

# The Whitby High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111429
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cheshire West and Chester
<b>Inspection number</b>	356911
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 May 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Judith Straw

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>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1607
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	230
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Cllr Myles Hogg
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Margaret Hughes
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 January 2008
<b>School address</b>	Sycamore Drive Whitby, Ellesmere Port Cheshire CH66 2NU
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by six additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 51 lessons and 50 teachers. They held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation including policies and records relating to the safeguarding of students. They analysed the responses to questionnaires from 562 parents and carers together with many responses from students.

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

- The attainment and progress of students at Key Stage 4, particularly in English and mathematics.
- The attainment and progress of the more-able students in the school and the sixth form.
- The impact of developments to the curriculum on attainment and achievement.
- The extent to which students know how to improve their work in order to achieve targets which stretch and challenge them.

## Information about the school

Whitby High School is a larger-than-average comprehensive school with a growing sixth form. The school was awarded specialist technology status with mathematics and science in 2002. Whitby became a Foundation school in 2007 and expects to become a Trust school by September 2011. The school has a stable population with a lower-than-average percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals. There are few students from minority-ethnic backgrounds or who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than the national average. The school has achieved Investors in People status, Healthy School status, the International School award and Artsmark gold.

**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

Whitby is a good school. Some aspects of its work are outstanding. The school is well led by a determined headteacher and senior leadership team who have clarity of vision and a commitment to ensuring the school constantly develops and improves. At the last inspection the school was deemed to provide a satisfactory education for all students. Now, three years on, there are tangible improvements right across the school and a growing confidence and belief among parents and carers, teachers and students. Students are proud of their school, which is held in high regard by the vast majority of parents. Factors such as these demonstrate the school's good capacity to sustain improvement.

Achievement is good both in the main school and in the sixth form. Students' success in gaining five or more A\* to C grades overall has been significantly above average for the last two years; their success in gaining five or more A\* to C grades including English and mathematics has risen steadily for the last three years and is now just above average. This improving trend is also evident at Key Stage 3 where the proportion of students gaining the higher levels in English, mathematics and science is steadily rising. When students enter the school in Year 7 their attainment is average or just a little below; when they reach Year 11 attainment is significantly above average. This represents good progress across the school for all students. No group underachieves.

The school has an accurate view of its strengths and areas for improvement. The school has identified raising achievement in English and mathematics as a top priority and is implementing a rigorous programme of improvement. Very effective systems of target-setting promote good progress across the school and a range of interventions are effective in supporting the achievement of particular groups of students of higher and lower ability. The quality of monitoring the work of departments is inconsistent and not all departments are as effective as those in English and mathematics.

A large majority of teaching is good and some is outstanding. Teaching is particularly successful where expectations are high and lessons are planned to stretch and challenge students of all abilities. Where teaching is less successful it is because the pace is slower and the level of challenge is moderate. The curriculum is outstanding. Options have been extended and improved. The school works tirelessly to provide students with the most appropriate curriculum to maximise their potential and the impact of the school's specialist status has made a significant contribution to students' achievement and raising standards.

Students enjoy school. They demonstrate good attitudes to learning, are polite, behave well and their attendance is high. These factors, combined with above-average attainment, mean that students' preparation for their future economic well-being is excellent. The school takes good care of its students. A very large majority of students and the vast majority of their parents and carers reported that the school is a safe and secure environment.

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

- Further raise achievement by:
  - increasing the proportion of outstanding teaching
  - raising the expectations of students as to what they can achieve
  - developing the consistency and effectiveness of middle leaders by sharing the good leadership practice which exists in English and mathematics.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**2**

Students enjoy learning. In almost all the lessons observed by inspectors, students progressed well and engaged enthusiastically with their learning. Students work well individually and in pairs or in groups. Behaviour only rarely falls below good because relationships between adults and students are strong. Attainment and achievement have risen significantly as a result of a vastly improved tracking system which enables the school to closely monitor the progress of all students so that higher, average and lower-ability students all have the opportunity to achieve well. A similarly well-focused tracking system for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities supports their learning with a wide range of individually programmed intervention strategies, enabling them to make good progress. Results from early entries in GCSE examinations in both English and mathematics show that attainment is continuing to rise.

