

Southlands High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119738
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	339518
Inspection dates	26–27 May 2010
Reporting inspector	Patrick Geraghty 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 of pupils on the school roll	908
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Tom Frost
Headteacher	Mr Mark Fowle
Date of previous school inspection	11 October 2006
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors spent the majority of their time visiting 33 lessons with 32 teachers observed. They held meetings with staff, groups of students, the School Improvement Partner and governors. Inspectors also observed four faculty meetings. Documentation was scrutinised including: information related to the tracking of the academic and personal progress of students; detailed analysis of students' attainment and progress; school development planning; school and subject self-evaluation; records of recent classroom monitoring; minutes from meetings of the governing body; and evidence to demonstrate how the school supports students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. Inspectors also examined evaluations undertaken by the school to ensure that it meets statutory requirements with regard to safeguarding. In addition, 251 parental questionnaires were scrutinised along with questionnaires returned by a representative sample of staff and pupils.

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

- students' attainment and progress to determine the effectiveness of strategies used to improve outcomes
- if teaching and learning are sufficiently challenging to promote better outcomes for students
- the impact of curriculum development on increasing engagement and improving students' outcomes, especially in literacy and numeracy
- the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation by leaders and managers at all levels to drive improvement.

Information about the school

Southlands High School is of average size and situated on the southern edge of the market town of Chorley. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is very low. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is just below the national average, although the proportion of those with a statement of special educational needs is above average. The percentage known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Most recent local authority data shows a rise in the number of students from wards in the lowest quintile for socio-economic disadvantage. The school has received a number of national awards in recent years including Sports Mark and Artsmark, Beacon School and Leading Edge Status, Investors in People designation and the National Healthy Schools Standard. The school has specialist technology college status.

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. Following the last inspection, school leaders were initially slow to make the necessary adjustments to elicit further and rapid improvement in provision. However, within the last eighteen month change has been brisk and has impacted on improving outcomes. The headteacher has led a period of innovative change characterised by the development of the Southlands LEAP (Leading Edge Action Plan) and Southlands Challenge. The former is designed to drive improvement across all provision and the latter to link the school and its students actively into the local and wider communities.

There has been a year-on-year improvement in results at Key Stage 4 which the school recognise now needs to be accelerated further to raise attainment above national averages. The 2009 results at Key Stage 4 were broadly in line with the national average. Current trends indicate that improvement is accelerating in part due to much improved teaching. Student behaviour is good and working relations between staff and students excellent; a harmonious atmosphere and culture of ambition has been nurtured. Students take pride in their school. One student reflected this in commenting, 'I would advise all my friends to come to this school'. Attendance rates are now above the national average.

A large majority of lessons observed were good or better with 15% rated as outstanding by inspectors. The school recognises that it needs to build on this critical mass of good and better teaching so that all learners are challenged to excel and achieve their best. The curriculum has been further developed to meet the needs of learners. Literacy and numeracy programmes have impacted positively on progress in Years 7 and 8. Early entry to GCSE is improving results. New BTEC courses are providing an alternative and valued pathway. The Bridge Learning Support Unit provides outstanding additional learning support for all students. Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Links with external agencies and effective pastoral and support system ensure that the most vulnerable and those at risk of not achieving receive excellent support and make good progress.

