

Carr Hill High School and Sixth Form Centre

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119744
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	339522
Inspection dates	11–12 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Vincent Ashworth 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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1233
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ian Marquis
Headteacher	Mr Patrick Earnshaw
Date of previous school inspection	17 September 2008
School address	Royal Avenue Kirkham Preston PR4 2ST
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 34 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff and students. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of evidence. This included assessment information, students' work, key policies and practices including those on safeguarding and health and safety, records of monitoring the quality of teaching, school improvement plans and arrangements to support vulnerable learners. In addition, 173 parental questionnaires, 206 student questionnaires and 53 staff questionnaires were reviewed.

- the extent of progress made by the school since its last inspection
- the impact of improvement strategies on students' achievement and standards in the sixth form
- the extent to which students make good progress in lessons as a consequence of improvements in teaching
- the extent to which students know how to improve their work in order to achieve challenging targets
- how well managers at all levels use information about performance to improve outcomes for students.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average secondary school. It has been a specialist Engineering College since 2003. Although the vast majority of students are White British, a wide range of different backgrounds is now represented in the school. The number of students who are eligible for free school meals is below average, but increasing. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below that found nationally. The number of students with a statement of special educational need is similar to the national average. The school has secured a number of awards including Investors in People, the Financial Management Standard, Sportsmark, Artsmark Silver and Healthy Schools. The current headteacher joined the school in January 2009.

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

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

This is now a satisfactory and rapidly improving school. The significant improvement in students' results at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2009 is testimony to the fact that the school has turned a corner and now has a clear strategy to make the school even better. Staff welcome and feel excited by the clarity of vision and direction which the new headteacher and his dynamic team of senior leaders provide.

After a period of decline, examination results have started to improve. Most students are making at least satisfactory progress; some groups, for example, girls and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. The school is successfully closing the achievement gap between boys and girls. In addition, students with social and emotional difficulties are supported well and remain focused on their education. Students' achievement in mathematics and English has improved dramatically, consequently in 2009, the proportion of students who attained five or more good grades at GCSE, including mathematics and English, rose to an all time high of 63%. Within this picture of improvement, there remains variation in the rates of progress and results between different subjects and some groups of students, for example, boys and higher ability students. School leaders have a good grasp of the issues and are making excellent use of their analysis of assessment information to target support for staff and students where it is most needed. This information contributes well to the school's plans to overcome any remaining variation in the performance of different subjects or groups of students. Senior leaders are not resting on their laurels; they recognise that more work needs to be done to ensure that students are provided with greater challenge to achieve their very best.

The school has made great strides in evaluating the quality of lessons and in increasing the proportion of good or better teaching. Outcomes of lesson observations are used as a basis for sharing good practice and raising the quality of teaching and learning. There are pockets of excellent teaching that inspire students to achieve and flourish.

Nevertheless, the quality of teaching remains satisfactory. Not all teachers are equally skilled in using assessment to find out how students are getting on and to figure out how best to meet their individual needs in lessons. Similarly, the quality of marking varies too much and not all students benefit from insightful and personalised feedback to help them improve the standard of their work.

The school's capacity to improve is good. The school has made improvements in all of the areas identified for action at the last inspection. School data and inspection evidence

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indicate that a rising trend in students' attainment and achievement will be sustained in 2010 and beyond. Leaders and managers have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. Planning is good with clear priorities, timescales and success criteria. Target setting is now more demanding and aspirational.

The school's specialist status in engineering is being used well to underpin improvement and innovation in the school. It has had a very positive impact on the quality of teaching and the enrichment of students' learning. In 2009, the school reached an all time high by exceeding its challenging targets in design and technology and mathematics.

Students enjoy being part of the sixth form. The new building that houses the sixth form is seen as a major improvement and is greatly appreciated by the students. The pace of improvement in the sixth form has been slower than that of the main school. In spite of recent improvements, aspects of sixth form provision remain weak. Expectations are too low, consequently, too few students achieve the high grades they are capable of and improvement lacks vigour.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to raise attainment and achievement of all students, and in particular boys and higher attainers, by:
 - ensuring that teaching is of consistently good quality across all key stages
 - ensuring that good practice in the use of assessment data to support individual students' learning and progress is used in all lessons
 - ensuring that marking consistently provides students with the detailed information and guidance that helps them to improve their work.
- Raise expectations in the sixth form by:
 - ensuring that self-evaluation of provision is sufficiently rigorous and incisive
 - ensuring that students' progress is monitored systematically and underachievement eradicated quickly and effectively.
- 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

The quality of students' learning and their progress in lessons is satisfactory overall. As a result of the use of effective strategies to accelerate progress and redress a legacy of underachievement, students' performance against key national indicators has improved significantly since 2008. Taking into account trends in students' performance over three years and the significant improvement in attainment in 2009, students' achievement is now satisfactory. Progress in some subjects is now good, for example, in humanities, physical education, English, mathematics and technology. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well motivated and engaged in their

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learning because of the good and unobtrusive support they receive.

