

Gateacre Community Comprehensive School

Hedgefield Road, Liverpool, L25 2RW

Inspection dates 16–17 January 2013

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

- Results in GCSE examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 have been too variable over time.
- Although teaching shows considerable improvement, in the past it has been inconsistent, resulting in too much variability in achievement.
- Academic targets are too easy for more able students and too difficult for lower ability students.
- Leaders and managers, including the governors, have an incomplete view of how well the school is performing against other schools nationally. This is because they do not make use of all the information that is available to them.
- Senior leaders' analysis of how well the school is meeting its targets for improvement is not sharp enough.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Examination results at A level have shown the same pattern of variability as they have at GCSE.

The school has the following strengths

- The school is an oasis of calm where students behave well. They are invariably courteous and polite contributing to a safe, welcoming and harmonious community.
- Leaders and managers, supported by governors, have taken robust action to tackle inconsistencies in teaching so that it is now consistently good.
- In the school's specialist subjects, teaching is good, with some being outstanding. In art and drama, for example, students develop their independence, find things out for themselves and make decisions about the next steps in their learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 53 part-lessons taught by 53 different teachers. Joint observations of lessons were also carried out in partnership with two senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with the Chair of Governors and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors also met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, groups of teachers and a range of students of differing ages.
- Inspectors took into account the views expressed in the 16 responses to the on-line Parent View survey and the 21 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Students' work was examined as were the school's key policies, minutes of governing body meetings, the school's self-evaluation and its development plan. Information showing students' progress was also analysed.

Inspection team

Charles Lowry, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average school located in Belle Vale, about 7 miles to the east of Liverpool City Centre.
- There are significantly more boys in the school than girls.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well above average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, children of parents serving in the armed forces and for students who have an entitlement to free school meals.
- The number of students who require extra help including those supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- Most students are of White British heritage with few students from other backgrounds; consequently almost all students speak English as their first language.
- The school has specialist arts and humanities college status and also has a designated unit for visually impaired students.
- The school is also the holder of a number of awards including Artsmark Gold, Healthy Schools, Investors in People, the Basic Skills Charter Mark and the Customer Service Excellence Award.
- The school moved into new premises in September 2011.
- All students are educated on the school site.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that all teaching is at least good with much outstanding by:
 - planning activities in every lesson that meet more closely the needs of all students of all abilities and needs
 - reducing teacher talk, where it is too prevalent, so that more time is given for students to work independently and find things out for themselves.
- Continue to improve achievement by:
 - making sure that the system for setting targets and monitoring students' progress takes account of their differing starting points and that students' targets are suitably challenging for the most able and not too difficult for the least able
 - developing the school's tracking system so that students' progress can be thoroughly assessed and the information used to help the school decide which students need additional help.
- Strengthen the effect leaders and managers have on achievement by:
 - sharpening the ways they assess how well the school is doing, so that the impact of the actions taken to improve the school are fully explored
 - making sure that they use all of the most up to date and challenging information available to gauge how well all students are achieving and set targets for further improvement
 - making sure that the school development plan focuses on the most important areas for improvement, particularly those that will have the greatest effect on students' achievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students enter the school, in Year 7, with attainment in reading, writing and mathematics which is low. In 2011, the proportion of students in Year 11 who achieved 5 passes at GCSE including English and mathematics was below average.
- The school took steps to address this underperformance. Vigorous action to improve teaching meant that the proportion of students leaving the school with 5 GCSE passes including English and mathematics rose from 40% in 2011 to 47% in 2012. The school also provided targeted support for middle ability students in mathematics. In addition, to maintain this group's motivation and make achievement in mathematics their priority, the school entered them early for GCSE. As a result, in 2012 this group's progress in mathematics improved markedly compared to the year group before. Students' attainment in the school's specialist subjects of art, dance and drama remained strong and students' progress in these subjects was and continues to be good.
- The school has been effective in improving students' use of English in all subjects, developing their writing and their knowledge of specific vocabulary. When required, most students are able to apply their mathematical skills.
- The achievement of students who receive additional funding through the pupil premium and those students who require extra help is improving, albeit from a low base. Consequently the gap between the average point scores for these students and their peers in the school is narrowing.
- Students who are members of the visually impaired unit are also making improving progress; in line with their peers.
- As is the case nationally, girls' attainment is better than that of the boys.
- When the students enter the school they are set targets and progress against them is monitored four times per year. However, these targets do not take account of students' capability. As a result they are easily achieved by more able students and beyond the reach of weaker ones. Consequently the progress of both groups is not as good as it could be.
- The school's analysis of the data used to track students' progress is not sufficiently thorough. As a result some students who are underachieving are not identified quickly enough to be given the help they need to get back on track.
- Students' achievement in academic A and AS levels in the sixth form has declined in the last two years. However, it has remained strong in the vocational courses. Robust action to address weak teaching across the school has meant academic achievement at A and AS is now beginning to improve.
- Most parents who responded to the on line Parent View questionnaire feel that their child is making good progress. Although improving, students' progress over time has not been good enough.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The school's recent and robust drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning has resulted in teaching that is now consistently good and students' progress is speeding up.
- These improvements, however, have yet to impact significantly on the standards achieved by students in examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.
- In the best lessons, teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable. They give students a variety of activities to keep them engaged and on task.
- Teachers skilfully question students making them think carefully and deepen their understanding. They make effective use of information technology; for example using the interactive whiteboard to show video clips and high quality diagrams.
- Students say that, in the best lessons, they are given opportunities to find things out for

