



# Prescot School Language College

Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 104487  
**Local Authority** Knowsley  
**Inspection number** 286959  
**Inspection dates** 11–12 December 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Martin Pope

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Knowsley Park Lane
<b>School category</b>	Community		Prescot
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16		Merseyside L34 3NB
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 4265571
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	920	<b>Fax number</b>	0151 4260419
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mr E Day
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs L Heath
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4 November 2002		

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<b>Age group</b> 11–16	<b>Inspection dates</b> 11–12 December 2006	<b>Inspection number</b> 286959
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

This is a small school. Students are drawn from a wide number of primary schools with a significant percentage coming from disadvantaged areas. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is well above average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average and is increasing. The number of students from minority ethnic groups or whose first language is not English is low. The school was designated as a specialist languages college in 2000 and re-designated in 2005. The school has achieved the International Schools, Sportsmark and Investors in People Awards.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Prescot School is a good and improving school. It is popular with parents. Students enter with below average standards in English and mathematics. By the time they leave, they reach standards that are only slightly below the national average, and GCSE results have risen significantly over the last five years. Students' achievement is good because they are well taught and are supported in their learning. The school works hard to raise students' aspirations and to remove barriers to success. The most vulnerable students receive very good support and gifted and talented students are given a broad range of opportunities to fulfil their potential. The school has effectively tackled underachievement of individuals and groups of students. For example, action to address the previously poor performance of girls, particularly in Years 7 to 9, has resulted in significant improvement.

Students generally enjoy school. In particular, they value lessons that are well structured and fun. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Five departments, including modern foreign languages, have been recognised for their innovative practice and there is some outstanding teaching, which inspires students. However, whole-class teaching dominates too much lesson time and students are not given enough opportunities to respond to questions and to develop as independent learners. Marking is usually thorough and is beginning to indicate how students can improve their work. However, assessment is inconsistent and departments are using different and sometimes confusing systems. The impact of specialist language college status is apparent across other departments and in the impressive outreach work in primary schools. There is a good curriculum. The school has achieved the International Schools Award for its extensive links with partners in Europe, Africa and China. It also offers a broad range of sporting opportunities, which has been recognised by the Sportsmark Award as well as a variety of performing arts activities. There is a broad curriculum that includes a range of GCSE courses as well as vocational opportunities, and there are valuable and innovative enrichment activities.

The care, support and guidance provided for students are good and as a result, they develop well personally. They like school, behave well and their attendance is above average. They are encouraged to eat healthily and their awareness of personal safety is developed within effective personal, social and health education lessons. Too many form periods are not used constructively to help promote pupils' personal development, however. Students' awareness of environmental issues is developed through a range of activities such as work with the Woodland Trust. They are encouraged to be responsible citizens and to become involved in the community and there is a good range of enterprise and careers education opportunities.

The leadership and management of the school are strong and purposeful and the senior team has a clear commitment to maximising the opportunities of students and all staff. Its programme of courses and staff development is excellent. Despite the fact that the school is scheduled for closure in 2008 and will be amalgamated with another local school to create a new learning centre, the headteacher, governors and all staff have ensured that the school has continued to make significant improvements and is

at the leading edge of many innovations. Its judgements about its effectiveness are accurate and it knows what it needs to do to improve further. The school has good capacity to bring this about.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve the quality and consistency of marking and assessment in order to indicate to students how to improve their work.
- Give students more opportunities to become independent learners.
- Develop the use of form time to ensure that it contributes to the personal development of all students.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Students' achievement is good. Information gathered when students join the school indicates that, due to weaknesses in reading and writing, the attainment of students on entry is slightly below the national average. Attainment in the Key Stage 3 tests at age 14 has been consistently below the national average and, despite an increase in the number of students attaining the higher levels, continues to be so. However, given their relatively low starting points, students make satisfactory progress during Years 7 to 9, with boys exceeding their targets in mathematics and science. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.

Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 have shown a steady improvement and are now close to the national average. In 2006, the school achieved its best ever results at GCSE with significantly improved results in mathematics and many other subjects. Students make good progress by the end of Year 11, and good progress was seen in the majority of lessons. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported and make good progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

The personal development and well-being of students are good. Students enjoy school, feel safe, attend regularly and are well motivated in lessons. They develop good teamwork, problem-solving and communication skills through enrichment activities. However, there are few opportunities for them to discuss personal and social matters that concern them. Students support charities, take part in leadership programmes and have contact with other cultural groups through trips abroad and exchange visits. Their spiritual, moral, cultural, and social development is good overall. Students take part in surveys and they are beginning to improve aspects of school life through the student council. Preparation for life after school is developed through programmes of enterprise activities, careers guidance, and links with local colleges. Students are disappointed, however, that they do not undertake work experience. There are healthy

