

Carr Hill High School and Sixth Form Centre

Royal Avenue, Kirkham, Preston, Lancashire, PR4 2ST

Inspection dates 10–11 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Since the previous inspection students' achievement has improved strongly and is now good. The progress and attainment of all groups of students have shown a sustained rise since 2009 and, in 2012, results in GCSE and vocational subjects were the highest in the school's history. In addition, the percentage of students attaining five or more grades A*/A rose to over a third.
- The quality of teaching has also improved and is good overall. There are examples of outstanding teaching in a range of subjects across the school. Teachers and teaching assistants challenge and support their charges well and students are keen to learn. Relationships in the classroom are good.
- The sixth form is good and students achieve well.
- Students show much pride in their school, feel safe within it and are happy to attend. They behave well in lessons and around the school site. They have a perceptive sense of right and wrong. They speak highly of the adults who work with them and comment that staff are always approachable and support them rapidly if they have any concerns.
- Strong leadership from the inspirational headteacher, supported well by the senior team and by committed academic and pastoral leaders, generates high expectations of how the school can move forward. This, complemented by a well-informed governing body which holds leaders to account, has led to marked improvements in all areas of school life since the previous inspection.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There are a few inconsistencies in teaching across the school and students do not always have sufficient opportunities to work independently of the teacher.
- The cluster system, although strong, does not yet ensure that all staff recognise their full accountability for students' achievement.
- Curriculum planning in the sixth form is developing well but current academic and vocational courses do not always meet students' needs closely enough. Sixth form students do not always contribute to whole-school life as much as normally found.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning and teaching in 44 lessons or part-lessons, taught by 44 teachers. They visited two college assemblies and also heard students in Key Stage 3 read.
- Meetings were held with four groups of students in the main school and also one group of sixth-form students. They had discussions with the Chair and one other member of the Governing Body, learning leaders and deputy leaders, college (house) leaders and members of the senior team.
- Inspectors took account of the 34 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and also of the 17 returns from the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at internal and external student progress and attainment data, work in students' files and exercise books, school development planning and documentation on the school's analysis of how well it is doing. They also scrutinised documentation on performance management, opportunities for professional development, behaviour, safeguarding and attendance.

Inspection team

James Kidd, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jane Holmes	Additional Inspector
Johan Mackinnon	Additional Inspector
Janet Pruchniewicz	Additional Inspector
Bernard Robinson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average sized secondary school. Student numbers in the sixth form are below average but increasing over time.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is below average.
- Most students are of White British heritage and there are few students with English as an additional language.
- There is a below average proportion of students supported at school action and also fewer students than usually seen on school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The school meets the government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The school holds nationally accredited Healthy School status and also has the Artsmark and Activemark awards. It is in partnership with the Community Service Volunteers organisation based in Preston. Carr Hill has six colleges (houses) and academic provision is divided into clusters, in each of which there is a range of related subjects.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching, to be consistently good or better, by:
 - providing more opportunities for students to be able to work independently of the teacher
 - ensuring that students' skills in both literacy and numeracy are reinforced in all subjects of the curriculum
 - building on improvements in marking and feedback to ensure that students are always aware of what they need to do to improve their work.
- Develop the strengths already evident in the cluster system to ensure that all staff are fully accountable for their students' achievement.
- Continue to improve provision in the sixth form by:
 - ensuring that curriculum planning leads to the development of academic and vocational programmes which closely meet the needs of all students
 - extend the contribution that sixth form students make to whole-school life.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students consistently enter Year 7 with average levels of attainment in English and mathematics. They make good progress across the school and leave Year 11 with standards in GCSE and vocational subjects which are above that usually seen. This represents good achievement from their starting points. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is variable over time but students achieve well here too and in a variety of academic and vocational courses, for example in physical education and sports studies.
- The percentage of students reaching at least five grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has increased each year since the previous inspection and was the best in the school's history in 2012. Indeed, the percentage reaching grades A*/A in at least five subjects rose to over a third, from a quarter in 2011. Standards across the whole curriculum improved, and in each of the subjects for which students were entered: standards in English remained high, improved markedly in science, mathematics and art, and performance in vocational subjects such as health and social care, and engineering were also impressive.
- Improved tracking of students' progress, in order to identify and address any possible underachievement, has led to sustained improvements in the progress of different groups of students. Consequently, gaps in performance are closing rapidly. For example, the progress of more-able students is now good at least, evidenced by the marked increase in the percentages of grades A*/A in the 2012 GCSE examinations. Disabled students and those with special educational needs also achieve well as a result of tailored support, both in class and in individual and small-group sessions, from teachers and from the talented team of teaching assistants. The 'Tutoring for Excellence' programme, including the 'Passport to Success', has accelerated students' progress, for example in mathematics.
- The school takes the progress of those students known to be eligible for the pupil premium seriously. Leaders have established a range of programmes and initiatives to meet their needs and to promote their achievement, both academically and personally. They achieve well as a result. The intervention centre, for example, run by two higher-level teaching assistants, is well attended. Students often give of their own time to meet the staff and discuss any problems they have with their classwork and homework.
- Reading has a high profile in school and students generally read confidently, accurately and with fluency and expression.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good overall and there are examples of outstanding teaching in a range of subjects and across the school, including the sixth form. In the vast majority of lessons relationships between students and between students and staff are strong. Teachers know their subjects well and how best to teach them. Teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations of their students. Students respond positively, with active participation in and enjoyment of the activities in the lesson. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection as a result of senior leaders' emphasis on improving classroom practice. It is also better because of the opportunities provided by the cluster arrangements, which allow teachers to recognise and share good and exemplary practice within and across clusters. Teachers are grateful for the chances they have to observe their peers at work and to learn from their skills.
- Pace and challenge, questions which encourage students to think more deeply about the subject-matter, and strong support from teaching assistants are the key features of good and better teaching in the school. Outstanding teaching in sports studies in the sixth form, for example, skilfully guided students to take the lead themselves in activities. They responded very responsibly and developed their own leadership skills while also helping their peers to improve. As a result, they were able to role-play media interviews with skill. Similarly, in a Year 8 English

