

Oulder Hill Community School and Language College

Hudson's Walk, Rochdale, OL11 5EF

Inspection dates 17–18 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students achieve well given their various starting points. They make particularly good progress in mathematics.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers convey high expectations and plan activities that help students to learn effectively.
- Students behave well and have positive attitudes to school. Attendance is consistently high.
- Good leadership and management, including governance, have led to better teaching and improved achievement. Leaders set a positive tone and provide effective opportunities for staff to improve their teaching and management skills.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Students' achievement over time is improving overall but is not improving consistently across subjects or across different groups of students.
- There remains some weaker teaching. For example, not all teachers exploit opportunities to develop students' literacy skills in their subject teaching. As a result, some students do not develop fluency in using subject-specific terminology.
- Where teachers check students' understanding during lessons, it does not always contribute sufficiently to students' learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 42 lessons, including seven that were observed jointly with senior staff at the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, representatives of the governing body and the local authority, staff and students.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including that relating to the work of the governing body and to the achievement, behaviour and safety of students; they took account of 36 responses to Parent View, as well as responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Paul Chambers, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
John Dunne	Additional Inspector
Bernard Robinson	Additional Inspector
Anne Seneviratne	Her Majesty's Inspector
David Thompson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Oulder Hill is larger than average for schools of its type.
- Approximately 60% of the students are White British and 30% are of Pakistani heritage. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is well above average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding) is above average.
- The proportions of students who receive additional support, are disabled or have a statement of special educational needs are average.
- More students join the school during the school year than is usually the case.
- One student in Key Stage 4 follows an individual educational programme at Rochdale Football Club for one day per week.
- The school meets the current floor standards, the minimum standards set by the government for students' attainment and progress.
- Since the last inspection the school has changed its age-range status from 11–18 to 11–16.
- The current headteacher took up post in January 2011. Since the last inspection there have been several other changes to the senior leadership team.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve overall achievement through reducing the unevenness in progress made by students in different groups and in different subjects.
- Improve teaching further through:
 - ensuring that teachers apply the school's policy for developing students' literacy more consistently
 - checking students' understanding more effectively during lessons.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Attainment is above average. This is particularly the case, in comparison with national figures, in subjects accredited as GCSEs rather than equivalent qualifications.
- Students make good progress relative to their starting points. Students' excellent progress in mathematics leads to impressive GCSE results and, frequently, to a high number of the top A* grades. In English, while students make good progress overall, fewer exceed the expected progress than is the case nationally. Students do well in the school's specialist subject area of modern languages.
- There is more variation between students' progress in different subjects than would be expected. This is because standards of teaching vary.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make the expected progress in English and better than expected progress in mathematics.
- White British students, those of Pakistani heritage and those who speak English as an additional language achieve well but this is not consistently the case every year. However, there is no consistent pattern over time of particular groups of students achieving better than others. In 2011 the gap between the progress of students entitled to free school meals and other students was wider than the national picture.
- The school's arrangements for one student to attend off-site provision are fully appropriate. As the placement has only recently started it is not possible to evaluate the impact on his general progress. Other students who attended different off-site provision last year attained suitable qualifications.
- Students are well prepared for the next stage of their lives. The quality of the guidance offered has been recognised in the school gaining the Information Advice and Guidance Gold Award. An above-average proportion of the students leaving the school continue into education, training or employment.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good. This judgement is supported by the school's records of lesson observations, the substantial number of lessons observed during the inspection and by the views of parents. Evidence from joint observations shows that judgements about teaching, made by inspectors and by school leaders, match closely.
- The majority of teaching observed during the inspection was good or better, with nearly 20% judged to be outstanding. A small amount of inadequate teaching was also seen. Most of the outstanding teaching was in the key subjects of English and mathematics.
- Teachers develop strong working relationships with students. Teachers' high expectations are successful in promoting students' positive attitudes to learning. As a result, students apply themselves to their work and make good gains in their skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Where teaching is strongest, teachers offer high levels of challenge and promote students' independent learning skills very effectively. They use questioning well to probe and develop students' understanding and enable students to learn from each other. They adapt their lessons in the light of students' learning, for example to deal with misconceptions or to move students on more quickly.
- Where learning is less effective, teachers stick rigidly to their plans when adapting them would be more appropriate. In these cases teachers' use of techniques to assess students' learning can slow down the learning rather than enhance it.
- Not all subject teachers pay sufficient attention to improving students' literacy skills. While the school has a focus on improving students' literacy, the application of the policy is uneven across the school. As a result, students' use of subject-specific terminology is sometimes limited.

