

Westhoughton High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105252
Local Authority	Bolton
Inspection number	355739
Inspection dates	15–16 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Joan Davis

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1234
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	117
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Hayes
Headteacher	Philip Hart
Date of previous school inspection	3 October 2007
School address	Bolton Road, West Houghton Bolton, Greater Manchester Bolton BL5 3BZ
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Forty-two lessons were observed and the same number of teachers seen. Meetings were held with groups of students, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation including school assessment data, added value analyses, minutes of meetings, records of lesson observations, the School Improvement Partner's reports and the school's self-evaluation of its work. Inspectors also considered an analysis of 374 parent and carer questionnaires as well as those from students.

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

- The effectiveness of teaching in ensuring that students make good progress.
- The progress of students in mathematics and how effective the school has been in tackling poor performance in this subject.
- The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form.

Information about the school

Westhoughton High School is a larger than average secondary school. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is slightly below the national average. A very small minority of students are from minority ethnic groups and virtually no students speak English as an additional language. The percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average. The school has specialist status for technology. Westhoughton High has achieved a number of awards including the International School Award, the Inclusive School Award and the Basic Skills Quality Mark. The school has a leisure centre attached to it which is open to the public each evening and at weekends. The school has provision for visually impaired students, although there are at present no students using this provision.

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

Westhoughton High School is a good school. The school has addressed effectively the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report and attainment has improved considerably since 2007. Students now make good progress in most areas of the curriculum.

The school provides a caring environment where all students are valued. Students receive good guidance and acquire skills that equip them well for the next stages in their lives. Students feel safe in the school and provision for safeguarding is good. Students say that bullying, when it occurs, is dealt with effectively. Behaviour is good, enabling lessons to proceed productively. Movement around the school is purposeful and orderly. Students are friendly, cooperative and polite.

In the large majority of lessons, teaching is good and, in some instances, it is inspirational. Information and communication technology is used effectively to make lessons more interesting for students. The school has had a sharp focus on improving the quality of teaching and, as a result, students enjoy their lessons, show enthusiasm and are keen to learn. Relationships between students and adults are characterised by mutual respect. Teaching in English is of a particularly high standard and is improving in mathematics under new leadership. Variability in science has been addressed and new leadership in this subject is already having an impact on improved outcomes for students. ♦

The use of assessment to improve learning is inconsistent. In some lessons, questioning is used highly effectively, for example, to establish whether students have understood the work or to encourage debate. However, the quality of marking across many subjects is far too variable and too often does not give the students information on how to improve their work.

The curriculum is good and is tailored well to the needs and abilities of the students. It engages students well in their learning and has contributed to the marked improvement in attendance, which is now above average.

Good links with primary schools have been established, especially through the specialist subjects of mathematics, science and technology. The school also has a highly effective partnership with a cluster of local secondary schools.

The headteacher has developed an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Concerted and decisive action has been taken to seek out and tackle underperformance. The school has embraced challenge and support provided by other agencies and this has led to improved outcomes. The leadership and management of teaching and learning have been particularly well developed; as a result, the quality of provision has improved, as has the progress made by students.

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A robust system of departmental review has been effective in creating a culture of accountability. Leadership at all levels is highly focused on improving provision and, as a result, the school's capacity for sustaining improvement is good. However, although outcomes and provision are good, there have been shortcomings in the management of resources and the school has a substantial deficit.

Outcomes in the sixth form are satisfactory. Attainment overall is average and progress is satisfactory. The leadership of the sixth form is improving; however, initiatives to address weaknesses are at the early stages of development and the impact of these changes is yet to be seen.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment further by:
 - accelerating improvements in mathematics
 - building on existing good practice in other subjects to improve leadership and improve the consistency of good teaching in modern foreign languages, geography and design and technology
 - ensuring assessment across all subjects gives students regular, clear advice on how to improve their work and that teachers monitor the impact of this advice.
- Raise attainment in the sixth form by:
 - improving teaching and learning so that all lessons provide sufficient rigour and intellectual challenge, ensuring students make good progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students arrive at Westhoughton with levels of attainment that are slightly below the national average. They make good progress overall so their achievement is good. By the end of Key Stage 4, attainment is improving rapidly in most areas of the curriculum and is slightly above the national average. However, this has not been the case in the past in mathematics, where outcomes have lagged behind those in other subjects. The school provided robust evidence during the inspection to show that outcomes in mathematics are improving as a result of new leadership, much better strategies to target intervention and a clear focus on improving the quality of teaching. During the inspection, the quality of teaching and the learning and progress of students in mathematics lessons were found to be never less than satisfactory and were often good. For example, in a good Year 11 mathematics lesson, the teacher used questioning particularly effectively to clarify and reinforce students' understanding of the topic. In other subjects, students are making good or better progress in the large majority of lessons. Students show enthusiasm for their learning and work at a brisk pace. The progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also good and mirrors that of other students. The school works hard to include all students and has been awarded the Inclusive School Award.

