

Longdendale Community Language College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106267
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	377387
Inspection dates	23–24 May 2012
Lead 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 category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	891
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Colin Baldwin
Headteacher	Matthew Bowler
Date of previous school inspection	18 March 2009
School address	Spring Street Hollingworth Hyde SK14 8LW
Telephone number	01457 764006
Fax number	01457 766483
Email address	admin@longdendale.tameside.sch.uk



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Introduction

Inspection team

Patrick Geraghty
Judith Tolley
David Selby
Lenford White

Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector
Ofsted Seconded
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 37 teachers delivering 37 lessons, of which two were joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. Meetings were held with four groups of students, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body, senior leaders, middle managers and two groups of teachers including heads of department, newly-qualified and more experienced teachers. The inspectors observed the school's work and considered a wide range of documents, including the school improvement plan, school self-evaluation, safeguarding and equality policies and minutes of governing body meetings, in planning the inspection. They analysed 157 questionnaires completed by parents and carers along with others completed by students and staff.

Information about the school

Longdendale Community Language College is an average-sized 11–16 mixed comprehensive with specialist language status. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national average. The student population is predominantly of White British heritage with smaller numbers of students from other backgrounds. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is broadly in line with the national average, while the numbers with a statement of special educational need is above. In 2011, the school met the government's floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. The school has achieved the Artsmark Gold Award, the Gold Healthy Schools Award, the Silver Eco-Award and International School Award.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	3
Leadership and management	3

Key Findings

- This is a satisfactory and improving school. For several years the school has underperformed in key indicators at Key Stage 4. A period of instability within the leadership and management of the school impacted on the capacity of the school to improve: this underperformance was not fully recognised by the school. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2010 and has quickly established systems that are enabling the delivery of better provision and creating a stronger culture of improvement. Systems to ensure and monitor the quality of provision have been reshaped. Tracking, monitoring and intervention systems have been established. There have been significant staff changes to senior and middle leadership. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Current student progress and attainment is now satisfactory. There is a strong understanding within the school of the need to further accelerate the percentage of students gaining 5 GCSE A*-C including English and mathematics.
- Too much teaching remains satisfactory. Managers acknowledge the need to now reduce the percentage of satisfactory lessons and increase the proportion of those that are good, so as to further accelerate improved outcomes for students. The curriculum is better matching the needs of all students. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is better focused on the development of literacy, numeracy and learning skills and students here are making better progress. Care, support and guidance systems are effective in supporting those at risk of underachievement.
- Behaviour around school is satisfactory. The school is an orderly and safe community. Students are generally courteous, well-mannered and welcoming and there are few incidents of unacceptable behaviour. However, inspectors observed low-level disruptive behaviour in a minority of lessons where the school's behaviour code was not observed.

- The school promotes the spiritual, moral and social development of students effectively. Students have opportunities to participate in the school's extra-curricular programme and serve the school and wider community. In particular there are numerous opportunities for extension activities in modern foreign languages and the performing arts.
- A sense of urgency to further embed improvement and raise aspiration pervades the new senior leadership and is driven by the headteacher. New leadership in English, mathematics and science has impacted on improved teaching within those areas. The headteacher has an acute sense of the need for further and accelerated improvement which is reflected in accurate and developmental self evaluation. He is strongly supported by governors. Systems and the required drive are fully in place to achieve further and sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment at Key Stage 4 so that outcomes for five GCSEs at A* to C, including English and mathematics, are further accelerated.
- Accelerate the rate of progress made by students by ensuring that more teaching is good or better by:
 - sharing best practice within the school so that inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning are tackled and all students have the opportunity to engage in consistently challenging learning
 - ensuring that questioning is used effectively to challenge individual students according to their needs
 - promoting a greater focus on independent and group learning skills
 - ensuring that marking in all subjects gives a clear indication to students of what they need to do to improve
 - ensure consistency in the use of data for lesson planning across the curriculum.
- Tackle low-level distributive behaviour in a minority of lessons by ensuring that:
 - students are engaged and challenged in their learning more fully
 - all teachers follow the school's behaviour policy and procedures
 - all teachers have high expectation of student behaviour
 - tutor time is used well so that a work ethos is embedded at the commencement of the school day.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Students' achievement is satisfactory. The attainment of students on entry is above average. For a number of years the school has underperformed at Key Stage 4 and particularly in English and mathematics. However in the current year, as a result of significant changes to monitoring, tracking and intervention systems, students are making much better progress. The most recent modular examination results and scrutiny of current tracking information indicate that improvement trends will significantly accelerate in 2012. In particular, English results are now above national averages and students are achieving their potential. In mathematics, results already achieved for 2012 indicate significant improvement, although the school acknowledges the need for further and accelerated improvement in this area. In 2011 the proportion of students who left the school with at least five high grade GCSEs or equivalent qualifications was above the national average. Improvement trends were confirmed by lesson observations and the scrutiny of students' work. Scrutiny of Year 10 work indicates that students' progress is showing improvement in English and mathematics and across the curriculum. Disabled students and those with special educational needs are fully integrated into the life of the school and along with those students entitled to free school meals are making better progress. The recent appointment of a special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) has accelerated a sense of purpose and enabled more detailed planning and focus on provision for special needs students.

