



Ormskirk School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 132834
Local Authority Lancashire
Inspection number 294040
Inspection dates 10–11 January 2007
Reporting inspector Patrick Geraghty HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Wigan Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Ormskirk, Lancashire
Age range of pupils	11–18		L39 2AT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01695 583040
Number on roll (school)	1445	Fax number	01695 583050
Number on roll (6th form)	244		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Dave Hughes
		Headteacher	Mr John Doyle
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2002		

Age group 11–18	Inspection dates 10–11 January 2007	Inspection number 294040
---------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

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.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of schools and five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Ormskirk School was formed by the amalgamation of two comprehensive schools in September 2001. For three years the school operated on a split site and in poor accommodation. It moved to new purpose-built accommodation in September 2004. Learners arrive in Year 7 with a full range of attainment but overall, attainment is above the national average. About 14% of students are on the SEN register. The proportion of students in receipt of free school meals is lower than both the national and local averages. About 60% of students live in wards graded in the top 40% in socio-economic terms. Since September 2005 the school has been designated a specialist school in the performing and visual arts.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. GCSE results improved in 2006 to the national average. Standards at Key Stage 3 in mathematics and science are consistently above the national average and in English are in line with the national average. However, average ability students make less progress than they should, especially in English. Strategies to address this have not been fully embedded and their effectiveness has been limited.

Students enjoy school. They are involved in a range of sporting and performing arts activities. Attendance is above the national average. Behaviour is generally good and any cases of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively. Students are given the opportunity to contribute to the life of the school as well as the local community. The sixth formers make an important contribution to the whole school as role models, reading mentors and within the school council.

Teaching is satisfactory. The school recognises that the current satisfactory teaching needs to become more varied and lively in Years 7, 8 and 9. Approaches to improvements in teaching and learning are not consistent and there is limited sharing of good practice.

The curriculum is satisfactory but improving. The school is establishing a range of partnerships in the community to offer more effective alternative provision for students with different learning needs. The Achievement Centre under the joint leadership of the inclusion co-ordinator and special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) provides a high quality of effective care for the well-being of vulnerable groups and individual students. The school is a specialist performing arts college. The faculty is very well led and has some of the best practice in teaching, planning and curriculum development in the school.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school has dealt well with amalgamation and the move to a new purpose-built campus. Accommodation and resources are very good. Senior leaders share a strong commitment to continuing school improvement but there is scope to improve the planning for this. Middle and subject leadership is variable and there are some inconsistencies in the application of improvement strategies, especially at Key Stage 3.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The school has a well established sixth form. A wide range of GCE advanced level courses are offered and these have been recently supplemented with academic vocational programmes. There are effective quality assurance and tracking procedures to monitor student progress. Standards are above national averages and learners make good progress as measured against prior attainment. Guidance and induction procedures are thorough. Careers and higher education (HE) advice is good and 95% of learners progress to higher education. There is a comprehensive tutorial programme.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement at Key Stage 3 and student progress in English in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- Improve consistency in the quality of teaching and learning and promote the sharing of best practice.
- Improve consistency across the school at middle management and subject leader level so that improvement strategies are fully embedded
- Ensure that senior managers monitor more rigorously the progress and effectiveness of strategies for improvement so that the impact of the action taken can be evaluated and the accuracy of self-evaluation improved.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. Standards at Key Stage 3 in mathematics and science have been significantly above the national average over a period of four years. Standards in English are in line with the national average. However, progress for students of average ability is significantly below the national average for similar schools at Key Stage 3. Students are not making the progress that they should in English. The school recognises weaknesses in student achievement at Key Stage 3 and the need to tackle this robustly. In all Key Stage 3 lessons visited, inspectors judged that the students made at least satisfactory progress.

In 2005 GCSE results were below average. Girls of average ability made unsatisfactory progress. Achievements were strong in the performing and visual arts, business studies, geography and physical education but weak in modern foreign languages, and for girls in science and health and social care. The school has implemented strategies to improve standards and more recent results show that these have been successful. In 2006 there was a significant improvement in the percentage of students gaining five or more grades at A* to C, which rose from 50% in 2005 to 59% in 2006. The percentage of students gaining five GCSEs including English and mathematics rose from 41% to 47%. Girls of average ability showed significant improvement. Students with learning difficulties or disabilities progress less well than at Key Stage 3 in Years 10 and 11.

Standards in the sixth form are good. The pass rates for GCE AS and A-level are above the national average. There is an improving ratio of higher grade A and B passes at GCE A-level. Students make good progress given their prior attainment. A significant number of learners continue their studies in higher education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good throughout the school. Students show positive attitudes to learning and take part in a good range of extra-curricular activities, notably in the performing arts and sport. Relationships are harmonious and productive and the overall good behaviour is reflected in the very low exclusion rate and high attendance. Younger students say that they are made welcome and they appreciate the buddy system with older students which enables them to settle quickly into the school. Moral, social, spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory although more could be done to ensure that pupils have regular and varied experiences of cultural, ethnic and religious diversity.