Students demonstrate many positive attributes in their personal development. They say that bullying is very rare and, if it occurs, it is dealt with promptly and effectively by the school. Students' good spiritual, social, and moral development is seen in the positive contribution they make to their community and willingness to take on roles of responsibility, such as prefects and house captains. Older students regularly take on roles as mentors for younger students. Students' good cultural development is promoted through the strong tradition of drama, music, dance and the arts. Their international and global awareness is enhanced by links with South Africa and Norway. Students have a good understanding of what it means to be healthy and know what to do to stay healthy and fit. Students' preparation for their future economic well-being is excellent because of their high levels of attendance, above average attainment, awareness of the world of work and articulate confidence.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</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>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</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?

Teaching and learning are good. Over three quarters of the lessons seen by inspectors were judged to be good or better, with examples of outstanding practice. All teachers are specialists in their subjects and have access to a wide range of information about their students, which they use carefully when planning lessons. Support staff play an active role in helping to improve overall achievement, particularly of those students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Constructive and supportive relationships are evident in the vast majority of lessons. Students respond with consistently good and respectful behaviour. In the best lessons, teachers' expert knowledge and enthusiasm inspires students to learn and achieve highly. In the minority of lessons where teaching is less effective, expectations of staff and students are too low, the pace is slower and activities are not sufficiently stimulating to motivate students to secure better than satisfactory attainment and progress. Assessment is consistently good across subjects and marking regularly informs students about the next steps they need to take to improve.

The outstanding curriculum is under constant review to ensure that it provides the best possible opportunities for all students. The specialism has been pivotal in changing the nature of the school by raising aspirations, driving improvements in teaching and learning, improving provision for information and communication technology across the school and developing an extensive range of partnerships with other providers, industry and other services. The school has received recognition for its work in this area from the Specialist

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Schools and Academies Trust. It has been invited to work with other specialist schools as a mentor to help raise results through a specialism. Extra-curricular and enrichment activity is widespread, varied and well-supported.

The effectiveness of care, guidance and support is good. The attention to students' individual, personal and academic needs is a strength of the school. The well-established house system and conscientious form tutors ensure that all aspects of students' development are carefully monitored. The school provides good support for students who need extra care, making good use of other agencies when necessary.

Transition arrangements into school and at Year 9 and Year 11 are strong. The energy and dedication of heads of houses is exemplary but the school acknowledges that they need more support. The school is developing a tracker system of pastoral issues and is working towards making this aspect of its provision outstanding.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The strength of the leadership provided by the headteacher, supported by the governors, is a key element in the school's improvement and the strong progress made since the last inspection. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a clear vision for the school with a passionate belief in improving the life chances and maximising the potential of all students. Staff at all levels share this vision. This is well recognised both by students and their parents and carers who appreciate the strong and positive ethos that promotes equal opportunities well, both in relation to academic success and personal and social development. The school is rigorous in tackling any form of discrimination and thus ensuring that all students have the opportunity to achieve well. The monitoring of teaching is regular and effective. Strategies to eradicate weaknesses have been successful and the next step is to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching. Middle leaders are developing their skills and are fully committed to securing improvements, although there are inconsistencies in the quality of their monitoring and evaluation.

Governance is good. Governors play an active role in the development of the school and have a good understanding of what needs to improve. They support and challenge staff at all levels and ensure that the school meets statutory requirements. They manage the school's finances well so that it provides good value for money and they are leading in the drive to become a Trust school.

The school promotes community cohesion well. The school has a clear understanding of its context and plans accordingly. The school is a happy, cohesive community and many

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students are active in their local community and beyond. The impact of the specialism is felt in many local primary schools and many local groups use the school facilities.

Students' understanding of the wider national and international communities is promoted successfully in many areas across the curriculum, including global citizenship lessons.

