

Sir Thomas Boteler Church of England High School

Grammar School Road, Latchford, Warrington, Cheshire, WA4 1JL

Inspection dates

31 October–1 November 2012

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Students do not achieve as well as they could be expected to. Not enough students make the rapid progress they are capable of to achieve the highest GCSE grades.
- The way in which students' work is marked varies between subjects and teachers. It does not always help students to recognise mistakes, know how to correct them and move forward in their understanding.
- Some teaching is inadequate and overall, is not good enough to help all students to do the best they could.
- Despite a range of initiatives, attendance is low, particularly for students who are eligible for the pupil premium, disabled students and those with special educational needs.
- Senior leaders have secured improvements in students' examination results and in the quality of teaching. However, these have not been sufficiently rapid for them to yet be good and the good practice seen in some teaching and marking is not consistently established throughout the school.

The school has the following strengths

- The examination results, while below average, are improving at a faster rate than is the case nationally.
- There is steady and sustained improvement in both the quality of teaching and in the checks the school makes on its quality.
- The school's Christian nature is evident in the respectful relationships between students and staff and its successful work with its disadvantaged students.
- Senior leaders have a clear understanding of how well the school is doing, what needs to be done to improve it and a strong commitment to achieving this aim.
- The school has made suitable progress in addressing the areas identified for improvement at the time of the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 35 lessons, three of which were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors made a number of other short visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and one other governor, representatives from the local authority and school staff, including senior and middle managers.
- Inspectors considered the 48 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and the 16 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The team observed the work of the school and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own data on students' current progress, its self-evaluation, the school development plan, a range of policy statements and minutes of governing body meetings.

Inspection team

Michael Blaylock, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Anthony Briggs	Additional Inspector
Bimla Kumari	Additional Inspector
Judith Tolley	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Sir Thomas Boteler Church of England High School is a smaller than average-sized secondary school that serves the dioceses of Liverpool and Chester. The school has been a specialist music college since 2008. The school is popular within the local community and also attracts students from wider afield.
- Over 95% of students are White British. Many other ethnicities are present among the student population.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding is above average, as is the proportion of students supported by school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- A local authority-wide specialist resource unit for students with cognitive and learning difficulties opened in the school in September 2012. At the time of the inspection there were seven students in the unit.
- The school has formal links with a local college that many students move to on leaving school. A small number of older students have college or school placements for practical specialist courses.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that more is good and outstanding by:
 - ensuring the work that students are expected to do is always sufficiently challenging
 - making sure students' work is consistently marked in ways that will help them to improve
 - providing more opportunities for students to develop their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills across different subjects.
- Accelerate the improvements in students' achievement, particularly for the more able pupils by:
 - raising the expectations of teachers and the aspirations of students to help more of them to achieve the highest grades A and A* at GCSE
 - having a sharper focus on enabling students to make more than expected progress.
- Improve attendance particularly for students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, disabled students and those with special educational needs so that it is closer to the national average by:
 - creating a high profile and sustained focus on improving attendance which is supported by appropriate rewards and sanctions
 - making careful checks on patterns of attendance, linked to the performance of different groups of students.
- Ensure senior and middle leaders secure more rapid improvement by:
 - leading by example in their work, including teaching, with a clear commitment to wanting the best for all students
 - ensuring there is greater consistency in the quality of teaching and marking across all subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students start in Year 7 with a typical range of abilities. In recent years students have not made the progress they could be expected to make and their results at the end of Year 11 have been significantly below the national results. Students are now making better progress and reaching standards that are approaching national averages.
- From a low base at the time of the last inspection, GCSE results are improving at a faster rate than is the case nationally, because students are making better progress. The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSEs at grade C and above, including English and mathematics, has risen from 41% in 2010 to 50% in 2012. Most subjects, including English and mathematics, increased the proportion of GCSE grades at C and above in 2012. Students achieve well in more practical subjects, such as music, drama and physical education. Well established alternative provision arrangements with three other secondary schools are proving successful for the small numbers of students involved.
- The proportions achieving the highest GCSE grades of A and A* remain too low and not enough is done to help more-able students to make better progress to achieve the higher grades. The number of early entries for GCSE mathematics has reduced, because the school has recognised that early entry has limited the progress made by students in previous years. Links with a local college are intended to help the most able students to achieve these higher grades. This, along with in-school initiatives, such as work with gifted and talented students and a 'more able students' project, is beginning to raise aspirations for both students and staff.
- The scrutiny of students' work and lesson observations confirm that most students are now making the progress they should and are working at appropriate levels. Year 9 assessments by teachers show an overall improving trend in English, mathematics and science with performance in line with the national picture. At times, poor literacy skills limit the progress some students make in lessons.
- The school is now better at using data to check on students' progress, both individuals and groups and to set individual targets. The underachievement of some disabled students and those with the most significant learning difficulties was identified in 2011 and was effectively addressed. Good support for disabled students and those with special educational needs enables them to achieve well, including those in the new resource unit.
- The school makes considered use of the pupil premium funding to provide targeted support. This includes additional coaching and resources, such as revision guides, protective equipment and tools for vocational courses. This is proving effective in that the gap in performance between students known to be eligible for free school meals and their peers is smaller than in most schools.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching in the lessons observed ranged from inadequate to outstanding. Just under half was good or better but around 10% was inadequate. The uneven quality of teaching over recent years has contributed to underachievement.
- Teaching is characterised by positive, respectful relationships between teachers and students and amongst students. Teachers and teaching assistants sensitively support and encourage students with emotional and behavioural problems, enabling them to work within the classrooms with minimal disruption to others. Strong support is provided for disabled students and those with special educational needs that enables them to integrate well and make good progress.
- In the better lessons, all learners were actively involved often learning in pairs or small groups on challenging and well-structured activities. Lessons proceeded at a good pace with a clear purpose and teachers showed good subject knowledge. There were also good opportunities for students to develop their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills, with careful attention to