- The quality of marking and feedback is variable. Students know their target levels/grades and feedback from regular assessments helps them to know how well they are progressing. Inspectors saw some excellent examples of written feedback in students' books that had led to clear gains in learning; other feedback seen was brief and over-general.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students behave well in lessons and around the school, a view that is supported by observations during the inspection and by the views of staff and parents. Students respond positively to the system where red and green slips are issued that reflect the good things that they have done and the times when their work or behaviour has fallen behind the standards expected.
- Almost all parents and carers who responded on Parent View agree that their children are happy and feel safe at school. Students know who they can turn to if they have a problem. Those joining the school, whether at the beginning of Year 7 or during the school year, feel welcome and settle in quickly because of the support they receive.
- Students understand the different forms that bullying can take, including cyber-bullying, and say that bullying is rare. They report that, very occasionally, a student may make racist or homophobic comments but that the school responds to such incidents vigorously. Overall, the school promotes good relations successfully.
- Although exclusions are starting to drop, they remain broadly average and uneven for different groups of students. For example, the proportion of boys excluded is above average while the proportion of girls excluded is slightly below average. A greater proportion of students with special educational needs are excluded than is the case nationally.
- Attendance is high. It is consistently above average for all groups of students. The proportion of students who are persistently absent is low. Concerted action from the school has led to recent improvements in already strong attendance figures.

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders and managers promote a positive tone and have a clear long-term strategy for improving the school. They use data well to identify where teaching is strong or needs to be improved, or where students are at risk of underachieving. Staff support the school's leaders and work together well to improve the quality of teaching.
- The capacity to improve is good. Recent years have seen a clear upward trend in GCSE results and in students' attendance. Strategies to improve teaching and the management of those with responsibility for subjects have been effective.
- Since his appointment the headteacher has taken a firm lead in driving the school's improvement. He has led the initiative to strengthen the quality of teaching across the school. As a result, teachers are held to account for students' progress and rewarded for meeting exacting targets.
- The management of teaching and learning is good and has a clear focus on the Teachers' Standards (the government's expectations of teachers' professional practice and conduct). Underperformance is addressed robustly and effectively. Leaders and managers set targets for teachers that relate to their personal development needs but also fit in with the school's priorities.
- The school's self-evaluation is accurate. Leaders are able to identify where improvement is needed and can show the impact of their actions. For example, following poor GCSE results in science in 2011 the school's leaders put particular focus on developing subject leadership and teaching in science, as well as reviewing whether the courses on offer were the best ones for the students. Unvalidated results for 2012 show considerable improvements. Similarly, a focus on raising the number of top grades in English has had a clear impact.

- In 2011 the difference between the standards attained by students eligible for the pupil premium and other students was similar to the difference nationally. The pupil premium has been used partly for additional staffing to speed up the progress of those in danger of falling behind. This has had a clear impact in science, where the appointment of a higher level teaching assistant contributed to a high proportion of those students known to be eligible for the pupil premium making at least the expected progress. The impact of the additional funding on results generally is less clear. The school recognises that it could do more to publicise how the pupil premium is being spent.
 - Students are not disadvantaged in any way by taking their mathematics GCSE examination in November of Year 11, rather than at the end of the year. Subsequent time in Year 11 involves students either continuing their study to try to improve their grade or studying for an additional qualification in mathematics or statistics. The current arrangements lead to excellent results in mathematics, including for the most able students.
 - A small minority of parents express concern about how well the school responds to issues they raise and keeps them informed about their children's progress. The school's leaders are aware of this and have appropriate plans to improve home-school communication further, such as through the school's website.
 - The Key Stage 4 curriculum is mainly focused on GCSE courses and includes opportunities for students to study a wide range of modern languages. A small number of students benefit from studying for vocational qualifications, such as in engineering. The curriculum fosters students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through subject teaching, where students take part in regular paired work, discussion and opportunities to reflect.
 - The school benefits from a close relationship with the local authority. Representatives from the local authority have provided support for the English and mathematics departments and, particularly in the last year, have helped the science department to improve students' achievement. Senior leaders in the school have benefited from opportunities, facilitated by the local authority, to share professional expertise with their counterparts in other local schools.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are well-informed and knowledgeable about the school. They have appropriate expertise and understand where teaching is stronger and where it is weaker. They understand the school's arrangements for performance management well and are fully informed about salary progression for individual members of staff. They have helped the school to manage effectively the sudden drop in funding caused by the recent loss of the sixth form and, as a result, the school now runs a balanced budget. Governors are reflective and have recently undertaken two reviews to monitor where their expertise is increasing and where further training or development might be beneficial. Governors are beginning to engage with parents more directly.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	105840
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	400804

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1163
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Zakaria Al-Hassani
Headteacher	John Watson
Date of previous school inspection	14 October 2009
Telephone number	01706 645522
Fax number	01706 648404
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