

The Hollins Technology College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	119757
Local Authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	363911
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Sally Kenyon 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	751
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Heather Pitman
Headteacher	Mr Mark Jackson
Date of previous school inspection	14 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 26 lessons, taught by 26 teachers. One inspector did a learning walk with the head teacher which covered five lessons. Inspectors held meetings with three representatives of the governing body, senior school staff, middle leaders, teachers, support staff and groups of students. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at samples of students' work in lessons across a wide range of subjects and different year groups. Inspectors looked in detail at documents relating to the school's monitoring of its performance and undertook a detailed analysis of students' attainment and progress. They also scrutinised minutes of meetings, improvement plans and safeguarding procedures. The responses from parents and carers on 250 questionnaires were considered, together with replies from staff and students.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The current progress and attainment of all students
- The quality of teaching and assessment for all students
- The extent to which the curriculum meets the needs and interests of all students and its impact on their progress.
- The quality of leadership and management across the school

Information about the school

The Hollins is a smaller than average school and has been a Specialist Technology College since 2000. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. A small minority of students are from minority ethnic heritage, although the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is above the national average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average as is the proportion

of students with a statement of special educational needs. The school was granted High Performing Specialist School status in 2009, and is a designated Leading Edge School.

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

The Hollins is a good school, with some features of its work that are outstanding, including the care, guidance and support students receive. That support contributes to a calm and reassuring atmosphere at Hollins. One parent commented, 'The school has renewed my child's love of learning and I have every confidence they will help her succeed.'

Strong and collaborative working relationships between teachers, parents, carers and students contribute enormously to students' good and often outstanding behaviour, above-average attendance, positive attitudes to learning and their enjoyment of school life. The school has a very personalised approach to its relationships with parents and they are very involved in decision-making at all transition points. The very large majority report that the school keeps them well informed of their child's progress.

Long-standing, highly successful partnerships with a multitude of organisations ensure the very best support for all students in times of need, and particularly for those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. The most vulnerable students have their own learning support assistant to whom they can turn to for support and many make use of the Quiet Room at breaks and lunchtimes where they say they feel safe and can enjoy playing games with their friends.

Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are above average, which represents good progress from students' below average starting points on entry into school. This is due to the good quality teaching and to the outstanding support that students receive. In the good lessons, and in those lessons that were observed to be outstanding, teachers plan innovative and engaging approaches which enable students to take control of their own learning. In lessons where teaching was less effective, learning was too dependent upon the teacher's intervention and not all students made the same good progress as their peers.

The school sets ambitious targets and, most of the time, achieves them. The school's specialist status is being used well to harness students' positive attitudes to learning and enhance their drive and ambition to succeed. The Year 10 and Year 11 GCSE engineering group take part in an annual 'Green Power' challenge, to build an eco-friendly racing car to race against other schools. The school is extremely resourceful in designing and building its machine, and this year reached the finals of the event at Goodwood. This has raised the profile of Engineering in the school and students who take part in the project report the positive impact it has had on their confidence, creativity and teamwork skills.

Senior leaders and the governing body demonstrate a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and rigorous plans are firmly in place to tackle any areas that need improvement. For example, in order to continue to raise achievement, senior managers are rightly focusing on improving the quality of learning and progress in lessons to the level of the best already evident in school. The strength of leadership at all levels, along with school's well devised improvement planning, amply demonstrate that the school has good capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - ensuring that teachers make better use of data to plan for individual learning needs
 - developing more opportunities for independent learning
 - ensuring that all written feedback includes bespoke advice on how to improve
 - sharing good practice in peer and self-assessment across the school

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils



Inspection evidence, including from lesson observations, assessment information and the school's own evaluations of teaching show that the majority of students make good progress in lessons and all show an excellent attitude to learning. Students make outstanding progress in those lessons where teachers equip them with the confidence and skills to work independently and enable them to assess and evaluate their own work; for example, in food technology where Year 11 students were observed successfully discussing and marking each other's work. In another lesson, a Year 11 English class were making presentations on a subject of their choice. The atmosphere was electric as some presentations were amusing, thought-provoking and quite heartfelt. The teacher's excellent planning based on students' individual starting points allowed outstanding learning to take place. However, such outstanding practice is not evident in all subject areas.

