- the impact of specialist visual arts status across all aspects of the school's work.

## Information about the school

This average sized school serves a mixed area and admits 40% of its students from its immediate proximity. Students come from over 30 different primary schools. A below average percentage of students are from minority ethnic groups and few are at early stages of learning English. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below that usually found. The school has been a specialist Visual Arts College since 2004, is an accredited Healthy School and holds the Artsmark Gold and Sportsmark awards.

**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

This is a good and improving school in which the care, guidance and support provided for its students are outstanding in all respects. Accurate self-evaluation at all levels and the overriding concern of all staff to do what they can to maximise students' achievement in both personal and academic terms have brought about significant improvement since the previous inspection. It has, therefore, good capacity to improve further and provides good value for money.

All groups of students make good progress across the school and reach above average standards by the end of Year 11. Progress in Years 10 and 11 is more consistent than in Key Stage 3 because existing good practice in the use of assessment, curriculum development, paired and group work in the classroom and challenging questioning has not been fully shared in all years. Nonetheless, in both key stages, more-able students are now beginning to reach their targets and the gap between the performance of boys and girls is narrowing.

Students love their school and have the highest regard for the adults who work with them. As they say, 'Our teachers make learning fun and we always feel safe in school. Bullying and racism are not tolerated here.' Students behave well, welcome visitors warmly and are delighted to show them their work. They are fully aware of the importance of healthy food and regular exercise and take part in sport and games with skill and verve. They are actively involved in community activities and work alongside residents in local senior citizens' homes on a variety of visual arts projects.

Teaching is good and there is outstanding practice in both key stages. Excellent relationships in the classroom mean that students are eager to learn and that they enjoy their lessons. The Key Stage 4 curriculum in particular, provides students with a wide range of courses and prepares them well for the future.

Perceptive yet sensitive leadership by an outstanding headteacher, who is supported to the full by his senior colleagues, results in high levels of teamwork amongst all staff. Moreover, teachers, governors and students share the same clarity of vision about how the school should develop. A visit to the school is like a visit to an art gallery: students work adorns the walls and demonstrates the pride they and their teachers have in their achievements. As parents comment, 'We are so impressed with The Elton High. It makes every effort to ensure its students are safe and happy.'

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency in students' progress across Key Stage 3 by sharing

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existing good practice in:

- the use of assessment, to develop more targeted support for students
- the development of the curriculum in order to meet the needs, aspirations and interests of students even more closely
- the provision of more opportunities for students to act as a resource for each other's learning through collaborative work in the classroom
- teachers' questioning, to provide even more challenge for students to do their best.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

From broadly average standards on entry to Year 7, students achieve well and make good progress across the school to reach above average levels of attainment by the time they leave. Attainment, learning and progress have risen markedly since the previous inspection and the gap between the performance of boys and girls has narrowed. GCSE results in 2009 were the highest in the school's history and the percentage of students reaching grades A and A\* is much higher than ever before. Moreover, for three years running, all students have reached at least one A\*-C grade in these examinations. Inspection evidence demonstrates that students in the current Year 11 classes are on course to reach or perhaps surpass their challenging targets and to reach even higher standards. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same progress as their peers because they receive excellent support from their teachers and teaching assistants. The progress of students across Key Stage 3 is good overall, but has shown some variation since 2006 and the proportion of students reaching National Curriculum Level 6 and above in English and science has not always been as high as the school would like it to have been. Specialist status continues to have a profound effect on students' performance, since members of the art department deliver bespoke training across the school on how students' visual learning skills may be enhanced.

Students have a real pride in their school, their attendance is above average and their behaviour is good and improving. They feel very safe in school because, they say, 'Our teachers are genuinely caring and deal with any problems we have quickly.' They have a good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle and of what constitutes a balanced and healthy diet. Sports and games are an important element of school life and take up of physical activity is high. Students make an outstanding contribution to the school and to the wider community. Prefects, sports captains and peer mentors support their classmates and their younger counterparts, and the school council is proactive in making suggestions as to how school life can be even better. The local community benefits from the support of students too through the Art to Heart community programme which brings older adults and young people together. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and a major strength of the school. Trips to cultural events at home and abroad and links with Nicaragua, for example, give students many opportunities for reflection and to consider aspects of life outside their immediate

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environment.

Good achievement in both their academic and personal development means that students are well prepared for the next stage in their education and for their future lives.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. It is typically characterised by comprehensive planning, secure subject knowledge and strong relationships in the classroom. In the best lessons, for example in a Year 9 session on animal rights, students collaborated well in groups and learned so much from the views and opinions of their classmates. The use of paired and group work, however, is not consistent in Key Stage 3 and there is scope for the school to develop more opportunities for students to act as resources for each other's learning. There are many examples of teachers' challenging questions to encourage students to think for themselves and this exemplary practice now needs to be shared across all subjects in Years 7, 8 and 9. The use of assessment to inform planning and to accelerate progress has improved significantly

<sup>1</sup> 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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since the previous inspection and is now good. The school is looking to refine assessment practice further in order to establish more targeted support for students at risk of underachievement.