meal options at lunchtime and a range of sport activities that enables students to adopt healthy lifestyles. Students' behaviour is good overall and exclusions are low.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Senior leaders know its strengths and weaknesses and have initiated a range of strategies to promote good teaching and learning across the school. There is an innovative programme of sharing of outstanding practice and Advanced Skills teachers have had a significant impact on improving the quality of teaching. For example, outstanding languages teaching approaches have been identified and adopted in a number of departments. The strengths of good and outstanding teaching are evident in lessons, which are well planned and dynamic. Teachers have high expectations and there is appropriate pace and challenge for students of all abilities. Questioning is often used skilfully to ensure that all students participate. In the less effective lessons, teachers do not cater for the full range of students' learning needs and there are often not enough opportunities for independent learning. The school sets realistic targets for individuals and there is a wide range of intervention and support activities for students who fall behind. There is a good system of assessment and teachers effectively gauge whether the learning objectives have been met in most lessons. Marking of students' work is generally good, but in some cases it is superficial and offers few indicators for improvement.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good overall, with some outstanding features, such as the enrichment programme. It meets all statutory requirements. In Key Stage 3, the curriculum is broad and balanced and the provision of drama helps students gain confidence and self-esteem. In Key Stage 4, students have more opportunity to follow a wider range of courses that are suited to their interests and abilities. The school's use of opportunities created through the Specialist Language College is outstanding and the Young Language Leaders programme develops students' community awareness. Opportunities to obtain language qualifications and to travel abroad make a significant contribution to students' economic well-being. There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular opportunities and the provision for enrichment for the more-able and talented students is very good. The school has a well thought out programme of work-related learning but it does not ensure that the views of all students and their parents are taken into account when the vocational options are considered, and does not provide work experience opportunities. Partnerships with other education providers are strong.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 2

The quality of care, support and guidance is good and contributes strongly to students' progress, enjoyment and well-being. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are in place. Whilst students say that bullying does occur, they say it is dealt with effectively and they feel valued, safe and cared for. They benefit from good guidance and mentoring and from the schools' good links with a range of agencies for additional support. As a result, all students including the most vulnerable are well supported. The school has good and developing arrangements for tracking and reporting on student progress. The information is used to inform target-setting. Good links exist with primary schools to ensure smooth transfer to Year 7. In Year 9, the arrangements for pupils to make their Key Stage 4 option choices are comprehensive. Good information and taster opportunities are provided about post-16 options, including various courses at local colleges. The tutorial time is not used to enhance pupils' personal development and the use of rewards to recognise positive contributions by students is under-developed.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good overall. The senior team has ensured significant improvement since the last inspection and provides effective direction to staff and students. The planned closure of the school has not deflected the staff and governors from developing a culture of innovation and research. Intervention strategies to address underachievement have been effective and middle leaders are becoming more confident in analysing performance data and tracking student progress. However, the school's analysis and use of performance data is not coherent or consistent. There are five lead departments that provide training and support for teachers at a local and national level. The quality of staff development and training for teachers and support staff is outstanding. The school has recently sought the opinions of staff, students and parents and is beginning to act upon them. However, it is recognised that more needs to be done to involve parents and to take into account the views of students in review and evaluation. There are good opportunities to develop students' leadership skills, especially through the languages college programme and sporting activities. Resources are very well used and the school provides good value for money. The school's business manager provides outstanding financial management and strategic planning. There are good links with other schools. Vetting procedures for all staff that work with students are robust. Governors provide good support and challenge and are clear about the school's strengths and development priorities. There is a good capacity to make further improvements.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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**

We would like to thank you very much for the warm way that you welcomed us to your school during the recent inspection. We would like to share with you what we think is good about the school and what needs to be done to improve it further.

We think that Prescot School is a good school that has improved a great deal in recent years. We were impressed by your behaviour in lessons and you clearly enjoyed learning in many of them. We also thought that you moved sensibly around the school but that you could be a little bit more aware of other people around you at times. In most lessons, you work hard and make good progress and your teachers make a great effort to ensure that you understand the work. However, we felt that sometimes you need to be given a bit longer to answer questions and have more opportunities to work on your own or in groups. Your school has improved its examination results and most students now make good progress by the end of Year 11. We think that the way of marking done by teachers needs to be similar in all departments to ensure that you can make further improvements. We were very impressed by your work in languages lessons and feel that your ability to learn new languages and to speak them confidently will be very useful to you when you leave school. We think that becoming a Languages College and all the opportunities to meet students from other countries helps you to understand different cultures and customs. We also feel that the Junior Sports Leader and Young Language Leader Awards are excellent opportunities for you to help younger students and to become more confident.

We were very impressed by your sporting achievements and involvement in the arts. We also think that your charity work and care for others are good. We think that the student council should meet more often and be able to influence more decisions in the school, especially as you prepare for the opening of the new learning centre. To make the school even better, we have asked the school to make marking more consistent so that you are clear about how to make improvements; give you more opportunities to do research on your own, and to make sure that you and your form tutors use the form period at the end of the school day more constructively.

You should be proud of the way you represented your school during the inspection and we wish you well for the future.