

# Whitworth Community High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	119753
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lancashire
<b>Inspection number</b>	358619
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 May 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Susan Wareing HMI

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 category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	536
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Lila Towers
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ms Margaret Holt
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 September 2007
<b>School address</b>	Hall Fold Whitworth, Rochdale Lancashire OL12 8TS
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 24 lessons taught by 24 different teachers, visited one assembly and three form-tutor periods. One of the lessons was observed jointly with the headteacher and another with a senior leader. Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, external advisers supporting the school, members of the governing body, staff and students. They observed the school's work, and looked at information from the school's systems for monitoring and evaluating performance and for tracking students' progress. They looked also at records of governing body meetings, school policy documents, including those related to safeguarding, and records of external evaluation of the school's work. Completed questionnaires from 181 parents and carers were received and analysed.

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

- The accuracy of the school's analysis of the current attainment and progress of students across subjects and of different groups of students.
- The extent to which the quality of teaching and learning is good enough to raise achievement.
- The extent to which the school's use of assessment challenges all students appropriately, involves them actively in their learning and provides them with high-quality feedback on their learning.

## Information about the school

Whitworth Community High School is a smaller-than-average secondary school. Most students are of White British heritage and very few are in the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than average. The school's population is stable.

**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?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

Whitworth Community High School is a satisfactory and improving school. It has several good features. These include:

- the extent to which students feel and are kept safe
- the good contribution that students make to the school and its wider community
- the good preparation they receive for their future studies and working lives
- the significant improvement in attendance since the last inspection.

Students' achievement is satisfactory overall. Following a period during which attainment was low, the school has introduced new and more effective systems for identifying and intervening rapidly on underachievement. The school's assessment information shows that Year 11 students currently in school are on track to meet the national average in the 2011 examinations. In lessons seen during the inspection, all students made at least satisfactory progress, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The improvement reflects the highly effective leadership and management of the very capable headteacher and senior leaders. The purposeful, shared culture of sustainable improvement that they have established and the significant investment made in developing teaching and learning have begun to have an impact on students' achievement. The school's recently improved system for tracking students' progress is enabling a sharper focus on students at risk of failure at Key Stage 4, but the resulting information is not yet used well consistently across the whole school to target support as accurately and early as it could be. The school knows itself very well because senior leaders have set in place a very honest and rigorous system for monitoring and evaluating its performance. However, the implementation of new policies and practice is not yet consistent across all departments.

The school has successfully tackled most of the areas for improvement from the last inspection and made progress on the remainder. Staff know that there is still work to be done to ensure that students' improving achievement is reflected in national examinations. Nevertheless, the progress made already and the improvements effected by the headteacher and senior leaders attest to the school's satisfactory capacity to sustain improvement.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the achievement of all students by maintaining and intensifying current successful strategies for improvement.
- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by ensuring that all teachers make the most effective use of assessment information.
- Make sure that school policies and practices are applied consistently within and across departments.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**3**

Students enter the school with attainment that is broadly average. When they leave, their attainment, as measured against national averages in GCSE examinations, has been low in two of the last three years. However, assessment information held by the school indicates that the current Year 11 students are on track to meet the national expectation of five good passes at GCSE, including English and mathematics, in the 2011 examinations. The great majority of students leave school with a GCSE qualification in at least one subject, which contributes to their effective preparation for their future life. Very few students do not enter further education, employment or training when they leave Year 11.

Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress overall. Most students make satisfactory progress in mathematics. However, their progress in English was inadequate in 2010. The school responded promptly by introducing a much more rigorous and robust system for tracking students' progress and for identifying underachievement earlier. The positive impact of these measures is reflected in the fact that, in the lessons seen during the inspection, the progress of all students was at least satisfactory. The progress of students in English is improving rapidly and securely and was at least satisfactory in lessons observed.

The overwhelming majority of students, including the potentially most vulnerable, say that they feel safe and well supported in school because there is always a wide range of older students, teachers and adults to turn to whenever they need help. They say that bullying is rare and that they know how and where to find effective help when it occurs.

Observations during the inspection, in lessons and around the school, show that the behaviour of most students is satisfactory. They are courteous and helpful to visitors to the school and enjoy generally very positive relationships with each other and with their teachers. When asked by an inspector what was the best thing about the school, one student's response was typical of many; 'The teachers! They are very approachable and we can always have a chat with them.' Occasionally, when teaching fails to engage and motivate students sufficiently, students become inattentive and some low-level disruption occurs. The school works hard to encourage students to adopt healthy lifestyles, through the range of healthy lunch options, influenced by the active voice of the school council and the personal, social and health education curriculum. The school has made strenuous efforts to improve attendance since the last inspection so that it is now average.

The students enjoy a range of opportunities to take on responsibilities as prefects, peer mentors, 'buddies' for new students and sports leaders for primary pupils. They are keen fund-raisers for charity, for example, funding a wheelchair for a member of the local community. Students know and understand the consequences of their actions and

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assemblies and 'thoughts for the day' in form periods provide opportunities for reflection on spiritual matters. The school is aware of the need to help students to develop greater awareness of cultures beyond their immediate surroundings.

Students are well prepared for their future working lives. For example, organisational skills are supported in Year 7 by a learning-to-learn course. All students in Years 10 and 11 complete two weeks of work experience and take a vocational qualification in employability, with a strong focus on personal finance, cooperation and leadership. They have good opportunities also to develop and apply skills in information and communication technology.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>

<sup>1</sup> 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?