Students feel safe in the school and appreciate the efforts that the school has made to ensure their safety. They trust the staff and feel they can confide in them should problems arise.

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Attendance is above average and students are generally punctual to lessons. There is a strong focus in the curriculum on gaining skills for the future and students say that the school prepares them well for the 'real world'.

Students are proud of their school. The school has a wide range of links with the local community and recently hosted a dramatic production to commemorate the centenary of the Pretoria mining disaster, to which the public were invited. ♦

Students have a reasonable grasp of what constitutes a healthy diet and lifestyle. Students are aware of the healthy choices available in the school canteen; however, they do not always choose them. Equally, students are aware of the many sporting opportunities available but they do not always choose to participate in these activities. Students feel that the school council provides an effective forum for them to express their views.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Students are reflective and interested in moral issues, shown, for example, in a Year 10 lesson as students discussed the ethical implications of divorce. Students take part in visits and dramatic productions. However, they have too few opportunities to get to know people from other faiths or cultures and appreciate the diversity that exists across the United Kingdom.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	3
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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

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How effective is the provision?

In the large majority of lessons, teaching is good or better. Planning for learning is good and teachers generally design lessons well to meet the needs and abilities of the students. In the majority of lessons, there is effective challenge and support to accelerate the progress of all groups of students. Lessons are, for the most part, well structured with a purposeful range of activities that ensure pace is good and students are actively involved in their learning. However, in some satisfactory lessons, too much talk from the teacher limits the opportunity for students to apply their learning to better effect.

Assessment practices are inconsistent. Effective systems to track students' progress lead to early intervention for students who are underachieving. In the better departments, such as English, assessment of students' prior learning is used well to plan and deliver effective lessons. However, in other areas of the curriculum, the quality of marking is too variable and work is not marked regularly enough to help the students to improve.

The curriculum is good and in some instances innovative. The school has adapted the curriculum so that it better suits the needs, abilities and aspirations of the students. This has resulted in improved outcomes and has increased students' motivation. Information and communication technology contributes well to the curriculum as a specialist subject. Staff from this department have trained other teachers in order to improve the confidence and skills of their colleagues. As a result, technology is used to good effect in lessons, for example students in Year 9 have the opportunity to use video-conferencing to talk to children in other parts of the world.

Care, guidance and support are good. A strong pastoral team provides effective systems to enhance the welfare of students. The school has developed strong links with external agencies and takes its mission to serve the community seriously. Targeted support is in place for vulnerable students, which helps to improve their self-esteem. This support has also had a positive impact on improving attendance and reducing the number of exclusions. Partnerships with other schools have proved effective in enabling the school to provide courses that better meet the interests and aspirations of students.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
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 headteacher, supported by an able and committed senior team, has demonstrated a clear sense of purpose in driving the school forward. The senior leadership team has communicated its vision for improvement effectively and this is shared by other members of the school community. A climate of greater accountability has been created and high

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expectations are now the norm. There is a tangible commitment to improving outcomes for students.

Thorough and extensive systems are in place to make sure that the quality of teaching is good or better. Teachers are set challenging targets linked to the school's priorities. The school has invested a considerable amount of time in developing the skills of middle leaders. As a result, they are highly effective, for the most part, in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in their departments. The school has been determined in its approach to tackling underperformance. Unfortunately, on occasion, this has resulted in some turbulence in staffing. The school is beginning to address this issue to ensure that it does not have a negative impact on the progress of students.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory. The school itself is a harmonious community, with little conflict between students. The school also has a strong understanding of the context in which its students are growing up but there are too few opportunities at present for the students to extend their knowledge and understanding of other communities and cultures.

The school has a commitment to equality of opportunity. The performance of students is analysed carefully and the gap in performance between different groups of students is closing. Opportunities are taken to challenge stereotypes and tackle discrimination. The school ensures that all students, whatever their circumstances, can participate in trips or visits.

Procedures for safeguarding are good. All statutory requirements are met. Collaboration with a wide range of connected agencies is particularly effective and Westhoughton High is the lead school in Bolton in the 'Leading Parent Partnerships' initiative.

Engagement with parents and carers is satisfactory. The school has a parents' focus group, which is supported by governors, and has tried a number of initiatives to involve parents more in the life of the school. However, these are not yet sufficiently embedded to have had an impact on improving outcomes.

The governing body ensures compliance with statutory duties. Governors have set challenging targets and this has led to improvement. Governors have an excellent grasp of the school's strengths and have been very effective in establishing the school's priorities for further development. Owing to shortcomings in the management of resources, the school has accumulated a substantial deficit. This has not had a negative effect on the quality of provision or outcomes, and the governing body is now working in partnership with the local authority to draw up clear plans to address this with urgency.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

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	3
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Sixth form

Overall, outcomes for students in the sixth form are satisfactory. Attainment at the end of the sixth form is broadly average. However, the proportion of students gaining higher grades is lower than average. There was a rising trend in results up to 2009, but performance dipped in 2010, largely as a consequence of poor attainment in mathematics and separate science subjects. Students entering the sixth form have broadly average results at GCSE and therefore their progress is satisfactory.

