

Rivington and Blackrod High School

Rivington Lane, Horwich, Bolton, Lancashire, BL6 7RU

Inspection dates 9–10 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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' achievement at age 16 has improved steadily since the previous inspection. The proportion gaining five or more A* to C passes at GCSE, including English and mathematics, was well above average in 2012 and is set to improve further in 2013.
- Current Year 11 students are on track to exceed their challenging academic targets. Achievement in English is very strong.
- The sixth form is good. Good teaching is supporting improvement in AS and A level and achievement in vocational courses is strong.
- Teaching is good and some is outstanding. It is bringing about good and improving progress across subjects. A strong culture of learning and achievement, where students are keen to succeed, is well established.
- Leaders and governors have a good understanding of how well the school is performing. Checks on students' progress are rigorous and accurate and teachers' performance is checked closely for the effect it has on progress.
- Leaders have recognised what needs to be improved and have taken effective action so that teaching and students' achievement have improved since the previous inspection.
- Students behave well in lessons and are eager to learn. Most students conduct themselves sensibly when moving around the school. Students feel safe and secure in school and say there is very little bullying. Attendance is above average and improving.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement in mathematics is not as strong as in English but is improving quickly.
- Some teaching requires improvement and a very small amount is inadequate.
- Checks carried out by leaders do not always ensure that school policies are implemented consistently.

Information about this inspection

- Parts of 62 lessons were observed. Two of these were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with leaders, staff, members of the governing body, students and a representative of the local authority.
- Documents relating to students' progress in their learning, checks on how well the school is doing, improvement planning, behaviour and safety were analysed.
- Parents' views were taken into account through the school's recent surveys, a small number of phone calls from parents, and the 63 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View).

Inspection team

Gillian Salter-Smith, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Janet Peckett	Additional Inspector
Michael Blakey	Additional Inspector
Jane Holmes	Additional Inspector
Fiona Burke-Jackson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than an average-sized secondary school.
- An average proportion of students are eligible for pupil premium funding. (Pupil premium is additional funding provided by the government to support students known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care and the children of service families.)
- Of the disabled students and those with special educational needs, an average proportion is supported through school action and an average proportion is supported at school action plus or has a statement of special educational needs.
- There is specialist resourced provision for up to 10 students with speech and language difficulties. Currently, there are six students receiving this provision.
- A small number of students take part in study away from the school site on a part-time basis at the Powerwave Centre which is managed by the school. Other students take part in training provided by 'Training for Today'.
- The school meets current government floor standards, which set minimum standards for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress and improve students' performance in mathematics by providing more opportunities for students to use and apply their mathematical skills in different situations, including in subjects across the curriculum, in order to consolidate their knowledge and understanding further.
- Improve the effectiveness of teaching further so that it is at least good, eliminating inconsistencies evident in a few lessons, by:
 - ensuring that staff make better use of what they know about students' progress and prior learning so that tasks in all lessons help every student to accelerate their progress
 - providing more opportunities for students to take an active part in learning and spend less time listening to teachers
 - providing more tasks that help students to become more confident to discuss their work with each other
 - improving the guidance that teachers give to students so that students know what they need to do to improve their work
 - providing even more chances for staff to observe good practice in different subjects across the school
 - setting out even more clearly in school guidance what good and outstanding teaching looks like.
- Make sure that checks carried out by leaders at all levels are rigorous enough to ensure the consistent implementation of school policies, such as that for marking of students' work and guidance to students on what to do to improve.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- From broadly average starting points in Year 7, students make good progress and, by age 16, the proportion gaining five or more A* to C passes at GCSE, including English and mathematics, is well above average. This is the case for 2012 and is set to improve further in 2013. Students are exceeding challenging targets for academic performance. The proportion of students reaching the highest grades A* to A in GCSE overall is on an upward trend across subjects.
- Achievement in English is very strong and has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Achievement in mathematics is not as strong as in English but it is improving quickly in response to better teaching and leadership. Students in the current Year 11 are set to exceed challenging targets for attainment and progress in mathematics. Early entry policies in mathematics do not prevent students from gaining the higher grades. However, achievement in mathematics is sometimes held back because they do not always get enough chance to apply their skills in different situations and students do not get enough opportunities to practise their mathematical skills in other subjects.
- Students make good progress in learning basic skills in reading and writing. They are less secure in communicating their thoughts and ideas with each other because they do not get enough chances to do so.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good. Achievement in vocational courses is strong. Achievement in AS and A-level is improving each year and is strong in mathematics, drama, physical education and English literature. A high proportion of students go on to higher education courses at age 18.
- There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls. The gap between the attainment of students eligible for pupil premium funding and others is closing year-on-year. The government funding provided for these students is used effectively in all year groups; it provides programmes that help students who have fallen behind to catch up, extra adult support, and it enables students to take part in additional opportunities that bring the curriculum and learning to life.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs, those from minority ethnic groups, including those learning English as an additional language make progress in line with other students because their needs are identified quickly and staff provide well-targeted support. The very good care and support offered to students whose circumstances make them more vulnerable, including students who are looked after by adults other than their own parents, help them to make good progress.
- The small number of students receiving specialist provision for speech and language difficulties are very well supported by specialist staff and make progress that is at least as good as other disabled students and those with special educational needs.
- The small number of students attending courses that are held away from the school site make good progress and achieve well in relation to their starting points. The number of students who do not go on to training, education or employment at age 16 is very low compared to the national average.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is particularly strong in the sixth form. Students develop a strong commitment to their studies and they learn to study independently because of the guidance and encouragement they receive from teachers.
- Good teaching is leading to good overall progress and students' improving achievement year-on-year. Outstanding teaching is evident in all key stages. A few inconsistencies remain so that a small proportion of lessons require improvement or occasionally are inadequate.
- Positive relationships are well established in most lessons so that students are eager to do well.