lesson outstanding teaching comprised rigorous ongoing assessment and realistic praise which motivated students to analyse text rapidly and accurately. In lessons such as these there is continuous feedback to students and clear links to National Curriculum levels or external examination grades. Students want to learn and are often surprised at how much they can achieve.

- In the minority of lessons where teaching requires improvement, planning is often focused on tasks rather than on students' learning and progress. In a few instances there are also missed opportunities for students to assess their own work and that of their classmates. Activities do not sufficiently require students to work independently and to think for themselves. Nor do they provide students with sufficient opportunities to reinforce their skills in literacy and numeracy.
- The quality of marking and feedback is variable across the school. Where they are exemplary, students have an accurate understanding of how to improve their work. This is, however, not the case in all classes.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students in all years are very proud of their school. They comment, 'It has improved a lot, everyone is happy now and there is a really positive atmosphere in school. Our progress in lessons is improving every year.' They feel safe in school because, in their words, 'we can trust the staff and they are always there for us if we need them'. Their understanding of e-safety is particularly impressive.
- Students have a good understanding of the nature of and dangers inherent in bullying in all its forms. They comment about bullying based on prejudice, name-calling and cyber-bullying. They say that bullying does exist but that it is rare and is dealt with rapidly by the school if it occurs. They add that the school takes bullying seriously. In their opinion, too, the vertical tutor group system, of which they speak positively, enables students of all ages in the main school to get on well with and support each other. They also have a high regard for the college system, which gives them identity and a feeling of security. They also value mentor time at the end of the school day, when they can reflect on their learning and progress. All students appear to value the merit system!
- Students' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is evidenced by their good behaviour, by their willingness to support each other and by their perceptive understanding of right and wrong. Students take part in national poetry competitions, are proactive in their support for a range of charities and have strong links with schools in Kenya and South Africa. Racist behaviour is not tolerated and students with English as an additional language are accepted without question. Indeed, one student won a national competition in relation to the Muslim experience of post-9/11 Britain.
- Students benefit from a range of responsibilities. Some are trained as peer mentors, for example, and sixth formers lead paired reading sessions in the main school. They are also invited to act as role models in the thought-provoking college assemblies and explain to younger students just why it is important to work hard and attend regularly. The school recognises, however, that the full impact of sixth formers on the rest of school is not as apparent as it could be because their activities are not always integrated into whole-school life.
- The intervention centre is popular with students and supports their academic, personal and emotional development well. Staff hold sessions to reinforce literacy and numeracy skills for those students who need them. They also successfully deliver programmes on anger management and support students in danger of school refusal.
- As a result of a strong emphasis on teaching students the importance of coming to school regularly, attendance has improved and is now average.

The leadership and management are good

- Staff at all levels of experience and responsibility speak positively of the principled and inspirational leadership of the headteacher: in their view, the variety of initiatives established since the previous inspection have led to significant improvements in teaching, achievement and staff morale. The cluster system, for example, has, in their words, 'opened up liaison between subjects and facilitates the sharing of good and exemplary classroom practice across the whole school'. They add, 'Meetings are now more active and more collaborative.' The school now intends to build on the strengths of the cluster system to make sure all staff accept responsibility for how well their students do.
 - The senior leadership team, supported well by the directors of learning, has a marked impact on all areas of school life and places considerable emphasis during feedback to staff on development rather than criticism. As a result, staff are proactive in suggesting ways in which teaching can be improved. They are more confident and feel supported and challenged too.
 - The school knows itself well and, through annual cluster review weeks, identifies strengths and weaknesses in subjects, providing detailed feedback to staff on their classroom performance. This leads to focused targets for improvement and opportunities for relevant training, often delivered by staff themselves. Performance management arrangements are secure and inspection evidence demonstrates that meeting the required standards is vital for salary progression.
 - The school is most certainly a 'thinking school', one in which performance is continuously under review. For example, as a result of a close consideration of provision in the sixth form, leaders are aware that the curriculum is in need of further development, in order to ensure that academic and vocational courses on offer meet the interests and aspirations of students closely. The curriculum in the main school is good, comprises a wide range of academic and vocational courses and provides students with a variety of enrichment activities, promoting their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
 - Child protection and safeguarding arrangements are fully in place and meet current guidelines. The school promotes equality of opportunity well and rejects all forms of discrimination.
 - The local authority provides good support for the school and delivers valued in-service training to a range of academic staff, for example.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Members have a clear vision for how the school is to develop and are well aware of its key strengths and areas for development. They oversee the allocation of pupil premium funding effectively.
 - They support the school effectively and also hold the leadership rigorously to account.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	119744
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	401871

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	1,180
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	170
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Marquis
Headteacher	Patrick Earnshaw
Date of previous school inspection	11 November 2009
Telephone number	01772 682008
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