Students across the school enjoy lessons that provide opportunities for them to learn practically. However, many expressed a desire for greater challenge and for a stronger focus on student-centred activities. Progress is limited when the level of challenge is not sufficient. In the best lessons students demonstrate independent learning skills and high levels of engagement and enjoyment in learning. These qualities were exemplified in an outstanding music lesson where students were given responsibility and leadership roles in the learning activity. The session sizzled with student ideas and debate and highly-tuned co-operative skills and resulted in an excellently co-ordinated class performance. In this the teacher skilfully conducted student participation and lifted expectations and aspirations to a very high level. Years 7 and 8 work has a strong and developing focus on enabling improvement in literacy and numeracy and in building communication and learning skills. The school acknowledges the need the need to provide greater challenge for the most-able and to sustain and further improve GCSE 5 A*-C, including English and mathematics.

Quality of teaching

Overall teaching is satisfactory. The best teaching provides a variety of activities to appeal to the different ways students learn and sets a brisk pace. This was clearly illustrated in one outstanding English lesson where students were examining the ways in which language influences the reader using the text of 'Of Mice and Men'. Pace was brisk and activities well-focused to allow students to interpret, challenge and access their levels and to improve further. Group-, pair- and peer-assessment activities built confidence and expanded understanding. In the best lessons, students

develop their literacy and collaborative skills and are able to speak with confidence and understanding about their learning.

Too many lessons tend to be dominated by too much teacher-talk. In these weaker lessons inspectors observed low-level disruptive behaviour which impacted on the quality of student learning. Opportunities are missed to increase students' motivation and develop students' ownership of learning. There are few opportunities for collaborative learning. Work is not sufficiently tailored to meet all students' needs and progress is satisfactory. Independent learning skills are insufficiently promoted. Questioning is not used to probe understanding. Students have too few opportunities to explain or reflect upon their learning. Data are not always used to plan lessons effectively, nor tailored to meet all students' needs.

Students' work is marked regularly. In the best examples marking is frequent, swiftly returned to students and makes clear to them what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. Effective marking, for example, was seen in English. However, in some subjects, teachers' comments are not detailed enough to provide sufficient guidance on how work might be improved. The teaching and progress of disabled students and those with special needs has improved because of the support they receive from teaching assistants and the way teachers adapt the work to make sure that it meets their needs. Questionnaire responses from parents and carers were generally positive about the quality of teaching. The school acknowledges the need to reduce the number of satisfactory lessons while increasing those that are good and better.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students say that they feel safe. Most students behave well both in class and around school. However, some parents and carers and students expressed concern about low-level disruptive behaviour in a minority of lessons that impacted on the quality of learning. Inspectors agreed with these comments and have asked senior leaders to improve the consistency of approach on behaviour across all lessons. Movement around the school is safe and calm, despite some congested corridors. Students are punctual to lessons. Students demonstrate tolerance and respect for each other. They reported no concerns over racism and any type of bullying, including homophobic bullying. Fixed-term exclusions have been significantly reduced. Well-considered and robust attendance strategies have enabled attendance rates to improve and they are now broadly at the national average. Students have a good sense of what they need to do to be safe because these aspects are covered well through the curriculum.

