



Standish Community High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 106531
Local Authority Wigan
Inspection number 287539
Inspection date 1 March 2007
Reporting inspector Susan Wareing HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Kenyon Road
School category	Community		Standish, Wigan
Age range of pupils	11–16		Lancashire WN6 0NX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01257 422265
Number on roll (school)	1261	Fax number	01257 425858
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Adrian Hardy
		Headteacher	Mr Hugh Crossan
Date of previous school inspection	14 May 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of her Majesty's inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is larger than average and draws pupils from a wide area within Wigan local authority. Most pupils are of White British origin and come from backgrounds of relative social and economic advantage. A smaller proportion than average is entitled to free school meals, although there are pockets of deprivation locally. Around 17% of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which is broadly average; around 4% have a statement of special educational needs. The school is well established as a specialist language college.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Standish Community High School is a satisfactory school with some good features. It provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. The school is a popular choice for parents and offers a strongly supportive and caring learning environment. One pupil said, 'It's very easy to make friends here, but not just with the pupils. The teachers are our friends too and they care about us.' The school's Pupil Support Services Centre is a strength. It integrates the work of a wide range of agencies to promote inclusive care and education for vulnerable pupils of all abilities whenever they need it. However, the tracking of these pupils' academic progress is not yet precise enough.

The curriculum is satisfactory. There is scope to develop stronger links with local partners to enhance provision at Key Stage 4. Pupils value the opportunity offered by the school's specialist language status to learn a wide range of languages and this broadens their cultural understanding.

Pupils enter the school with standards that are above average and overall they reach above national averages in the Year 9 national tests. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, is also above average and most pupils gain at least one qualification. However pupils' progress over time, both from Key Stage 2 to 3 and Key Stage 2 to 4, is only satisfactory.

Pupils' attendance is good. Behaviour seen during the inspection was satisfactory but variable in lessons and around the school. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Lessons are generally well structured and most have clear objectives. However, pupils are not always sufficiently engaged in their learning because much of it is too heavily directed by the teacher. The use of information about pupils' progress to inform lesson planning and tackle underachievement is at an early stage.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. Some issues from the last inspection have been tackled but the pace of change has been slow. The school has undergone management changes over the last year after a period of severe instability in staffing. Since his appointment the headteacher has brought a new vision to the school which has identified the need for significant change. This focus is generally shared by senior and middle leaders. Recently introduced systems for monitoring and self-evaluation are robust. However, the quality of monitoring is variable in the amount of challenge it offers to staff. Self-evaluation is at an early stage. While the headteacher and senior leaders have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching, information gained from self-review is not yet consistently well used at departmental and whole school level to drive improvements quickly and consistently. Although the school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory, its performance with regard to the use of information from monitoring and evaluation to accelerate the pace of improvements is inadequate.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the use of information from monitoring and evaluation to drive improvement faster across the school.

- Increase the proportion of good teaching to offer appropriate levels of challenge to all pupils.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management at all levels.
- Strengthen links with local partners to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all learners.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Pupils enter the school with above average attainment. Overall, standards in Key Stage 3 national tests in 2005 were above average but progress was only satisfactory. Progress in English in 2005 was better than in mathematics and science. The school recognises some underachievement amongst boys, particularly of average and higher ability.

At Key Stage 4 standards in 2005 were above average for five or more GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics. The A* to G pass rate was also above average and most pupils gained at least one qualification. Overall, progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 in 2005 was satisfactory. No groups achieved significantly differently from others, including pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The school's own data confirm that in 2006 the GCSE pass rates at grades A* to C including English and mathematics rose further while progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 remained broadly satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Pupils generally enjoy school and attend regularly. Relationships are largely positive and pupils value the support that their teachers readily provide. Behaviour in lessons and around the school at lunchtimes is variable and there is sometimes disruption where teaching is undemanding or the teacher less well known. A minority of parents and pupils raised concerns about behaviour during the inspection. Pupils show good awareness of safety issues in lessons but not always in areas of the school where space is limited. Pupils have satisfactory opportunities to contribute to the community through the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme, which enjoys very good take-up. Some pupils and parents would like a more active role in decision making about school life.

At Key Stage 4 pupils follow an accredited course in information and communication technology (ICT) but opportunities to use the basic skills of ICT, literacy and numeracy are not yet consistently embedded across all subjects. The school also recognises the need to develop enterprise education more fully across the curriculum.