Innovative and ambitious leadership provided by the headteacher has the full support of staff. Self-evaluation is comprehensive and accurate. The collection and analysis of data is good. Tracking and monitoring systems are robust. Equality of opportunities is well promoted. Safeguarding is good. Governors provide strong links with the local community. The school has successfully tackled the areas for improvement noted at the last inspection. The school provides good value for money and has a good capacity to improve further.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the percentage of students gaining A* to C grades at GCSE so that by 2011 the school is above the national average in terms of the proportion gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, and five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C including English and mathematics.
- Further increase the proportion of outstanding and good teaching, by:
 - – sharing best practice across faculties
 - – ensuring that questioning is used effectively to challenge individual students according to their needs
 - – ensuring a greater focus on independent learning skills
 - – ensuring the effective use of data for lesson planning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The standards reached by most students joining in Year 7 are broadly at the national average. From 2008 to 2009 the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C increased to 67%, which represents a 14% increase on the previous year. The proportion of students attaining this measure with English and mathematics included has increased to 48%. School leaders recognise that results in this key indicator require further and more rapid improvement. Students work well independently and in groups and take responsibility for their own learning. Evidence from the school tracking records and the current standards of work, coursework already marked and moderated and examinations already taken indicate that results at Key Stage 4 will improve further in 2010. Well-targeted intervention strategies have had a positive impact on raising performance overall and across different groups of students. These include focused work on the C/D grade borderline. There has been a significant improvement in the progress made by previously underperforming groups including girls. Observations conducted during the inspection confirmed standards to be improving with students making good progress at both key stages. Students identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress.

Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Students demonstrate respect for each other and adults. Attendance has improved and is now above the national average. Persistent absences have been reduced to well below the national average. Student and parents and carers confirm that the school is a safe place. Healthy living is encouraged through a good range of extra-curricular activities. In the canteen a proactive pricing strategy is used to encourage healthy eating. Safety issues relating to sex, drugs, alcohol and information and communication technology (ICT) are embedded within the curriculum and pastoral system. Students make an outstanding contribution to their communities through a large amount of charity work and engagement in a very wide range of activities. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good with local and international links enhancing student understanding of equality and diversity. Students' preparation for their future economic well-being is good. Progression rates to further education and work-based learning have increased. Work experience is

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effectively linked to the development of key skills. A strong whole-school literacy programme is impacting on improving outcomes in both key stages.

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	3
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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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. Inspectors judged 79% of lessons observed as good or better with none inadequate, which accurately reflected the school's own judgements. In the best lessons, time is well used. These lessons were characterised by interest, enthusiasm, good pace, engagement and challenge. Teachers used praise to enhance student confidence and motivation. In the outstanding lessons, excellent questioning techniques enhanced student participation and active learning. For example, in an outstanding history lesson one student examining evidence noted 'my evidence shows' to which another quickly interjected 'suggested evidence'. This exchange, encouraged and developed by the teacher, led to a more sophisticated examination by the whole class of the nature and use of 'evidence' when forming historical interpretations. Marking is regular and clearly indicates to students where they are and how best to improve their work. In those lessons that were satisfactory rather than good, the pace was slow and

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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the focus too teacher-centred. Consequently, students chattered and were off task. There was a lack of challenge and the range of activities were restricted as were learning opportunities, and there were insufficient opportunities for students to work independently. The use of data to inform lesson planning was variable. The school acknowledges the need to increase the sharing of best practice in teaching across faculties.

The curriculum meets statutory requirements and provides a broad range of experiences which contribute to students' development, well-being and attainment. Transition arrangements from Key Stage 2 are good and include a family support worker in the primary schools. Students value highly the intensive literacy and numeracy support in Years 7 and 8. Since the last inspection, the curriculum has been further developed to meet the needs of all learners. BTEC courses have been introduced in physical education, performing arts and art as well a science OCR National course to provide popular alternative pathways. Specialist school status in technology has facilitated curriculum extension. There was good use of ICT to support learning. Collaboration with external providers has enhanced curriculum choice and progression opportunities. Enrichment opportunities are varied. The Southlands Challenge' ensures that every student participates in at least one extra-curricular activity yearly; the majority do far more. However, evidence of participation by different groups of students is not yet organised systematically to facilitate analysis and compare trends.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Well organised and coherent support for a whole range of needs are provided through the special educational needs department, attendance improvement worker, family support worker, the Bridge Centre and the pastoral system. The Bridge, established as a resource to focus on supporting students of all abilities, provides outstanding additional support that has impacted on improving outcomes for students. Robust monitoring systems ensure that each student's progress is followed carefully and, where necessary, well thought out intervention strategies are engaged. Strong partnerships with external agencies provide effective additional support for vulnerable and at risk students. Support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is excellent. The extensive care and guidance provided has been enhanced by strong working partnerships with parents and carers and intense cross curriculum support for careers and training beyond school.