Achievement is good. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similarly good progress from their individual starting points and those students with a statement of special educational needs make significantly better progress as a result of the highly personalised care and support they receive.

Overwhelmingly, behaviour observed in lessons and around the school is good, with an element that is outstanding. For example, in a Year 10 Information and Communication Technology lesson outstanding behaviour was seen as students were using spreadsheets to find solutions to problems. Students were self-reliant and collaborating confidently and independently in their learning with others.

Many students report that behaviour has improved since they joined the school. This is in part due to well organised peer-support mechanisms such as prefects and buddies. The very large majority of students surveyed feel safe in school and are confident that staff will help them if there is a problem. A small minority of students, whose circumstances make them vulnerable, stated that they have a variety of places to go at break and lunchtimes. There is clear and mutual respect between staff and students which contributes significantly to the calm and purposeful learning atmosphere.

Attendance is above average and improving due to the successful actions of the member of staff who has recently taken lead responsibility for it and also because of the improvements in the personalised support to students whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Exclusion rates have reduced significantly over the past four years because of improved teaching and this high quality support. A very large majority of students leave school and progress onto further education, training or employment.

Students make a significant contribution to the school and community through their highly influential school council. For example, as a result of the council's feedback about

lunchtime arrangements, the school has reorganised the provision to ensure that students can be served more quickly. Students' willingness to take on extra responsibility is impressive. For example, they raised over £6,000 for charities last year and many of them are active in the community through programmes such as the Sports Leader Award. They took part in a 'Heritage project' which involved collaborating with other schools to encourage local people to visit local areas of interest. Students report that this gives them an immense feeling of pride in their school and community.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	2
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	2
Pupils' attendance ¹	
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching overall is good. In lessons where teaching is good or better, students take control of their own learning through clearly embedded routines and high expectations. Teachers exhibit strong subject knowledge, frequently use praise and employ a variety of teaching styles and activities to capture the most developed imaginations. They also give clear guidance for students to assess their own and each other's work in order to comprehend fully how to improve it. This is not the case in

satisfactory lessons, where planning does not fully meet the needs of all students and there are fewer opportunities for independent learning. In some lessons, activities are directed too much by the teacher. As a consequence, students are more passive learners; they complete tasks conscientiously, but would benefit from more opportunities for independent learning.

Procedures for setting challenging targets and tracking students' progress are very well developed and contribute significantly to students' good academic progress. However, some teachers do not pay sufficient attention to these targets when planning their lessons, and in such lessons progress is satisfactory rather than good. The quality of day-to-day marking is also variable within and between departments. A sample of English books showed a consistently high standard of marking giving specific feedback to students and often referring to grades or levels. However, this was not the case for all subjects: where marking was weaker, it was cursory and did not give sufficient guidance of how to improve the work.

The curriculum is well organised, with a good range of academic and vocational GCSE courses that are appropriately adjusted to meet the needs and interests of different groups and individual students. It contributes well to students' personal and academic development. Strong partnerships with other providers have successfully extended the number of vocational programmes on offer. Personalised programmes, including work placements, are organised for individual students who benefit enormously from these opportunities. Students are well prepared for life beyond school through a well designed and delivered programme for personal, social, health and citizenship education.

The outstanding care, guidance and support are as a result of a truly personalised approach. The strong pastoral team have extensive understanding of the individual circumstances of each student. They have fostered highly effective and individual approaches to students' needs using a range of agencies to complement their work. The result of this work can be seen, for example, in one student who had low attendance and was quickly and effectively supported by the team and now has just below 100% attendance record. Students report that they benefit from well organised and targeted transition arrangements.