Behaviour is managed well and disruptions to learning are uncommon.

- In most teaching, staff expect a great deal of students and learning moves on at a good pace. Students have the confidence to work on their own, tackle problems and talk through their work with others. Staff get the best out of every student. They plan a good variety of tasks that take account of every student's previous learning and their potential. They question students in a way that encourages wider and deep thinking. Homework is set regularly and students' planners are helpful to parents in setting out what is expected. Students are made well aware of how well they are doing in relation to challenging targets. They know what they have to do to reach their targets in all their work. Teachers usually give useful guidance to students on how to improve their work. Students find these comments helpful and adjust and improve their work accordingly.
- Teachers pay good attention to helping students improve their reading and writing skills. The attention paid to improving students' oral communication skills and using numeracy skills is less consistent between subjects.
- Where teaching requires improvement or, occasionally, is inadequate, staff do not take enough account of what students already know and understand so that tasks are sometimes too easy and do not get the most out of every student. The pace of learning slows down when students spend too much time listening to teachers and there are few chances for students to be active in lessons working out problems for themselves. Students do not always receive enough helpful guidance on how well they are doing and what they must do to improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour in lessons is good. Students have positive attitudes towards their work and are eager to succeed. Students enjoy learning and say that most lessons are interesting. Sixth form students have a mature approach to studying and most are highly committed to their subjects.
- The rate of attendance is above average and has improved since the previous inspection.
- Students feel safe and secure in school and say there is very little bullying. They are aware of the many different types of bullying and they know what they should do when bullying occurs. They are confident that staff will help to resolve any difficulties. Students know how to keep themselves safe in many different situations including when using modern technology.
- The vast majority of students move around the school sensibly, even where corridors are narrow. Students report that occasionally a few students do not behave as sensibly as they should in these cramped situations.
- Surveys of parents, students and staff report a good level of satisfaction with behaviour and safety within the school.
- Students are consulted by the school through student councils and regular surveys. Their ideas are listened to and lead to improvements, for example, changes to uniform.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body set high expectations of staff and students. Leaders are strongly focused on the right priorities and have succeeded in improving students' achievement and the effectiveness of teaching since the previous inspection.
- Checks on students' progress and teaching are carried out systematically and well by senior and middle leaders. This information is used to hold staff more closely to account for how teaching supports progress. It helps leaders to gain an accurate picture of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. However, these checks are not always rigorous enough to identify inconsistencies in some policies, such as that for marking of students' work and guidance on what to do to improve.
- Teaching is well led and managed. Staff training is based on the school's priorities and staff needs identified through lesson observations and performance management. Additional support for individuals is effective in improving relatively weaker teaching. Increasingly, in-service

training is led by leaders and teachers from within the school reflecting the growing strengths in teaching and leadership. A culture of sharing what works well in teaching is developing and appreciated by staff but is not yet widespread enough to ensure consistency in all features of teaching. Not all school guidance on teaching sets out what good and outstanding teaching looks like clearly enough. Leaders keep a close check on staff performance and advancement in salary is closely related to the effectiveness of teaching.

- Leadership of the sixth form is good. Close checks are kept on students' progress and how well teaching helps students to make progress. Areas in need of improvement are identified and successfully improved so that achievement has improved since the previous inspection.
- The curriculum is well matched to students' needs. The opportunities in Key Stage 4 link well with subjects offered in the sixth form. A sensible balance between vocational and more academic study is encouraged. An increasing proportion of students are on target to gain the English Baccalaureate, which recognises GCSE grade C or higher in English, mathematics, science, a humanities and a modern foreign language. Good attention is paid to promoting students' personal development and their strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A wide programme of additional cultural and sporting activities is taken up and appreciated by many students. Alternative courses that take place off the school site meet the needs of students well; this provision is closely checked to ensure students are fully safeguarded.
- The local authority provides good support. It checks on the school's performance regularly and provides useful support and training, particularly to leaders.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors bring a good range of skills and experience to their role. They know how well the school is performing in relation to the national picture. They are aware of how good teaching is in the school. They are fully informed of justifications for progressions in salary and are aware of how weaker teaching is being supported and improved. They know how pupil premium funding is spent and evaluate its impact through information they receive on the progress of these students. They evaluate their own performance and arrange appropriate training for governors as a result. The governing body ensures that safeguarding procedures meet requirements.

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	105261
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	403737

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary controlled
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	1841
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	306
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Judith Marsden
Headteacher	Tony Purcell
Date of previous school inspection	21 April 2010
Telephone number	01204 333266
Fax number	01204 333264
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