

Fairfield High School for Girls

Fairfield Avenue, Droylsden, Manchester, M43 6AB

Inspection dates 23–24 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- All groups of students make outstanding progress because of outstanding teaching. Overall, students reach high standards, although the attainment of a small minority of more-able students could be further improved.
- All students have high regard for their teachers; they enjoy lessons and follow carefully the very helpful advice and guidance given by their teachers.
- The behaviour of students in and outside of the classroom is exemplary. Their excellent attitudes help them to learn extremely well.
- The school has a very wide range of curriculum activities that caters for every interest and ability, which are enthusiastically supported by the students.
- Senior leaders and the governing body rigorously pursue excellence. Staff and students are fully aware of their vision and are fully committed to making it a reality. Improvements to the quality of teaching are due to effective arrangements for the performance management of staff and the excellent provision for staff training and development.
- The governing body offers both challenge and support and is steadfast in ensuring that all students are safe, learn and achieve exceptionally well while at the school. For example, the targeted use of pupil premium funding ensures that those who are eligible make outstanding progress and are narrowing the gap to their peers within the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 39 lessons across a range of subjects. Two of these observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher and other senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, three groups of students, and representatives of the governing body.
- Inspectors reviewed school documentation, performance data, records relating to behaviour and attendance and looked at students' work.
- The inspectors took account of 48 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) prior to and during the inspection and took account of other evidence submitted by parents through letters. They also considered the views of staff, including those expressed in 76 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Pippa Jenkinson, Lead inspector

Seconded Inspector

John Coleman

Her Majesty's Inspector

Pamela Hemphill

Additional Inspector

Nell Banfield

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Fairfield High School for Girls is an average-sized secondary school which converted to an academy in April 2011. When the school was last inspected, it was judged to be good.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is average as is the proportion with English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well-below average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for looked after children, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families) is about half the national average.
- An extremely small proportion of students attend work-related courses at Stockport College, Tameside College and Skills Solutions.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher is a Local Leader in Education. As part of this role he has supported a number of schools in the local area.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the achievement of a small minority of more-able students by ensuring that they are consistently challenged during lessons.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Most students join the school with starting points that are just above average although there is some variation between year groups. In recent years, the standards reached at GCSE are significantly higher than those found nationally, with over three quarters attaining five good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics.
- The attainment of a small minority of students who are capable of gaining the highest grades of A* and A, while above average overall, could be improved in some subjects.
- Students' attainment in English and mathematics is excellent with over 80% of students gaining at least a C grade in both subjects, which is well above the national average. This is due to highly effective teaching and careful management of early entry into GCSE examinations. This represents outstanding progress.
- Students make exceptional progress in art and design, business studies and food technology; achieving high standards. In art and design, students spoke highly of the excellent guidance and support they receive and how they are always clear about how to improve their work.
- Students who are eligible for the pupil premium make outstanding progress; they achieve significantly better than their peers nationally. The gap between the average point scores gained by this group and others in the school has closed quickly, particularly in mathematics. The extra funds have been used effectively to provide one-to-one tuition in English and mathematics, booster classes and additional staff mentors.
- An extremely small number of students follow courses off-site during Key Stage 4. This provision is carefully monitored by school staff and shows that the progress made by these students over the last year has been variable.
- Students with special educational needs or who are disabled make outstanding progress as a result of highly effective, targeted support. The staff know all the students well and monitor their progress closely. Where a student is underperforming, interventions strategies, such as one-to-one literacy support, are put in place. School records show that such interventions rapidly improve students' achievement. This reflects the school's commitment to equality of opportunity.
- The outstanding attitudes to learning shown by the students, combined with outstanding teaching results in achievement that places them consistently in the top 10% of schools nationally.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Outstanding teaching results in outstanding learning. Several examples of truly inspirational teaching were observed, where teachers demonstrated a passion and enthusiasm for the subjects they were teaching. For example, in an outstanding English lesson, high quality discussion about books and literature captured the imagination of the students due to the teacher's excellent knowledge and vivid explanations. This led to excellent progress being made by all.
- The school's monitoring records show that in recent years teaching has improved so that almost all lessons are good or outstanding. The profile of lessons seen by inspectors supports this view.
- Teachers are thoroughly prepared for their lessons and checks on students' understanding are used exceptionally well to ensure that the tasks set are interesting and challenging for the overwhelming majority of students. Lessons take a variety of different approaches as teachers do not feel constrained to teach in a particular way. This leads to lessons being varied and stimulating for all students.
- Warm, positive relationships are evident both in the classrooms and around the school. The students have a high regard for their teachers and want to achieve. Students are keen to learn and have high expectations of themselves. This is evident in the quality of work in their books which is of the very highest standard. They are encouraged to work with minimal teacher

guidance and are confident enough to challenge both the teacher and their peers to stretch and extend their understanding. As one student summed up the feelings of many when stating 'respect is a byword for the school along with good grades'.

- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge is evident in the classroom as they effectively question students to extend their knowledge and understanding.
- Students are often involved in checks on their own and their peers work, for example, in mathematics they have been taught how to carefully check their answers when solving equations. Teacher's marking provides students with precise and focused guidance on how to improve their work.
- Overall, teachers have very high expectations for what students will learn in a lesson. However, for a small minority of more-able students the level of challenge does not always remain high throughout the time available.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary. The staff set very high expectations and in return students are always polite and courteous. They behave responsibly during lessons and as they move around school. Students enjoy coming to school. They feel safe and support each other in a range of activities. For example, Learning Leaders, who are Year 10 students, support Year 7 students in the development of reading and mathematical skills.
- Senior leaders regularly monitor students' behaviour. The detailed logs show that there are very few incidents of poor behaviour. Students know about the different types of bullying, for example homophobic or cyber-bullying and report that incidents of bullying of any kind are rare. If an issue does occur parents, staff and students are confident that it is dealt with promptly and effectively.
- Students' views play an important role in identifying how the school can improve further. They feel as though they make a difference and that their ideas and opinions are taken seriously and acted upon by school staff. For example, they felt that the virtual learning environment could be improved; as a result, it was updated incorporating their proposals.
- In recent years, students' attendance has been higher than the national average. Students almost always arrive on time to lessons. Exclusions from school are rare.
- Students whose circumstances might put them at risk receive excellent guidance and support from school staff and through effective use of external agencies such as social and health services.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher's commitment and determination to improve the school are shared by staff, students and parents. Leaders and governors have consistently high expectations and ambition. Leaders know the school well. They have an accurate view of what the school does well and of the areas which need to improve. The middle leaders understand the role they have to play in driving the school forward and relish the opportunities they are given to do so.
- The senior leaders have worked hard to create a performance management process that both challenges and supports teachers in improving their skills. There is a clear link between self-review, lesson observations, feedback, and teachers' performance management targets. The teachers speak highly of the excellent training programme which they say helps them to improve their teaching.
- Leaders make sure that students study a range of subjects that are precisely matched to their needs and abilities, preparing them well for the future. All students go onto further education, training or employment.
- The leadership of literacy is outstanding and students talk enthusiastically about their love of

reading. The school's literacy coordinator, head of English and librarian ensure that reading is given a high priority through excellent library lessons, time available for reading and by regularly updating the books available. The library is well-used, especially by the younger students, who take the opportunity at lunchtime to renew their books or sit quietly and read.

- Pupil premium funding is used very well to provide additional books, computers and trips. Learning mentors are also employed to support some individual students. This has resulted in marked improvements in the progress of these students in recent years.
 - The responses from parents about their children's experiences at school were overwhelmingly positive. Staff responses were equally positive. One member of staff wrote, 'I really appreciate the support senior staff give to teachers and the overwhelming feeling that all staff are encouraged to give 100% for the benefit and development of all pupils.'
 - The school promotes the students' spiritual, moral and social development outstandingly well through assemblies, form tutor time and the wide range of activities available to the students out of lessons. The school could help students to further enhance their cultural understanding with stronger links to other contrasting British and overseas communities.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governors know the school very well. They have a clear understanding of how the school's results compare to those of other schools nationally and of the progress made by different groups of students. The governing body offers strong support to school leaders but will challenge decisions if they feel they will not make a positive impact on students' learning. They are fully aware of the relationship between teaching and learning and ensure that teachers are only rewarded for good performance. The governing body ensures that the school's finances are well managed, and that pupil premium funding has an excellent impact on students' achievement. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities including those for safeguarding students.
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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	136593
Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	403673

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	981
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger Lingard
Principal	John Hedley
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0161 370 1488
Fax number	0161 371 1620
Email address	admin@fairfieldhigh.tameside.sch.uk

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