

Whitworth Community High School

Hall Fold, Whitworth, Rochdale, Lancashire, OL12 8TS

Inspection dates 31 January–1 February 2013

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		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- There was an unanticipated decline in GCSE examination results English in 2012.
- Teaching has not been consistently good over time and not enough students have made good progress.
- Although teaching is now improving rapidly, not all students are learning effectively, because in some classes the same work is set for all students whatever their ability.
- Some lessons taught by temporary or non-specialist teachers do not help students to understand what is being taught.
- The progress of some students has been limited because they have had a change of teacher part way through a course of study.
- Students do not always have the opportunity to find things out for themselves and are sometimes too reliant on the teacher for explanations and answers to questions.
- Marking and feedback from teachers does not always explain clearly how students can improve their skills and their learning.
- The curriculum does not meet the needs of all the students, including those who are interested in vocational subjects.

The school has the following strengths

- Teaching is improving rapidly so that more students are making better progress.
- Leaders and managers are clear and rigorous in their self-evaluation, know exactly what the school needs to do to improve further and their actions are accelerating students' progress.
- The majority of students behave well in lessons and around the school.
- Subject leaders, especially those who are new to the role are working energetically to improve progress.
- Governors understand the school well, are relentless in their support and challenge and are working closely with school leaders to make sure the school continues to improve rapidly.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 31 lessons, of which two were joint observations with the assistant headteacher.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior staff, students, the Chair of the Governing Body, the vice-chair and a parent governor, and held a telephone discussion with the local authority representative.
- The inspection team looked closely at the school’s work, scrutinised the school’s data about the students’ achievements, examined records relating to behaviour, safety and attendance and looked at documents written by school leaders to review the quality of the school’s work and their plans of how to improve further.
- Inspectors took account of 39 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and four letters received during the inspection.
- Inspectors also took account of the views of 36 staff who returned inspection questionnaires.

Inspection team

Nell Banfield, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Gary Kirkley

Additional Inspector

Fiona Dixon

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Whitworth Community High School is a smaller than average size secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are the children of service families, is in line with that found nationally.
- Very few students are from minority ethnic groups.
- Most students are of White British heritage and very few are in the early stages of learning to speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is below that found nationally. The proportion of students supported through school action, school action plus and with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- A very small number of students in Year 10 and Year 11 attend Oswaldtistle Short Stay School and a small number follow vocational courses at Accrington and Rossendale College.
- The school's recent GCSE results met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that all teaching is good and more is outstanding by checking that all teachers:
 - plan and teach activities for students at different starting points, so that can all move to the next stage of learning in a lesson
 - improve the quality of their marking in all subjects and give students time to think about and respond to advice so their work improves
 - create more opportunities for students to discuss their ideas and answers in a group or in pairs and to find out information for themselves, rather than rely on the teacher to tell them
 - include activities in their lessons that so students have the chance to explain their thinking, describe their ideas and justify their views and opinions.
- Implement plans from the curriculum review so that all students make better progress in a range of subjects and achieve at least good standards in examinations by:
 - providing examination courses in a range of subjects that meet the needs of students with different abilities
 - providing vocational courses so that students can gain qualifications that will prepare them well for future employment.
- Reduce the number of non-specialist and temporary teachers so that students' progress in lessons improves.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because students do not do as well in English as in other subjects. Attainment has improved in mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, physical education, art and performing arts in 2012 reflecting improvements to the quality of teaching.
- The proportion of students achieving five A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, and the proportion gaining Grade C in English, declined in 2012 to below the national average, although it was close to the national average in the previous year. This was because fewer students gained grade C and above in English than in previous years.
- The school responded promptly to this and students are now making better progress in English lessons because teachers are clearer what students need to know and be able to do in order to achieve the standards required for each GCSE grade.
- When students join the school in Year 7, they are working at the same standards as is found nationally in most subjects. In the past, the school did not act quickly enough to identify and address underachievement and this has slowed the progress of some students. Additionally some teachers adopt a 'one size fits all' approach. They do make sure that students of different abilities are set work that meets their individual needs. This, along with frequent changes of teacher, has also contributed to uneven progress.
- The gap between the performances of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and that of their peers in the school, as measured by their average point scores at GCSE, is larger than that found nationally, because work was not well matched to their learning styles and abilities. The school has improved the procedures for identifying those students eligible for the pupil premium who are in danger of falling behind, and are providing extra help and support for this group of students. As a result, their progress is improving rapidly.
- The progress of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is good because the school makes sure that all possible additional help is provided.
- Reading is highly promoted by the school. Students read regularly in form time and those requiring additional help improve their reading skills and make good progress. One Year 7 student spoken to said his reading had improved rapidly as a result of the school's support.
- The school's range of courses does not yet provide all students with opportunities to succeed and as a result, some students do not make the progress of which they are capable. The small number of students who access education off the school site make good progress because they are closely monitored and are following courses that match their interests and talents.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching in the majority of lessons seen by inspectors was good, but teaching is not good over time. A thorough review of teaching by the school confirms that teaching was not good enough in the past. The school has responded swiftly to this and teaching is now rapidly improving.
- Not all lessons are taught by specialist teachers, so some students do not make good progress because these staff do not have the in-depth knowledge of the subject they are being asked to teach.
- In some of the lessons that required improvement, students were taught by temporary teachers and were not clear what they were to learn. Some were confused about, or lacked confidence in, the tasks they had to complete and some more-able students repeated work or answered questions about processes and topics they already understood.
- In some lessons, students were too reliant on the teacher and the teacher's explanations. They were not able to contribute to their learning by finding out about things for themselves or by discussing or presenting their knowledge and opinions. This limited the development of their