correctly spelt technical terms.

- Weaker and inadequate teaching failed to involve or interest students. Where different learning aims were identified, sometimes there was insufficient challenge in what all students were expected to complete. Other adults were not always well used to support students. Teachers talked for too long, and there was insufficient focus on students' learning and their progress. In some lessons, students' learning was limited by their low literacy skills.
- The school has accurately identified improving the consistency of marking and written feedback to students as a priority. Some good marking was seen but too often it fails to identify clearly what students have done wrong, explain how to put it right or suggest the appropriate next steps.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Aspects of students' behaviour and safety are good, such as the respectful relationships between students and staff and the care and support that students receive. However, improvements are required because of low attendance, particularly of those students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, disabled students and those with special educational needs.
- Students' attitudes to learning mostly reflect the quality of the teaching. Where teaching was good students were interested and involved. Where the teaching was not good often students were disinterested. There were not enough opportunities for students to take responsibility and the initiative for their own work in independent research. The good computer facilities are well used by students for examination revision.
- Despite some initial opposition, the new vertical tutor groups are now seen as a good move with older students enjoying coaching and providing reading support for younger students. Consistent with the Christian character of the school there are good opportunities for reflection and worship. Students have a strong sense of right and wrong and their responsibilities to each other.
- Students say that they feel safe in school. This view is shared by the majority of parents who in the Parent View agreed that their children felt safe and were looked after well. There was also strong agreement in the staff questionnaires that 'children are safe at this school'.
- Bullying is taken very seriously by the school, with careful checks made on even minor incidents. Consequently, students have a high awareness of bullying in all its forms, including homophobic bullying. They say that bullying is not a problem and if it occurs they know who to report to and are confident that it will be treated seriously.
- Attendance has shown some improvement since the last inspection but it remains well below average, with a significant proportion of students who are persistent absentees. The school's reputation for succeeding with young people who have experienced problems in other schools makes improving their attendance a challenge. The school is aware that it needs a sharper analysis of patterns of attendance by different groups in tackling the issue with appropriate rewards and sanctions.
- Students are proud of their school. Their view is that it is a good school was summed up by one student who said 'I wouldn't want to go anywhere else'.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- School leaders have not secured rapidly enough the necessary improvements in achievement and teaching. However, senior leaders and governors have a clear understanding of the need for improvement and how this can be achieved. The school's procedures enable leaders to gain an accurate view of its performance and have the right priorities for the future which are widely shared. Staff strongly agree that they 'know what we are trying to achieve as a school'.
- Senior leaders have successfully addressed the areas for improvement identified in the previous

inspection report. Achievement has risen, information on students' performance is used more effectively and checks on teaching are more rigorous. The use of systems to measure the impact of teaching on learning is proving effective in identifying any underachievement.

- The school has successfully addressed weak teaching with training and robust challenges to improve, but some judgements on the quality of teaching are overly generous and the subject leaders' teaching is not consistently good. The management of teachers' performance is appropriately linked with salary progression. A strong partnership with departmental links has been established with a local college, to which many students go for post-16 courses, to help to improve teaching, particularly of more-able students.
 - The curriculum is responsive to both national initiatives and the interests of students. Involvement in a number of vocational courses with external providers has been scaled back, although the school does offer a number of vocational qualifications including music, physical education and Society, Health and Development. A small number of students have college placements for one day a week to follow specialist work-related, practical courses. The school ensures equality of opportunity. There are good extra-curricular opportunities particularly in sport and music.
 - The locating of the local authority special resource unit is recognition of the school's strength in supporting disabled students with those with particular special educational needs. Students are happy and proud of their new centre.
 - Students have a good appreciation of the diversity of life in modern Britain and in a global society. This is informed and developed through the school's Christian values. These are evident in good opportunities for worship, the provision of a prayer room and respectful relationships.
 - The school's safeguarding procedures meet statutory requirements.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors play an active part in the life of the school and are linked to subject departments. They are ambitious for the school and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. Developments in the school's use of data and the better checks on teaching mean the governing body, is more aware of the quality of classroom practice, how good teaching is recognised and rewarded and issues related to promotions. The governors provide good challenge to senior leaders to help them to secure the more rapid improvements while concerned to retain the 'soul' of the school, as expressed in the school's caring ethos and breadth of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities.
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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	133672
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	406544

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	783
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Canon Mike Finlay
Headteacher	John Sharples
Date of previous school inspection	16 September 2010
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