Students confirmed that incidents of bullying were rare and when they occur, they are dealt with firmly and quickly. Student behaviour at the start and end of school and at break and lunch times was at least satisfactory and often good. Inspectors have asked the school to consult with parents and carers more regularly on behaviour policy and practice.

Students appreciated and are confident of the guidance and direction offered by teachers and other school staff. Transition arrangements from primary schools are effective and students settle into school quickly, with confidence and enjoyment.

Effective partnerships with external agencies complement the support offered by the school for all its students. Progression rates to further education are satisfactory. The thirty-minute tutor period at the start of the day lacks focus and does not embed a suitable work ethos for students to enable them to commence the day's activities well-organised and with confidence.

Leadership and management

The appointment of the current headteacher has brought a sense of urgency coupled with a clear vision of improvement to the management of the school. He provides a tenacious focus on improvement and sharp spotlight on building higher aspirations for all. He is very ably supported by two recently-appointed deputies. Significant staffing changes within the last two years have impacted on the quality of senior and middle managers, who now have a realistic understanding of what is required to enable rapid and sustained improvement. Robust data, monitoring and tracking systems have been introduced and embedded into the new school culture. Middle managers and governors are now working to a consistent vision of improvement. Self-assessment recognises the key areas for improvement and the need to tackle historically poor performance at Key Stage 4. Development planning is well-focused. Accountability now exists at all levels. There are significant improvements in the use of data to track, analyse and inform on progress in performance at all management levels.

The monitoring of teaching and learning has significantly improved. A robust lesson observation and monitoring system has been established. Professional staff development is better focused to drive improvement. The school analyses its observation records well and there is evidence to show that teachers' skills are improving. There is recognition that too much teaching remains satisfactory and that this needs to be changed more rapidly. Performance management is better focused on performance and student outcomes. Improvements to the curriculum have impacted on improved outcomes in GCSE subjects and in particularly English and mathematics. New pathways better match the needs of all students. The curriculum offers students a range of courses. Large numbers of students take a modern foreign language. The Key Stage 3 curriculum now has a focus on developing literacy, numeracy and learning skills. The quality of students' spiritual, moral and social development is good and promoted through assemblies and lessons.

The governing body is aware of the developing school's strengths and areas for development and provides a good balance between support and challenge. The new Chair of the Governing Body works in tandem with the headteacher to drive an aspirational culture. School leaders and governors have ensured that the school site is safe and that safeguarding and child-protection arrangements are robust and meet statutory requirements. School leaders have also been effective in promoting equality and tackling discrimination. Students in the school make at least satisfactory progress and gaps in achievement between different groups are narrowing.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add up exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



25 May 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Longdendale Community Language College, Hyde, SK14 8LW

Thank you for the friendly welcome that you gave my colleagues and me when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed our visit to your school. We would particularly like to thank the many of you who spoke with us.

Our inspection found that yours is a satisfactory and improving school. You are now making satisfactory progress. Your results are improving, but need to accelerate further and particularly in English and mathematics. There is good teaching in the school. In these lessons, you respond well to the teachers' high expectations. However, there remains too much satisfactory and variable teaching. You raised issues about low-level disruptive behaviour in a minority of lessons and we have asked the school to tackle this as a matter of urgency.

The leaders in your school worked with us to decide on some ways in which your school could be even better. We decided that to achieve this, the school should:

- further increase the percentage of outstanding and good teaching so that you all have the opportunity to engage in consistently challenging learning
- improve GCSE examination results, especially in English and mathematics
- reduce low-level disruptive behaviour in a minority of classes so that you all have the opportunity to learn and develop to your full potential.

You can help your school to improve further by ensuring that everyone focuses on the pursuit of excellence and trying hard in your studies so that you can achieve your full potential in life.

I wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Patrick Geraghty
Her Majesty's Inspector