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The school's leaders and managers have the full confidence of staff, parents and carers. They show their high ambition through their recognition that they, 'Strive to succeed.' One parent commented, 'It is precisely because people keep believing in my daughter... that she is finally starting to believe in herself.' Staff are proud to be part of the school and feel that their views are taken into account when the school sets its strategic goals and improvement plans.

The school's partnerships with other organisations have a very positive impact on the learning and well-being of students. For example, the 'Our house' project, in partnership with a local Academy, saw students transform an empty unit in the town centre into an art installation open to the public. This increased students' understanding and relationships with their community and improved their confidence and team-working skills.

The school has established good links with the local community and developed beneficial international links. For example, the 'Bethany project' is a long-term partnership that the school has with a community in Tanzania. The school raises funds to buy books, tables and even to help build a well. Students spoke of this project with feeling and compassion, and reported that it had helped them to work with different groups of students and make new friendships.

The governing body fulfils its duties well and holds the school's leaders to account for the school's performance. It ensures that the school has good procedures for safeguarding. For example, the school is able to identify who entered and left the buildings and at what time through its identification card recognition system which allows the school to know at any one time exactly who is on the premises. Governors contribute significantly to school events and work closely with departments in school.

The school successfully tackles discrimination and promotes equal opportunity. There are very few racist incidents and, if any occur, they are thoroughly investigated and reported. School leaders have monitored the outcomes of the range of groups in the school closely to ensure that all do equally well and participate proportionately in school activities.

The leadership and management of the school's technology specialism is a strength of the school and has a positive impact on ICT across the curriculum in providing new resources such as electronic voting systems and laptops to help students learn

independently. The school helps to promote Science in primary schools through its 'Bright Sparks' programme.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers are supportive of the school. A few comments were received about bullying and the way the school handles discipline. Other comments were received which congratulated the school for dealing very effectively with a behavioural matter. The inspection team followed up the concerns about bullying with the school and concluded that incidents were rare and once mentioned to adults, action was taken immediately. Inspectors scrutinised behaviour records, held discussions with staff and students and observed students' behaviour in classrooms and around the school. Inspectors found students' behaviour around the school and in class to be good or outstanding.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Hollins Technology 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 250 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 758 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	89	36	145	58	10	4	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	110	44	133	53	3	1	1	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	122	49	114	46	8	3	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	100	40	134	54	9	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	109	44	131	52	3	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	77	31	152	61	14	6	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	56	22	157	63	26	10	3	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)	77	31	149	60	5	2	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	84	34	150	60	5	2	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	86	34	142	57	11	4	1	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	63	25	158	63	11	4	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	98	39	139	56	3	1	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	123	49	118	47	3	1	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 all 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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9

All schools	13	43	37	8
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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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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: 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.

- 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 pupils' 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.



4 March 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of The Hollins Technology College, Accrington, BB5 2QY

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. Many of you gave up your time to speak to us and to complete questionnaires. We found what you said interesting and thought provoking and your comments helped us arrive at our judgements. We were particularly impressed with the friendly and caring atmosphere in the school and your good behaviour. We recognised that you play a very important part in making The Hollins a friendly, safe and inclusive place to learn.

To summarise, we found that:

- you achieve good outcomes, make good progress and attain above average results in your end of Key Stage 4 examinations

- the outstanding care system supports all of you and is particularly effective in helping those of you who experience difficulties from time to time
- teaching is good and is helping you learn successfully.
- you are very caring, make a positive contribution to your school and local community and like to help other people by raising money.

We have asked the school to improve the quality of teaching and learning by increasing the proportion of outstanding lessons to ensure that you have the opportunity to work more independently, and that feedback on your work enables you to be clear about how you can improve. We have asked that you have more opportunities to assess your own and each other's work and that all lessons are specifically designed to allow everyone to make the best possible progress.

Yours sincerely

Sally Kenyon

Her Majesty's Inspector

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