In general, students are committed to their studies at school, attend regularly and make a valuable contribution to the life of the school as a whole, such as, for example, in helping younger students with their reading. A higher than average proportion of students chooses to leave the sixth form after one year of study to take up employment when the opportunity arises.

The school has invested considerably in providing breadth of choice to students, with a wide range of both vocational and traditional courses on offer. However, this has resulted in some groups being small in size.

The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is variable. In some subjects, such as English, media studies and history, students make good progress owing to the high quality of teaching in these areas of the curriculum. In the best lessons, teaching challenges the intellectual curiosity and capacity of students who enjoy their growing understanding of complex ideas. Students argue confidently using the mature insight they are increasingly developing. However, sometimes, for example in a Year 12 information technology lesson, students receive too much direct instruction from the teacher and do not develop sufficient independence in their learning.

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Targets are set for students and they are regularly assessed. However, the use of data to prompt intervention when students are underperforming is too variable and, as a result, some students do not achieve in line with expectations.

The guidance that students receive on entering the sixth form is good and, consequently, students enrol on courses that are appropriate to their abilities and aspirations. Students appreciate the support they receive in considering future options.

Leadership of the sixth form is satisfactory but improving. Measures have been put in place to address weaknesses in order to improve outcomes for students. However, these initiatives are at an early stage of development and therefore they have not yet had sufficient impact.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

There was a broadly average return to the Ofsted questionnaire. Most parents and carers are supportive of the school and feel that it is led and managed well. A very large majority state that their children enjoy school and the school does well in keeping their children safe. Most parents and carers feel that their children are making good progress and that teaching is good. Some parents and carers expressed concern regarding turbulence in staffing. The school recognises this and is trying to ensure that this does not have a negative impact on students' education. Some parents and carers feel that communication with the school can be difficult. Inspectors found that the school has a number of channels of communication with parents and carers, ranging from reports on students' progress to use of the virtual learning environment. A small minority of parents and carers have concerns regarding behaviour. During the inspection, behaviour was found to be good and the school uses appropriate systems to manage behaviour effectively. A small minority of parents and carers feel that the school does not help their children to have a healthy lifestyle. Inspectors found that the school offers a range of healthy options at lunchtime and there is a wide range of sporting activities on offer to students. However, students do not always choose to take advantage of these opportunities.

A small minority of parents and carers feel that the school could do more to help them support their children's learning. Inspectors are recommending to the school that students' work should be marked more regularly, with clear advice on how to improve. In this way, the school should be able to help parents and carers to better support their children's learning.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Westhoughton 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 374 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1234 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	81	22	237	63	40	11	13	3
The school keeps my child safe	84	22	259	69	21	6	6	2
My school informs me about my child's progress	87	23	220	59	52	14	10	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	75	20	224	60	54	14	10	3
The teaching is good at this school	46	12	233	62	50	13	13	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	34	9	212	57	94	25	9	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	8	212	57	91	24	14	4
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)	62	17	214	57	44	12	6	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	51	14	246	66	48	13	9	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	56	15	181	48	76	20	25	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	9	191	51	70	19	22	6
The school is led and managed effectively	40	11	231	62	51	14	15	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	69	18	233	62	51	14	14	4

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.



16 February 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Westhoughton High School, Bolton BL5 3BZ

Thank you very much for the warm welcome we received during our inspection of your school. We were impressed by your friendliness and the good attitudes you show towards one another. We found that your school provides you with a good education and that you appreciate the support and guidance you receive. Many of you enjoy taking part in activities such as trips abroad and drama productions. You have good links with your community and this is appreciated by local residents.

Your attainment by the end of Year 11 is slightly above average and you make good progress in most subjects as you move up through the school.

The school does well in providing you with courses that suit your abilities, interests and hopes for the future. Teaching is good overall and we noticed how keen you were to learn and the good relationships you have with your teachers. The school cares well for you and you trust your teachers. You know you can talk to them if you have a problem. The headteacher, senior leaders and staff have worked effectively to improve the quality of teaching so that you can achieve your potential. Examination results in the sixth form are satisfactory overall.

We identified a number of areas where we think the school should make improvements. We have asked the headteacher to make sure that improvements in mathematics are built on so that results in this area get better. We think that teaching should be improved in modern foreign languages, geography and design and technology. We asked the headteacher to make sure that your work is marked more regularly and that teachers give you advice on how to improve. We have also recommended that the school should try to make all lessons in the sixth form are as good as the best.

All of you can help in this by continuing to attend school regularly, working hard and taking advantage of all the wonderful opportunities available to you.

We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Joan Davis

Her Majesty's Inspector

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