Students learn the most when their lessons take account of their prior learning and the tasks are focused on their individual needs and aspirations. They particularly enjoy learning that requires them to get involved and work things out for themselves.

Inspectors saw some really good examples of this in history and religious education. In one particularly excellent history lesson, a series of tasks and activities relating to a potentially dry topic had been managed in such a stimulating way that each student got a buzz when they realised they were achieving at a level beyond that expected of them. Everyone left the lesson brimming with confidence and pride. Learning is least effective when teachers talk too much or when students are required to engage in dull activities such as copying notes from the board or filling out worksheets that are too easy for them. Consequently, students switch off and their progress falters.

Students' good behaviour shows their maturity and eagerness to learn. They contribute willingly in lessons and build positive relationships with their teachers. Instances of fixed-term exclusion have declined and are below national and regional averages. Above average attendance testifies to students' enjoyment of school life. Students feel safe and say that bullying sometimes happens, but in most cases is dealt with effectively by the school. They say they feel confident in talking to staff or older students in their college about any concerns relating to their safety. Students benefit enormously from the good sports facilities and many take advantage of the wide range of well managed sporting activities that help them to stay healthy. They enjoy taking on responsibilities such as becoming peer mentors or college representatives. Students speak enthusiastically of their involvement in making key decisions about what goes on at school. For example, they were actively involved in designing the school's new behaviour policy, something on which they are keeping a close watch so that they can advise senior staff on how well it is working. The school council is effective in voicing students' views and has effected changes for the better. The good range of work-related and enterprise opportunities prepare students well for life after school. The number of students who leave school and do not progress into education, training or employment is very low.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2

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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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
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	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Strategies initiated by senior leaders to improve classroom practice are having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. The proportion of good or better teaching has increased since the last inspection. However, the extent to which students experience consistently high quality teaching remains too variable. There is further scope for harnessing and spreading the skills of the very best teachers. The best lessons are planned around students' individual needs. Teachers communicate a high expectation, provide challenge, capture students' interest and ignite a fire in their imagination. Learning outcomes are clearly differentiated and provide stretch for all levels of ability. In such lessons, students' understanding of assessment criteria enables them to evaluate their own work and that of their peers. Students are engaged in a range of tasks and have the opportunity to think and draw conclusions for themselves. In less effective lessons, teaching does not meet the needs of all students because teachers have not drawn on detailed assessment information on students' prior learning and progress. Consequently, learning objectives lack precision and there is too much teacher input and too little student involvement. Similarly, marking is inconsistent between and within departments. There are examples of good practice, but marking often lacks the detail to help students to identify their strengths and know how to improve.

The school's good curriculum contributes well to students' personal and academic development. It meets the needs and ambitions of a wide range of learners and is kept under constant review. Provision for some of the most vulnerable learners is particularly effective. For example, the school collaborates effectively with a range of partners to provide personalised programmes for some individual students, including those at risk of exclusion. The enrichment activities challenge students to try different activities and develop new skills. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum promotes a good understanding of risk, relationships and responsibilities and helps students to make sensible decisions about their lives in and out of school. Provision for those students who are gifted and talented is satisfactory and improving.

The care, guidance and support offered to students are good. Students feel valued and

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supported by staff and this contributes enormously to their well-being and the progress they make. Teachers know their students very well and monitor their academic and personal development systematically, a significant improvement since the last inspection. Students say that behaviour has improved significantly, because strategies to manage poor behaviour are well understood and are now more consistently applied. When individuals are not achieving their challenging targets, they receive help and guidance quickly and manage to stay on track. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive very effective support tailored to their specific needs.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides strong leadership and a clear vision for improvement which underpins the work of the school. A reorganised and rejuvenated team of senior and middle leaders has been instrumental in communicating high expectations. Strong teamwork is apparent across the school. Middle leaders are generally confident in their roles and have responded enthusiastically to increased accountability. Governors are more knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses of the school and starting to hold the school more rigorously to account.