The school's strong programme of personal, social and health education has a high profile in the school and contributes to pupils' good moral and social development. Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. They have limited opportunities for direct

experience of the multicultural society in which they live. Opportunities are missed in some lessons for creative and imaginative work to promote reflection.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. A few examples of good teaching and one inadequate lesson were seen during the inspection. The recent instability in staffing continues to disrupt the continuity of learning for some pupils. Teachers' awareness of national initiatives to improve teaching and learning is generally evident through clear lesson objectives and structure, but work is not always well matched to pupils' specific needs and therefore does not always challenge them appropriately. In Years 10 and 11 teachers have good knowledge of examination requirements and prepare their pupils well for GCSE. However this often leads to too narrow a focus on examination success to enthuse pupils. There are pockets of good practice but these are not yet shared consistently across the school. Most pupils know their target levels or grades but teachers' marking does not always tell them exactly how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is a traditional, mainly academic one which meets the needs of most pupils. The school's specialist status ensures that all study at least one modern language to the end of Year 11, with opportunities to study two or even three. However, for a small number of students who take up such opportunities, the amount of time available to study some other subjects at Key Stage 3 is reduced, as are some option choices at Key Stage 4.

A small number of vocational courses have been introduced and a few, more vulnerable pupils are offered extended work placements and college-based courses. The school is beginning to consider how best to widen the range of alternative courses to GCSE in order to cater for the needs of a changing school population. The school's provision for pupils' economic well-being is satisfactory.

Pupils enjoy taking part in the wide range of extra-curricular activities and visits offered by the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school offers pupils good care and support and satisfactory guidance.

Clear vetting procedures and arrangements for child protection are in place and risk assessments are comprehensive. The Pupil Services Centre offers support for the learning, social and emotional needs of all pupils whenever they need it. Tracking the

academic progress of vulnerable pupils is not always precise enough to inform them of how well they are doing and how exactly to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory, but the pace of improvement since the last inspection has been slow. Since his appointment, the headteacher has refocused the staff on the raising of expectations and improving pupils' achievement. The school has tackled some key issues but improvements in the use of assessment information are still at an early stage. The staff and governors have received training to ensure that they are more familiar and confident in the use of available data. Systems set in place for senior and middle leaders to monitor the quality of teaching and learning offer the school an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching. There is some variability in the level of challenge presented by this process. Information gained from monitoring is not yet adequately used by all departments or at the whole school level to meet challenging targets. Consequently, its impact on pupils' attainment is not being felt quickly enough. Self-evaluation is broadly accurate and improvement plans generally identify appropriate priorities. However, they do not always focus precisely enough on the measurement of impact. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are well informed about and involved with the school. They provide a degree of challenge to senior leaders. There is scope for them to play a more active part in increasing the pace of change.

The specialist language status fosters links with local employers and partner primary schools and provides evening language classes for the community. However, its influence across the curriculum is not as strong as it could be.

The school's satisfactory capacity to improve is demonstrated by its progress on some key issues since the last inspection, the clear direction of the headteacher and the leadership qualities and commitment amongst the senior team. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Following our visit to inspect your school I would like to tell you about the things we found. Standish High School is popular: it provides a satisfactory education which has some good features. Most of you reach good standards over your five years in school but some of you could be making even better progress.

You told us that Standish is a school where it is easy to make friends. We were very pleased to hear that you see teachers as your friends as well, because they care about you and are always ready to help you when you need it. The Pupil Services Centre is a strength of the school.

Your attendance is good and you generally enjoy school. Your behaviour in lessons and around school is satisfactory, but we agree with those of you, and your parents, who told us that sometimes your work is disrupted by other pupils. We think that if you don't know the teacher very well, or you don't find the work challenging enough, your behaviour is not as good. However, we hope that all of you will play your part in working harder. Although you are conscious about safety in lessons, some of you also need to take more care as you move around parts of the school where there is not much space.

You know a lot about how to live a healthy life. We were impressed with the wide range of activities that you can take up outside the school day. You told us how much you appreciate being in a language college because you enjoy learning to speak a lot of new languages. However, you need more opportunities to meet people from the different cultures that make up our own society.

Teaching is satisfactory. Most teachers explain what you are going to learn in lessons and they know a lot about how to help you do well in your tests and exams. This is very important. However, some of you told us that you would like to know more about your subjects than you will need for exams and we agree that this is a good idea.

In some subjects the marking of your homework did not tell you as much as it could about how well you are doing or about how to improve your work.

We were glad to see that since the last inspection some new vocational courses have been introduced. We think that all of you should have more opportunities to follow courses like these, as well as more traditional ones.

The headteacher is working hard with the staff to make your school even better. A lot of good systems to monitor how well the school is doing have been introduced. We think that the school should:

- use all the information it gets from these systems to make changes happen a bit more quickly
- try to make sure that more of your lessons are as good as the best ones
- work with local colleges and schools to give all of you more courses to choose from in Years 10 and 11, including vocational courses for those of you who want them.

I would like to thank those of you who talked to me and my colleagues to let us know what you think of the school. We found this very helpful.

I would like to wish you all every success for your future at Standish Community High School.