The curriculum in Key Stage 4 offers students an increasingly wide range of academic and vocational courses, including recently established diploma programmes. There are very close links with a range of external providers and some students follow a variety of courses off-site. Teachers are continuing to develop the curriculum in Key Stage 3, but are aware that aspects needed to be enlivened in order to provide greater motivation for students and to meet their interests and aspirations even more closely. The extent and take up of extra-curricular and enrichment activities is a strong feature of the curriculum in both key stages and the annual arts week, an initiative introduced through the school's specialist status, is a highlight of the school year. Students also talk positively about the several 'drop down days', the one on personal safety and emotional well-being, for example.

Parents make particular mention of the excellent way in which the school helps students in Year 7 to settle down in their new surroundings. They add that communication between school and home is faultless. Strong pastoral care and equality of opportunity for each individual lie at the heart of everything the school tries to do; the comprehensive guidance and support from teachers and teaching assistants ensure that students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those identified as vulnerable make progress which is at least in line with that of their peers.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The outstanding headteacher leads by example and he is supported most effectively by a committed and energetic senior leadership team. Together, they have established a shared sense of purpose through which high aspirations for all members of the school are communicated clearly. Subject and other middle leaders are not afraid to express their opinions and often take the lead in the delivery of training to their colleagues, on the effective use of data, for example. Indeed, staff at all levels of experience speak with one voice about The Elton High: 'We all feel valued here'. More accurate self-evaluation of performance in all aspects of school life has led to significant improvements in students' attainment and progress, particularly in Key Stage 4, since the previous inspection. The school does not, however, rest on its laurels and is fully

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aware that more needs to be done to ensure consistency in students' achievement across Key Stage 3.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is good and governors are actively involved in supporting initiatives at local, national and global levels and evaluating the impact of these links. Parents and carers have the utmost confidence in the school and home-school relationships are of the highest order. Similarly, the school's partnerships with outside agencies, other schools and providers of further education are outstanding and are enhanced by the school's visual arts status: staff are now involving schools nationwide in the Art to Heart charity. Child protection and safeguarding procedures meet current national guidelines and are effective.

Governors have a thorough knowledge of the school and provide effective support and rigorous challenge for the leadership.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school, its caring ethos and what it does for their sons and daughters. They make particular mention of the sense of community that the school engenders among all those connected with it. A good proportion of parents returned questionnaires and many contained positive comments about the work of the school. For example, parents are delighted that the school places equal emphasis on promoting students' personal and academic development, as shown in the comment, 'The school inspires our offspring to excel in everything they do and keeps us as parents fully up to date about current events and issues.' Parents make



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particular mention of the headteacher who, they say, knows the students very well and is highly respected by all.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Elton High School Specialist Arts College 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 374 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 960 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	378	44	453	53	17	2	3	0
The school keeps my child safe	362	42	468	55	11	1	2	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	350	41	453	54	19	2	3	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	353	42	452	54	13	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	369	44	454	54	6	1	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	260	31	506	60	50	6	2	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	236	28	554	66	37	4	1	0
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)	337	41	441	54	10	1	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	333	39	478	57	14	2	3	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	344	41	441	53	23	3	5	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	261	32	493	60	35	4	4	0
The school is led and managed effectively	433	51	386	46	9	1	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	473	55	369	43	5	1	0	0

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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

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 were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



Inspection of The Elton High School Specialist Arts College, Bury BL8 1RN

Thank you so much for the warm welcome you gave us when we came to your school recently. We are especially grateful to those of you who came to talk to us on Monday lunchtime and to the many of you who opened doors for us, showed us round school and chatted to us in lessons and on the corridors. You were very friendly and very polite. You were very keen to find out how the inspection was going and so I would now like to tell you what we found.

You told us that The Elton High is a good school and you were so right! Your teachers teach you well, you make good progress in your studies and reach above average standards by the time you leave in Year 11. Your work in art is particularly impressive and the displays around school are a joy to behold. You develop well personally too. You feel very safe in school and your behaviour is good. You do so much to support your classmates and also younger students. Your voluntary work through the Art to Heart charity has a high reputation in the local community and older adults are delighted about the support you give to them.

You benefit from a curriculum, particularly in Key Stage 4, which prepares you well for life after secondary school. The care which adults show for you is outstanding and you respond positively to the help they provide.

Your headteacher, the staff and governors work well as a team and are always looking for ways to make your school even better. To help them do this I have asked them to look a little more closely at some aspects of teaching, assessment and the curriculum in Years 7, 8 and 9 so that students' progress across Key Stage 3 is consistently good or even better. I have also suggested that you could be given more opportunities to learn from each other in class, through paired and group work.

Thanks again for your contribution to the inspection and best wishes for the future. You are right to be so proud of The Elton High School.

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