Systems and procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning are rigorous. They provide senior leaders with an accurate picture of the quality of teaching and learning. The impact of coaching, intervention and continuing professional development is demonstrable in the increasing proportion of good or better lessons. The driving force for improvement has been from teachers working together in pairs and triads to coach mentor and support each other. Nevertheless, there remains inconsistency in the quality of teaching.

The school's collaboration with key partners such as local schools, further education colleges and local business and community groups continue to have a positive impact on students' outcomes. Links with parents are satisfactory and improving. Equality of opportunity is given a high priority and everything is done to ensure that all students are able to get the most of the educational, cultural and sporting opportunities provided to them. There are no recorded racial incidents. Plans are in place to ensure that boys and higher ability students make as equally good progress as other groups of students. Arrangements for safeguarding are well established and effective. The school has good plans to promote community cohesion and is increasingly looking at ways for students to

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learn with and work alongside young people from different backgrounds.

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	3
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	3

Sixth form

Recent examination results are broadly in line with national averages and students are currently making satisfactory progress. The school responds well to student demand regarding provision, for instance, by the introduction of media studies and textile design at advanced level. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory with some examples of good teaching. Students are cooperative and want to learn, however, in some lessons they are not given sufficient opportunity for independent learning and the lessons become excessively teacher dominated. Relationships with tutors and with fellow students are good. The use of data to help set challenging targets and monitor progress has been established, although further refinement is needed to make targets more challenging and subject specific. The new tracking system has been welcomed and understood by students. Potential underachievement is starting to be identified at an earlier stage and students are well supported with strategies identified for improving their performance. Students receive good pastoral support and guidance; they particularly appreciate the careers and higher education advice that is available. The decline in students' achievement has been arrested. However self-evaluation and planning for improvement lacks sufficient rigour to improve student outcomes at a faster pace.

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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

Most parents and carers are supportive of the school and are happy with the standard of education the school provides for their child. A very large majority of parents feel that the school provides well for the needs of their child which allows them to enjoy school, make progress and feel safe. Few parents made negative comments. However, some expressed concern about a lack of communication from the school, in particular about their child's progress. A couple of parents wrote about incidents of bullying. The inspection team investigated these concerns and is satisfied that systems and procedures are now in place to ensure that parents' concerns are handled efficiently and effectively. The school is aware of parents' concerns about communication and much has been done recently to improve this.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Carr Hill High School and Sixth Form Centre 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 173 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1233 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	44	25	112	65	14	8	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	51	29	105	61	11	6	3	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	32	18	95	55	31	18	4	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	34	20	102	59	22	13	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	25	14	115	66	19	11	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	22	13	95	55	41	24	4	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	15	102	59	27	16	5	3
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)	26	15	107	62	18	10	2	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	17	104	60	24	14	3	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	34	20	95	55	30	17	5	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	9	94	54	35	20	6	3
The school is led and managed effectively	31	18	93	54	32	18	3	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	39	23	107	62	17	10	5	3

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"> ■ 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.



13 November 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Carr Hill High School and Sixth Form Centre, Preston, PR4 2ST

Thank you for welcoming my colleagues and me to your school. We found it particularly helpful to hear your views about the school. We were pleased to note that most of you enjoy coming to school and that you appreciate the care shown by staff and the opportunities to join in activities after school. Your attendance and behaviour are good and we were particularly impressed by your eagerness to contribute to the development of your school. Many of you told us about changes for the better and how much improved your school is since it was inspected last year. We agree with you. We judged that your school is satisfactory and that some aspects are now good. Since the last inspection, results in mathematics and English have improved considerably; students now make at least satisfactory progress overall.

Your headteacher and all the staff have high aspirations for the future development of your school and are committed to improving your achievement. In order to make your school even better, we have asked them to concentrate on some key things:

- to make sure that all your lessons are equally good
- to ensure that comments on your work give you enough guidance on what to do in order to improve and achieve your challenging targets
- to ensure that teachers are skilled in using assessment information to plan lessons that are suited to your different needs so that you can all make good progress in your learning
- to accelerate the pace of improvement in the sixth form so that results improve as fast as they have in the lower school.

You have an important part to play by continuing to attend school regularly and doing your very best at all times. I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Vincent Ashworth

Her Majesty's Inspector

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