

# Blakewater College

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	134906
<b>Local Authority</b>	Blackburn with Darwen
<b>Inspection number</b>	341568
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30 November –1 December 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Ann Wallis

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

---

<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>	438
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Andrew Fawcett
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Alan Chambers
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 April 2007
<b>School address</b>	Shadsworth Road Blackburn Lancashire BB1 2HT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01254 505700
<b>Fax number</b>	01254 505701
<b>Email address</b>	Blakewater.college@blackburn.gov.uk

---

<b>Age group</b>	11–16
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30 November –1 December 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	341568

---

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)

W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2009

## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 24 lessons and held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, the School Improvement Partner, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work and looked at the school's 'Raising Attainment Plan', students' books, examination results and student progress data. The 12 questionnaires returned by parents were analysed, along with those completed by staff and students.

- the achievement of all groups of students, particularly in mathematics
- the effectiveness of the school's strategies to improve attendance
- the quality of promotion of community cohesion and whether this is a strength of the school
- the quality of teaching
- the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation and how effective leaders and managers at all levels are in bringing about improvement.

## Information about the school

Blakewater College is smaller than average and opened as a 'Fresh Start' school with places for 600 students in 2005. It was designated as a specialist mathematics and computing college in 2008. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language are all high. A larger than average proportion of students come from minority ethnic groups.

**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?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

Blakewater College is a satisfactory school which has good capacity to improve further. Leaders and managers evaluate the school's work rigorously and know its strengths and weaknesses well. All staff are increasingly held accountable for the progress and attainment of the students they teach and outcomes for students are improving. Good new systems to track students' progress and make better use of assessment data to plan learning are in place and are already having an impact on raising attainment. However, these have yet to become fully embedded in the school's work.

Although students make good progress during their time in school, their overall achievement can only be judged satisfactory because their attainment remains too low. This is particularly the case in terms of the percentage of students gaining five A\* to C GCSE grades including English and mathematics. An upward trend in results was halted in 2009, due to poor examination grades in mathematics. However, current students are now on track to reach their targets in both mathematics and English and were seen to be making good progress in lessons.

The school has many strengths. In the large majority of lessons students are taught well and make good progress. In some subjects and in lessons which are satisfactory students have fewer opportunities to assess their own learning and develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Students are appreciative of the good care, guidance and support they receive. They are aware of how to eat healthily and many enjoy the food provided by the school's very good restaurant. They are given ample opportunities to contribute to school life, particularly as lead students, and feel their voice is heard through the active school council. The 'Skills for Success' course, which equips students in Years 7 and 8 with very good learning skills, is a strength of the curriculum which the school plans to extend to all year groups in order to raise attainment further.

Despite the school's efforts, attendance remains low and there is still a core of students who are persistently absent. In addition to rigorously following up every student absence, the school recognises the need to further develop links with parents, carers and other agencies to reduce the percentage of persistent non-attenders.

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

- Raise attainment, particularly in mathematics, so that the proportion of students gaining five GCSE grades A\* to C including English and mathematics increases significantly by:
- - embedding and refining newly established systems to track the progress of all students and monitor their attainment

**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

- - increasing the proportion of good or better teaching
- - encouraging students to become more actively involved in their own learning and to assess their own performance
- - building on curriculum improvements in Years 7 and 8 which equip students with the skills to learn effectively
- - ensuring all curriculum subjects are contributing to the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills.
- Improve attendance by:
  - - continuing to implement robust strategies to follow up all pupil absences further strengthening the links with parents and carers, feeder schools and outside agencies to reduce the percentage of students who are persistently absent.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****3**

During the inspection all students were seen to be making good progress in lessons and this was confirmed by scrutiny of work in their books. Students are generally keen to learn, do as they are asked by their teachers and concentrate well, especially when tasks engage their interest and enable them to become actively involved. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same good progress as their peers because they receive constructive individual support from teachers and teaching assistants. Rising standards are particularly noticeable in mathematics and English. Specialist teachers are working with these departments to raise attainment by identifying more accurately the needs of individual students and giving them the help they need to succeed.

Students enter the school with attainment which is low and many have complex social and emotional needs. They make good progress as they move through the school but the standards they reach by the time they leave Year 11, although much closer to average, are still low. Students' attainment in mathematics has been significantly below average for the last four years. However, in spite of a dip in results in 2009, standards are now rising to match those of English where 32% of students gained a GCSE grade C or above. National value added measures for the last three years show that students have achieved well and made good progress. In 2008, the school was ranked in the top 1% most improved schools nationally and the proportion of students gaining five or more grades A\* to C was significantly above average.