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?

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The headteacher provides strong and ambitious leadership. A clear strategic and operational vision has been established which is fully shared by the headteacher, governors, senior leadership and staff. All staff have contributed to the development of the Southlands LEAP project, which drives the school's ambitious improvement planning. Faculty self-evaluations feed into the whole-school self-evaluation and are effective instruments for driving improvement across all aspects of provision. A year-on-year trend of improvement at Key Stage 4 has been established which the school acknowledges now needs to be accelerated. Effective monitoring, evaluation and action planning for improvement are in place. Data is accurate and accessible to staff. Managers, teachers and staff have brought about improvements to teaching and learning which are now good. The school is accurate in its judgements of the quality of teaching: a large majority of teaching is good or better. A robust system of lesson observations leads to actions for improvement and appropriate professional development. Community cohesion and local partnerships are good. The school has a good understanding of its religious, ethnic and socio-economic context. Strong local partnerships have been established to enhance learning opportunities and enable better student outcomes. Each faculty conducts a yearly evaluation on community links that feeds into the whole-school improvement planning agenda. The quality and effectiveness of middle management is a strength of the school. Governors provide a strong link with the local communities but they do not consistently monitor the school's performance sufficiently well or critically challenge senior leaders. External agencies play a key role in the outstanding care, guidance and support that the school provides. There is excellent support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for vulnerable students. Parents and carers have an increasingly strong place in the development of the school. The Southlands Challenge has galvanised community involvement by students and parents and carers alike. Equality of opportunity is good with the gap between outcomes for different groups closed significantly. This is a highly inclusive school providing a harmonious environment with a strong focus on mutual respect and student progress. There are good arrangements in place for safeguarding. Value for money 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	3
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

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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

Views of parents and carers

Inspectors received questionnaire responses from approximately 251 parents and carers. Analysis of responses indicates that the vast majority are happy with their children's experience at school and that appropriate steps are taken to ensure that their children are well prepared for the future.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Southlands 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 251 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 908 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	105	42	130	52	10	4	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	117	47	130	52	3	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	140	56	103	41	4	2	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	136	54	107	43	5	2	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	114	45	131	52	2	1	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	86	34	153	61	7	3	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	79	31	154	61	8	3	2	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)	95	38	138	55	6	2	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	97	39	134	53	10	4	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	106	42	119	47	13	5	3	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	80	32	148	59	8	3	1	0
The school is led and managed effectively	109	43	125	50	6	2	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	143	57	96	38	6	2	2	1

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.



28 May 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Southlands High School, Chorley, PR7 2NJ

Thank you for the friendly welcome that you gave my colleagues and me when we inspected your school this week. We would also like to commend you for your good behaviour and the way in which you contribute to making the school a pleasant place to work in. We were impressed by the positive relationships you have with each other and your maturity. We would particularly like to thank those of you who spoke with us.

The reason we came to your school was to find out what was going well and what could be improved. Here is what we found: Yours is a good school. You make good progress throughout your time at the school. Your GCSE results are improving. There is much good and some outstanding teaching in the school. In these lessons, you respond well to the teachers' high expectations and you make good progress. Your curriculum options are good. You enjoy a wide range of extra activities. You have responded enthusiastically to the Southlands Challenge project. The teachers and support staff give you outstanding care, guidance and support. The Bridge provides outstanding additional learning support for all those who need it.

The leaders in your school worked with us to decide on some ways in which your provision could be better. We decided that to achieve this, the school should:

- further improve the percentage of high grade results in GCSE mathematics and English.

increase further the proportion of outstanding and good teaching through teachers:

- sharing their best practice across departments
- ensuring that questioning is used effectively to better challenge you all
- providing a greater focus to develop your abilities to work in groups and individually.

You can help your school to improve further by ensuring everyone focuses on the pursuit of excellence and trying hard in your studies so that you can achieve your full potential in life.

I wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mr Patrick Geraghty

Her Majesty's Inspector

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