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and improving. The best lessons seen during the inspection were well paced and employed a wide range of strategies to promote high-quality responses and high levels of engagement, interest and motivation that enabled students to make good progress. This was because in those lessons teachers' planning was tailored well to students' individual needs and teachers' good expertise in assessment clarified for students the standards of work to which they should aspire. In satisfactory lessons, insufficient account was taken of learners' starting points to ensure that the level of challenge was appropriate for each individual. On occasion, the teacher talked too much and the lesson's pace slackened. While there were some good examples

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of detailed marking, giving advice to students on how to improve their work, there were also some inconsistencies within and across subjects.

The school's curriculum in Years 7, 8 and 9 is broad and balanced and meets all statutory requirements. In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum is flexible enough to provide some new subjects, such as sociology and health and social care, as well as a range of science options. Students have satisfactory opportunities to apply the basic skills of literacy and numeracy in class and project groups, assemblies, and during work experience. The school's partnerships with local providers enable college- and work-based placements, as well as continued study of core subjects and access to personal and academic support. Students appreciate the broad range of extra-curricular activities provided by the school, including sports, the Moorathon whole-school challenge for charity, well-attended homework and film clubs, and performing arts productions in which approximately half the students participate each year.

The school takes adequate action to care for and support students, especially the potentially more vulnerable, often in partnership with a range of external agencies. The school has recently developed a satisfactory range of policies and procedures for the support of students, but the policies are not yet applied consistently across the whole school. There are sound arrangements for transition from primary school and students say that this helps them to settle well in the school, both socially and academically. The advice and guidance that they receive in Years 10 and 11 prepare them well for transition to college courses or employment.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>3</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher is relentless in her determination to establish a culture of continuous improvement within the school. She does not shrink from difficult decisions in setting a clear direction for the school and priorities capable of driving it forward. She has made astute new appointments to strengthen the capacity of the senior leadership team, by whom she is very well respected and supported. Both senior and most middle leaders, some recently appointed, have a very clear, shared understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Middle leaders say that they feel effectively supported and held to account in equal measure by their senior colleagues. Since the last inspection new, more effective systems have been put in place to monitor, evaluate and increase the impact of the school's planned actions to improve the school and to track students' progress. These systems have begun to raise achievement and improve the quality of teaching and learning. However, the impact of these changes has not yet been realised fully in public

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examination results. This is because information from these systems is not yet used well consistently across the whole school.

Governance is satisfactory and improving. The relatively new governing body has been restructured and its members bring a wide variety of experience and enthusiasm to their responsibilities. It knows the school's strengths and weaknesses and is developing the confidence to put forward its own ideas for the school's improvement and to provide an effective challenge.

The school's commitment to equality of opportunity for every student is evident in the narrowing of the gaps in the achievement of different groups of students, for example, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve in line with their peers. It is also reflected in the very small proportions of students who leave school without at least one GCSE pass and who do not enter into further education, training or employment. The students have an effective voice in the school and provision is in place to challenge stereotypical views, for instance, in advice given to students in Years 10 and 11 about course options. The school has a sound understanding of the nature of its immediate community but recognises that there is more work to do in terms of increasing students' contacts with the wider community, including at an international level.

Arrangements for safeguarding students are good. Policies and procedures are very robust and highly effective. The school provides satisfactory and improving value for money.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

## Views of parents and carers

The number of questionnaires returned was average for the size of the school. Most of the responses were supportive of the school but a very small minority of parents and carers did not feel that the school helped them to support their children's learning or take



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account of their suggestions and concerns. Inspectors held discussions with senior leaders and investigated the school's systems for communicating with parents and carers on these and other issues. The school agrees with the inspectors' findings that effective channels of communication have been put in place, but more work could be done to seek the views of parents and carers and to explain more regularly to them the use of assessment information.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Whitworth Community 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 181 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 536 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	36	20	117	65	21	12	4	2
The school keeps my child safe	54	30	114	63	4	2	4	2
My school informs me about my child's progress	56	31	112	62	7	4	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	42	23	112	62	19	10	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	28	15	126	70	12	7	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	15	117	65	28	15	4	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	22	12	130	72	22	12	1	1
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)	27	15	113	62	16	9	3	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	33	18	125	69	14	8	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	35	19	110	61	15	8	9	5
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	13	105	58	22	12	12	7
The school is led and managed effectively	27	15	118	65	15	8	10	6
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	45	25	113	62	11	6	4	2

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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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.

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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



13 May 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of Whitworth Community High School, Rochdale, OL12 8TS**

Thank you for making the inspection team so welcome at your school. We enjoyed talking with you and you helped us to find out a lot about the school.

- The school provides you with a satisfactory and improving education overall and has some notable strengths.
- Over the last three years, some of you have not been doing as well as we think you could in your school work and examinations. However, during the inspection we were pleased to see that most of you are now making satisfactory progress.
- The school's arrangements for keeping you safe are good. We are pleased that this helps you to feel very secure and to enjoy school.
- The school's curriculum prepares you satisfactorily for your further study and employment.
- You enjoy the variety of activities that the school organises for you, including sports and the arts. You make a good contribution to the school and wider community, for example, through the student council, fund-raising for charities, and musical performances.
- Your school is effectively led and your headteacher and senior teachers are very keen to improve it further.
- The quality of most of the teaching that you receive is satisfactory, but we think that it could be even better.

We have asked the school to:

- help all of you to raise your achievement
- make sure that more of your lessons are as good as the very best ones
- help teachers to make the best use of information about how well you are doing to help you to improve
- check that when a new system is introduced, all the teachers apply it in the same way.

Yours sincerely,

Susan Wareing

Her Majesty's Inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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