The development of workplace skills is satisfactory. Although attendance remains low, the vast majority of students achieve a qualification in functional English and mathematics and teamwork skills are developed well. The proportion of students who did not enter education or training when they left school was halved this year. Most students feel safe in school, although some younger students had concerns about boisterous behaviour in the corridors. Behaviour is satisfactory. Although some students exhibit challenging behaviour, this is very well managed by staff and the atmosphere in

**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

the school is calm and purposeful. Relationships between students from different ethnic heritages within the school are good.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
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>3</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>3</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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	4
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>

### How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good in the large majority of lessons and none is inadequate. Teachers have good relationships with their students and in most lessons activities are varied and interesting. A really exciting range of photographs and video clips were used to follow up a visit to the zoo which engaged the interest of lower attaining students very well. Consequently, they really enjoyed learning and made good progress. In the best lessons students are actively involved in their own learning and encouraged to assess their own work. Consequently, they are very clear about how well they are doing and how to take the next steps in their learning. However, this is not yet consistent across the school. In a minority of lessons some learning time is wasted when teachers manage low level disruptive behaviour.

The curriculum is satisfactory. It has some good features such as the 'Skills for Success' course in Years 7 and 8 and it provides a suitable choice of vocational and academic

<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.

**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

courses to meet the needs of students in Years 10 and 11. In some subjects students have few opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. The specialism is contributing to positive links with primary schools and local businesses but is not making a significant contribution to driving up standards across the school. A good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities add to students' enjoyment of learning.

The care, guidance and support for students that the school provides are one of its strengths. Very well targeted support, particularly for vulnerable students, enables them to overcome some of their barriers to learning. However, others barriers, such as low attendance of some students remain, despite the school's efforts to tackle them. The Student Support Centre and the Nurture Group help build students' confidence and develop their basic skills very successfully.

*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>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The newly appointed headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the senior team are all firmly focused on raising attainment and have communicated their vision very effectively to all staff and students. The school has responded very positively to the 'National Challenge' initiative and has made very good use of the financial and specialist support this has provided. An excellent 'Raising Attainment Plan', specialist teachers and a much improved tracking system are all contributing to rising standards in mathematics and English. Teaching and learning are carefully monitored and good opportunities exist for staff to develop their skills further. Governance is satisfactory. Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school increasingly well and are becoming more involved in determining its strategic direction.

The talents of all students are valued and nurtured. The school ensures all groups of students achieve equally well by close monitoring of their progress to identify and help any who are falling behind. Safeguarding policies and procedures are all satisfactorily in place and meet requirements. Finances are well managed and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

The promotion of community cohesion is a priority for the school and is good. Links with the local community are particularly strong and senior leaders have evaluated the significant impact of this work very well. Students' understanding of communities beyond their own is developed well. The school works hard to communicate with parents, but it has not yet been successful in involving them enough in their children's

**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

education.

*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>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>3</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>3</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>3</b>

## Views of parents and carers

A very small number of parental questionnaires were returned. The vast majority of these were supportive of the school and parents commented positively on improvements in their children's school work and in their self-confidence. Inspectors agreed with the comments parents made.



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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Blakewater 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 12 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 438 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	5	42	7	58	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	3	25	9	75	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	4	33	8	67	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	6	50	6	50	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	4	33	8	67	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	5	42	6	50	1	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	3	25	8	67	1	8	0	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)	3	25	9	75	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	3	25	9	75	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	3	25	9	75	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	4	33	7	58	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	4	33	8	67	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	5	42	7	58	0	0	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.**



2 December 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Blakewater College, Blackburn, BB1 2HT

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school last week. A particular thank you to those of you who took time to talk with us and tell us about the things you enjoy most and least about your school.

These are the main findings in our inspection report:

yours is a satisfactory school

you make good progress in lessons because teaching is good

you receive good, care, guidance and support from all staff at your school

you get well with each other, understand how to keep healthy and some of you make a helpful contribution to school life

your school is well led and managed.

This is what we have asked your school to do now:

improve the standards you reach, particularly in mathematics, so that more of you gain five GCSE grades A\* to C including English and mathematics by:

tracking your progress even more carefully

improving the already good teaching even further

encouraging you to become more actively involved in your own learning and in assessing your own performance

extending the 'Skills for Success' course to all students

improving your literacy and numeracy skills in all lessons.

Work with your parents to improve your attendance.

You can help your school to improve even further by attending regularly, behaving well and working with your teachers to achieve the very best you can.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Ann Wallis

Lead inspector

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).**