Students, parents and carers believe that there are occasional incidents of bullying and that these are usually dealt with effectively. Younger students say that being able to report incidents anonymously on line is particularly reassuring. Robust measures ensure that all students feel safe in school and know who to approach should they need advice. They also understand the way in which diet and physical activity contribute to a healthy lifestyle and learn about related issues, including alcohol abuse and drugs awareness. Students are very generous in contributing to a wide range of local, national and international charities and they enjoy opportunities to take responsibility and to represent their school. They appreciate it when they are listened to and their views are acted upon. A significant number of parents feel that that the school does not take sufficient account of their suggestions and concerns.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen although too few lessons were good or outstanding. The best lessons are well planned with clear objectives and delivered at a good pace. A strong feature of these lessons was how students immediately engaged with starter activities and continued that initial enjoyment and involvement throughout. For example, challenging work was observed in drama where students were confident, creative, supportive and inquisitive and found their learning rewarding. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used confidently to motivate students. The sharing of good practice in teaching and learning across the curriculum is limited.

In the weaker lessons, questioning is not extensive enough to extend the more able students and teaching does not focus adequately on the different rates of learning of various groups of pupils. The pace was slower and the lessons were too teacher focused. Systems are in place to enable target setting and monitoring of students' progress;

however, there are inconsistencies in their application. Marking of students' work is inconsistent and does not always tell them how to improve. Homework, when given through extended tasks, does not inform lesson planning and many students and parents question its value.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. Provision at Key Stage 4 includes vocational courses, some of which are delivered off-site at a local centre. Citizenship is not available to all students at Key Stage 4 but the school has plans to remedy this. Since the last inspection, the school has significantly improved its resources for ICT and developed a wider range of choice at Key Stage 4. The school is still to address fully the provision and monitoring of ICT across the curriculum. There is a good range of courses in the sixth form which matches the needs and abilities of the learners and includes an academic vocational curriculum. The school has started to address enterprise education and has developed a successful week that engages students in a broad range of enterprise activity; however, it recognises the need for further development in this area.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Care and guidance are satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. The school has a strong commitment to inclusion and its new and more rigorous procedures now identify more quickly students requiring additional pastoral and mentoring support. The use of data to track each student's progress against established targets is being used more effectively and students are beginning to understand that they must take some responsibility for their own learning. However, these systems, led by the learning managers, have not been in place long enough to have had a significant impact on overall achievement. The work of tutors and pastoral leaders is supplemented by very good links with a range of external services, such as educational psychologists, welfare officers and social workers. Sixth formers are impressive role models and make a significant contribution to improving the reading skills and self-esteem of younger students through the paired reading scheme. Close liaison with primary feeder schools ensures a smooth induction into Year 7 and students receive good advice when choosing option subjects for GCSE, sixth form courses, employment or college and university entrance. Risk assessments are in place and child protection procedures are thorough, clear and well understood by staff and students. Students with learning difficulties receive good support.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head teacher demonstrates caring and sensitive leadership qualities which have helped him to steer the school through amalgamation. The new building with its improved facilities and resources has had a positive impact on the school as a whole. Standards are satisfactory overall; however, some students at Key Stage 3 progress less well than they should. The management of the sixth form is good.

There are inconsistencies in the implementation of improvement strategies. Where strategies are focused with clear direction from senior management, they are successful, as shown by improvements in achievement and standards at Key Stage 4 in 2006. However, strategies to improve achievement at Key Stage 3 have not been embedded and insufficient progress has been made across all subjects. Targets for improvement lack clarity and are not sufficiently focused to improve the performance of subject areas and individual classroom teachers. Some middle and subject management is variable in quality and impact. Inspectors found that the school was over generous in grading some aspects of their self-evaluation.

Governors played a central role in planning for a smooth amalgamation and completion of the new school building programme. However, governors do not sufficiently monitor and challenge performance outcomes. Specialist status in performing and visual arts is managed effectively. The school gives satisfactory value for money. The school demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to improve because it has successfully tackled a number of issues identified at the last inspection and has raised achievement and standards at Key Stage 4.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
--	-----------------------	--------------

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	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
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?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
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	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	2

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	2
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	3	
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	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

Ormskirk School

Wigan Road

Ormskirk

Lancashire

L39 2AT

12 January 2007

Dear Students

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team into your school recently. Many of you gave up your time to talk with us about your work, life in the school and all the activities you do. We enjoyed taking with you and appreciated your time and comments.

These are the main finding from the inspection.

You enjoy many of your lessons, particularly when you know that you are improving and learning. However, some of you are not reaching the standards and making the progress that you are capable of. You can play an important part in this by working with your teachers and helping them to improve your work.

There is some good teaching in the school and in these lessons you respond well and you make good progress. You are doing well in mathematics and science at Key Stage 3. However, this is not the case across all of the school. In some lessons you are not being given work which really stretches you or encourages you to enjoy learning, achieve well and make progress.

The teachers and support staff care for you and give you satisfactory guidance. Generally your behaviour is good and you agree that the school is a safe and enjoyable place to be. You enjoy a wide range of extra activities including sports and in the performing and visual arts.

You make an active contribution to your community, for example through the school council. Achievement and standards in the sixth form are good and sixth formers make a very good contribution to the whole school.

Some aspects of the school could be improved and we have suggested to the staff and governors that they:

- ensure that your examination results improve and that you make the progress that you are capable of across all subjects, particularly in English at Key Stage 3
- ensure that more teaching is good and that you are set challenging targets and homework to enable you to improve your performance
- ensure greater consistency in teaching and learning, homework setting and marking across all subjects and all year groups.

On behalf of the inspection team I wish you well for your future education.

Yours sincerely

Patrick Geraghty

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools