

Weaverham High School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 111414 |
| Local Authority | Cheshire West and Chester |
| Inspection number | 363779 |
| Inspection dates | 9–10 February 2011 |
| Reporting inspector | Sally Kenyon HMI |

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

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|--|---|
| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 11–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1041 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mrs Helen Newton |
| Headteacher | Mr David Charlton |
| Date of previous school inspection | 23 January 2008 |
| School address | Lime Avenue Weaverham, Northwich Cheshire CW8 3HT |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 32 lessons, taught by 32 teachers. Inspectors held meetings with the vice-chair of the governing body, senior school staff, middle leaders, teachers, support staff and groups of students. One of the inspectors held a telephone conversation with the School Improvement Partner. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at samples of students' work in lessons across a wide range of subjects and different year groups. Inspectors looked in detail at documents relating to the school's monitoring of its performance and undertook a detailed analysis of students' attainment and progress. They also scrutinised minutes of meetings, improvement plans and safeguarding procedures. The responses from parents and carers on 495 questionnaires were considered, together with replies from staff and students.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How well do the different groups in the school perform, including looked after children?
- How good is the quality of teaching, particularly in English?
- Whether leaders at all levels are using self-evaluation effectively to drive improvement.

Information about the school

Weaverham High School is an over-subscribed specialist Technology College. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The vast majority of students are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average as is the proportion with a statement of special educational needs. Since the last inspection the school has received High Performing Specialist School Status in 2009, Leadership Partner School Status in 2009 and Foundation Status in 2010.

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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Weaverham High School is a good school. It has a number of very significant strengths including students' high attainment and outstanding achievement. Students make good progress to achieve examination results at the end of Year 11 that are significantly above the national average. However, progress in English is slower than in other subjects. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make the same good progress as other students because of effective support provided through the learning support department.

The students' high attendance reflects their positive views about the school. Students in all year groups commented that they enjoy school, feel safe and have confidence that adults will deal sensitively and promptly with any concerns they raise. Discussions also highlighted the students' full awareness of how unhealthy diets, smoking and the misuse of drugs can affect their well-being. Their high rates of participation in after-school sports and other physical activities further demonstrate their commitment to lead healthy lifestyles. Behaviour in lessons is good and is exemplary when teaching is inspiring. Behaviour around the school and outside is mostly good.

The quality of teaching is good. The majority of lessons have clear learning objectives, and teachers plan work that is suitably challenging, use questions to extend learning and give clear written feedback on what students need to do to improve. However, in a minority of lessons, the activities set occupy the students but do not move their learning on. A minority of teachers do not help students make as much progress as they could because the questions they ask are undemanding and do not require students to challenge their own thinking .

The curriculum is good. The school takes full advantage of a consortium arrangement with other local providers to offer a wide range of vocational and diploma courses. The school's specialist status has had a positive impact on information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum and teachers have used this to share good practice. The quality of care, guidance and support is a strength of the school. Students feel confident to approach staff if they have a problem and the school can show how the work of its inclusion resource centre has benefited students, including looked after children and students at risk of permanent exclusion.

The school demonstrates good capacity for sustained improvements. The senior leadership team evaluates accurately the school's performance and identifies the strengths and weaknesses within the different departments to inform improvement planning. The monitoring and evaluation procedures hold staff to account and secure improvement in outcomes for most students. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities satisfactorily and is systematically involved in evaluating the school's performance.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement in English through:
 - - strategies to ensure the quality and consistency of teaching
 - - lesson planning using assessment information to build upon previous learning
 - - questioning which extends learning and encourages students to think for themselves
 - - well-focused feedback from teachers, including marking, identifying clear targets for improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

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Attainment on entry is above average and current school data and lesson observations confirm that students are making good progress across a wide range of subjects including mathematics. Learning in many lessons is active and students convey a sense of challenge and enjoyment. In these lessons, students work with enthusiasm and make good progress in developing their cooperative skills through working in groups and pairs. For example, in a Year 8 science lesson, students extended their knowledge about microbes and diseases by working in groups to gather information from posters made by other classes. They analysed them, discussed the strengths and voted for the best one. Precise questioning by the teacher helped clarify misconceptions and ensured students of all abilities made good progress. The progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good because teachers and learning support assistants take care that the work they are set closely matches their individual learning needs.

Progress has been slower in English than in mathematics over the last three years. This partly reflects a drop in attainment in 2009 when marks for coursework were lower than expected. However, inspectors observed good progress in only a minority of English lessons because planning did not consistently build upon previous learning. Questioning often failed to extend learning and encourage students to think for themselves and feedback from teachers did not always identify how students could improve their work.

The behaviour of the vast majority of students is good in lessons and mostly good around the school. In lessons where there is insufficient challenge a small minority of students misbehave. Incidents of bullying are low and where they do occur they are dealt with quickly. Through events such as enterprise days students acquire good work-related skills and are well prepared for their futures. One parent noted how well students were, 'encouraged to develop skills including organisational skills that will equip them for the outside world.' The students' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development benefits from provision in subjects such as art, music and drama which provide high quality opportunities for students to reflect upon values and beliefs, and appreciate cultural diversity. For example, in a Year 7 art lesson students were using pastels to create a memory map. When students started to blend the colours they were captivated by the quality of their own and other students' work.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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|---|----------|
| Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning | 1 |
| Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹ | 1 |
| The quality of pupils' learning and their progress | 2 |
| The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils feel safe | 2 |
| Pupils' behaviour | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community | 2 |
| The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being | 2 |
| Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹ | 1 |
| The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

In the best lessons planning is effective because it takes into account the needs of all students. Learning is brisk because there is appropriate pace and challenge and a variety of tasks to actively engage students. These lessons enable the students to develop independence and to take responsibility for their own progress. In these lessons, teaching assistants are well managed to support students with additional learning needs. For example, in a Year 7 geography lesson students were learning about rock formations. Students were well supported with targeted questions from support assistants and accurately assessed their own progress.

However, where lessons are satisfactory, there is a lack of appropriate challenge for some students and questioning is not planned in a way that promotes good progress for the most able. This was evident in an English lesson studying the play 'An Inspector Calls' where high-ability students were asked closed, unchallenging questions and so opportunities to consider key themes in the play were missed. Similarly, in a Year 11 English lesson where students were planning a piece of persuasive writing, the teaching resources were not suitably tailored to meet students' specific learning needs and allow those who had special educational needs and/or disabilities to do as well as they might. For example, a student who had weak literacy skills was unable to read the teaching resource independently.

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The school's curriculum supports successfully the students' good academic progress and personal development. It benefits from a wide number of local partnerships with other providers. In response to feedback from students, and parents and carers, the school is introducing an 'English Baccalaureate' pathway at Key Stage 4 for students currently in Year 9. Many parents and carers praise the commitment of the staff in providing a vast array of extra-curricular activities, one parent wrote: 'The after-school clubs are amazing & they really enhance the formal learning. Staff put in a lot of extra time and support to run most of these clubs and as parents we are very grateful.'

The technology specialism is driving improvements in the use of assessment to support learning in design and technology, science and mathematics. Funding has been used to improve ICT facilities and many classrooms now have interactive whiteboards which help to make learning more engaging. Funding has also been used to buy video equipment which allows staff to observe each other teach and is helping to further improve the quality of teaching.

Care, guidance and support for students are good. The school works with a wide range of services to provide health and well-being support to students. There is a thorough induction for new students in Year 7. These students speak highly of a 'buddying' system of Year 10 ambassadors that is highly effective and helps them feel safe. Many parents and carers praised the transition arrangements for Year 7 students which begins with a week long induction for Year 6 pupils and culminates in a week long residential allowing friendships to blossom and confidence to build. Students feel well supported when they make choices about their futures and the vast majority go on to further education, employment or training.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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| The quality of teaching | 2 |
| Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning | 2 |
| The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships | 2 |
| The effectiveness of care, guidance and support | 2 |

How effective are leadership and management?

The school's leaders and managers have the full confidence of staff, and parents and carers. They show their high ambition through their recognition that, 'We can always do better.' One parent commented, 'Staff are very approachable and are always ready to go the extra mile for the students.'

Staff are proud to be part of the school and feel valued because their views are taken into account when the school sets its strategic goals and improvement plans. Senior leaders carry out regular observations of all staff and these ensure that in most subjects they have a largely accurate view of teaching and learning. This ensures that development plans are detailed and focus on improving provision in relatively weaker subject areas. However,

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occasionally the timescales for completion of actions are not ambitious enough to secure rapid improvement.

The governing body fulfils its duties satisfactorily and holds the school's leaders to account for the school's performance. It ensures that the school has satisfactory procedures for safeguarding. Some safeguarding policies, however, are not subject to rigorous quality assurance and there were some minor administrative errors in the way the school recorded its recruitment checks which the school corrected during the inspection.

The school successfully tackles discrimination and promotes equal opportunity. There are very few racist incidents and, if any occur, they are thoroughly investigated and reported. School leaders have monitored the outcomes of the range of groups in the school closely to ensure that all do equally well and participate proportionately in school activities. In recent years, the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has been slightly higher than other groups reflecting the effectiveness of support for this group.

The leadership and management of the school's technology specialism is a real strength of the school. Good links have been made with local businesses and industry to enrich the curriculum and improve learning. The school is actively involved in the local community having secured a zebra crossing for the road outside and made over 100 bird boxes in collaboration with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Through the North Manchester project students are learning about different communities in their region. However, their awareness of cultures elsewhere in the United Kingdom and globally is less well developed and school leaders need to evaluate more robustly the impact of their community cohesion plan.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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|--|----------|
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 2 |
| Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers | 2 |
| The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination | 2 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures | 3 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion | 3 |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 2 |

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Views of parents and carers

A high number of responses from parents and carers was received. The great majority of parents and carers are supportive of the school. Some comments were received about bullying and the way the school handles discipline which the team followed up with the school. However, other comments were received which congratulated the school for dealing very effectively with a behavioural matter. The inspectors scrutinised behaviour records, held discussions with staff and students and observed students' behaviour in classrooms and around the school. The inspectors concluded that behaviour is good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Weaverham High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 495 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1041 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|----|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 200 | 40 | 269 | 54 | 21 | 4 | 2 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 224 | 45 | 253 | 51 | 15 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| My school informs me about my child's progress | 247 | 50 | 227 | 46 | 18 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 202 | 41 | 259 | 52 | 26 | 5 | 4 | 1 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 185 | 37 | 285 | 58 | 16 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 156 | 32 | 289 | 58 | 33 | 7 | 1 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 144 | 29 | 301 | 61 | 40 | 8 | 1 | 0 |
| The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment) | 181 | 37 | 271 | 55 | 11 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 167 | 34 | 294 | 59 | 18 | 4 | 4 | 1 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 155 | 31 | 264 | 53 | 53 | 11 | 10 | 2 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 143 | 29 | 279 | 56 | 32 | 6 | 3 | 1 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 253 | 51 | 222 | 45 | 11 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 256 | 52 | 218 | 44 | 14 | 3 | 2 | 0 |

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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 | 59 | 35 | 3 | 3 |
| Primary schools | 9 | 44 | 39 | 7 |
| Secondary schools | 13 | 36 | 41 | 11 |
| Sixth forms | 15 | 39 | 43 | 3 |
| Special schools | 35 | 43 | 17 | 5 |
| Pupil referral units | 21 | 42 | 29 | 9 |
| All schools | 13 | 43 | 37 | 8 |

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Achievement: | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training. |
| Attainment: | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons. |
| Capacity to improve: | the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement. |
| Leadership and management: | the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the 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: | <p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support. |
| 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. |

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.



14 February 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Weaverham High School, Northwich, CW8 3HT

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspection team when we visited your school recently. Many of you gave up your time to speak to us and to complete questionnaires. We found what you said interesting and thought provoking and your comments helped us arrive at our judgements. We judge that you receive a good quality of education and that by the end of Year 11 you achieve outstandingly well and attain high standards. We were particularly impressed with your high rate of attendance and by your good behaviour. We recognised that you really play your part in making Weaverham a friendly, safe and inclusive place to learn.

To summarise we found:

- good academic performance; strong personal development skills are preparing you well for the future
- teaching is good and is helping you learn successfully
- the good pastoral care system supports all of you and is particularly effective in helping those of you who experience difficulties from time to time.

To improve the school further we have asked the school to raise achievement in English by ensuring that lessons build upon your earlier learning, that teachers ask questions that encourage you to think for yourselves and that feedback on your work enables you to be clear about how you can improve.

Yours sincerely

Sally Kenyon

Her Majesty's Inspector

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