Safeguarding procedures are good. Appropriate checks are carried out on all staff and visitors to the school. Relevant personnel receive regular training to update them on child-protection procedures. Thorough risk assessments are carried out on students' activities and the school has good arrangements for identifying and supporting students who may be at risk.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Sixth form

The sixth form is good, and improving. The school provides well for a range of students by offering a choice of academic advanced-level courses, together with an increasing range of vocational and applied courses at a variety of levels. Student numbers are increasing because the school is successfully offering courses which match students' aspirations and abilities. Entry requirements are suitably stringent but flexible. Overall, the attainment at GCSE of students entering the sixth form is similar to the national picture. Given their starting points, students achieve well in their examinations. In Year 13, virtually all students successfully complete their A2 courses. In 2010 a third of passes were at the highest grades. Almost all leavers access their higher education or career ambitions. The rigorous monitoring of teaching has brought improvements to its quality and impact on learning. Teaching is good and students praise the teaching they receive. Tracking of students' progress is regular and rigorous.

Students have very positive attitudes to their studies and say they enjoy being in the sixth form. They feel the checks on their progress are in their best interests. They appreciate



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the strong individual support they receive and value highly their good relationship with the staff. Students willingly take on responsibility, for example, as prefects, sports ambassadors, supporting younger students and organising charity fund-raising. They are confident that their views matter. They participate fully in a wide range of extra-curricular activities to enrich their studies, most notably a flourishing Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

## Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents and carers who returned questionnaires agreed or strongly agreed that they were happy with their child's overall experience at school. Most felt well informed about their child's progress and agreed that teaching was good and that their children were making good progress. A few commented that behaviour was a problem but inspectors found that this issue was restricted to a very small proportion of satisfactory lessons where a few students caused low-level disruption. A very high proportion of parents and carers think that the school is well led and managed effectively. Inspectors endorse these views. A small minority of parents and carers felt they would like more regular information about the progress their children are making. The school recognises this and endeavours to make sure that parents and carers are updated about progress at least four times in each academic year.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Whitby 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 562 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1607 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	114	20	397	71	44	8	2	0
The school keeps my child safe	176	31	372	66	9	2	1	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	173	31	355	63	24	4	2	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	172	31	354	63	30	5	2	0
The teaching is good at this school	151	27	383	68	16	3	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	120	21	373	66	54	10	3	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	82	15	379	67	83	15	5	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)	121	22	397	71	18	3	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	125	22	396	70	26	5	2	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	147	26	360	64	36	6	8	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	79	14	410	73	40	7	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	143	25	388	69	13	2	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	180	32	357	64	19	3	0	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.**



23 May 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of The Whitby High School, Ellesmere Port, CH66 2NU**

I would like to thank you all for your help during the inspection of your school. The inspectors found what you had to say very helpful in making judgments about your school. We would particularly like to thank those who gave up their lunchtime to speak with us.

We were pleased to hear that so many of you enjoy attending school and that you feel safe. The care, guidance and support you receive are good and your preparation for the future is excellent. We were pleased to see so many of you willingly take part in the range of extra-curricular activities, particularly those that help you improve your work and those that link with your school's specialism. We were particularly impressed with the contribution you make to the school and wider community. A large number of you from across the age range act as mentors and prefects supporting other students. We were impressed by your knowledge and understanding of how to stay healthy.

We found your school to be good. Teaching is consistently good and your positive attitudes to learning make a strong contribution to your good progress. You told us that you find your teachers to be helpful and supportive and most make your lessons interesting by involving you in your learning. The curriculum is outstanding because it provides you with so many opportunities to develop a wide range of skills, as well as allowing you to develop well as young people. Your school is well led and has improved significantly since the last inspection.

We worked closely with the senior staff to consider what the school should do next; we agreed that the school should further raise achievement by:

- increasing the proportion of outstanding teaching
- helping you all to have high expectations about what you can achieve
- ensuring all departments closely check on and promote your progress.

You can play your part by continuing with your very positive attitudes to school and excellent attendance.

We wish you success and happiness in the future.

Yours sincerely

Judith Straw

Lead inspector

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