themselves and direct their own learning. For example in one outstanding Year 9 drama lesson students worked in small groups to explore the negative aspects of being a celebrity and then used a drama technique to show the result of their discussions. Students made excellent progress because they were energised and motivated by the relevance of the topic and showed great maturity as they took responsibility for their own learning.

- Students with visual impairment are taught alongside their peers and receive good support enabling them participate fully in lessons.
- In the few lessons that require improvement there is a tendency for teachers to talk too much with students listening for long periods. This reduces the opportunities for students to think for themselves, limiting their progress. Some teachers adopt a 'one size fits all' approach with all students doing the same activity. When this happens higher attaining students are not suitably challenged and lower attaining students find the tasks too difficult. As a result the progress of both groups slows.
- Marking varies in quality. The best examples of marking direct the students to aspects of the work they have done well and gives clear guidance as to what they need to do to improve it.

The behaviour and safety of pupils is good

- Students say they feel safe, secure and well supported in the school; a view that is shared by their teachers and most parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire. They are aware of how to keep themselves safe and understand the different forms that bullying can take including racist, cyber and other prejudiced based bullying. Students say that incidents of bullying are rare, but when they do occur they are dealt with effectively.
- Relationships are generally warm, friendly and based upon mutual respect. As a result the school has a calm, purposeful and welcoming atmosphere. Younger students value the school's 'friendship club' where they can go when they are feeling vulnerable or lonely.
- In the majority of lessons students are engaged and well-motivated; making a positive contribution to their progress. Disruptions to learning are rare and usually confined to lessons involving a few younger students who have yet to adapt well enough to the school's expectations.
- When asked, students understand what constitutes acceptable behaviour and they agree that the policy for rewards and sanctions is consistently applied by their teachers.
- Incidents of unacceptable behaviour are well managed and the school uses exclusion as an appropriate sanction. Encouragingly the number of exclusions has fallen significantly over the last two years.
- Additional funding the school receives from the pupil premium is being used effectively in supporting work to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence. Although attendance is below average it is improving for all groups of students and a faster rate than that found nationally.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The school's analysis of how well it is doing is detailed and broadly accurate. However, the school's view of achievement is not fully informed by the most up to date information about students' progress. In addition this analysis does not place enough emphasis on the impact of actions taken to improve the school.
- The detailed school development plan identifies a large number of priorities. However, not enough thought has been given to which of these priorities are the most important, who is responsible for making sure they are achieved and which of them will have the biggest impact on outcomes.
- Local authority officers have worked effectively with the school to improve the quality of

teaching, learning and assessment. However it is too early to see the impact of this improvement on students' examination results.

- Senior leaders have a good understanding of what constitutes good and outstanding teaching. They regularly observe lessons and systems are in place for sharing good practice. Teachers whose practice requires improvement are given appropriate support.
- The curriculum meets the needs of students and along with a range of extra-curricular activities promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The additional finance the school receives through the pupil premium is carefully managed. As a consequence, the attendance and achievement of students entitled to this funding is improving and the gaps between their performance and that of their peers narrowing.
- Arrangements for the management of teachers' performance are suitably organised. There is a consistent approach to the setting of performance targets and teachers are held to account for the quality of their teaching. Salary progression is linked to the successful achievement of performance targets.
- The sixth form welcomes students of all abilities and offers a range of academic and vocational courses to meet their needs.
- The proportion of students who successfully follow and complete one year courses in the sixth form is high. Consequently the proportion of students who stay on and complete a second year is lower than that found nationally.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are supportive of the headteacher and his colleagues in the drive to improve standards. They have an understanding of the school's strengths, including the quality of teaching, and areas for development. Governors evaluate the achievement of groups of students including those who attract additional funding through the pupil premium and those who require extra help. However, this evaluation needs to be sharper as they do not access all the available information on students' performance. The governing body uses performance management systems effectively to hold the school to account and bring about improvements in teaching. They have ensured that all safeguarding and child protection policies and practice 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	104700
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	400732

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,311
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Derek Brown
Headteacher	Gerard Lonergan
Date of previous school inspection	25 May 2010
Telephone number	0151 235 1400
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