communication skills.

- In good lessons, students were given carefully chosen tasks which meant they had to work together to solve a problem. In one mathematics lesson, students were asked to complete one line each in turn to solve an algebra question. This made them explain to their co-worker what they had done and why before their partner completed their line. They had to agree it was correct before proceeding. Students built up their confidence and clarified misconceptions through this task.
- In the better lessons, teachers ask searching questions which make students think carefully before answering and encourage students to check their own and each others' work
- Many teachers make sure that students are clear about how to reach the standards of which they are capable and support them well. Students do better than they thought they could because of the teachers' high expectations and the way they instil self-belief.
- Students with weaker reading skills make good progress in literacy as a result of well-focused support. Most teachers practise the reading, spelling and understanding of key technical terms in their subjects and also comment on the grammar and spelling in students' writing.
- A small number of teachers do not yet mark students' work thoroughly enough. Senior leaders have begun to make sure that all teachers provide feedback on learning. As a result, more students not only know what they have done well and which targets they have met, but respond to suggestions as to how they can reach the next stage.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The majority of students behave well in lessons and around the school. Inattention in lessons is rare and usually occurs when teachers talk for too long, when students do not understand the work or when tasks are too easy.
- Students say that behaviour has improved in recent years and that it is good. This is because leaders have clear expectations about students being smart, polite and considerate to each other. The school has introduced a room where students who are struggling to settle in lessons can complete their work without disturbing the learning of others.
- Students feel safe and cared for well. They are confident about raising any concerns they have with tutors, mentors and teaching assistants. Almost all students attend school regularly and persistent absence has reduced over time.
- Very few students are excluded from school because there are support staff who talk to them about their behaviour and help them to settle disputes, and because there is a clear behaviour policy which most teachers follow consistently.
- Discrimination for example, through racist or homophobic language, is not tolerated. On the rare occasions when issues do arise, students say that senior staff take immediate action. A very small number of incidents of name calling are not settled right away and it may take a little longer before they are fully resolved. Disabled students, those who have special educational needs and students from different ethnic groups socialise and study well with other students.
- Students understand the damaging impact of bullying and students say that many help younger students who might feel unsure around the school. The vast majority of students are clear about how technology can be used to bully and intimidate and say that occasions where mobile phones and the internet are misused are rare. A student involved in one incident was made aware of the seriousness of his actions and the incidents stopped.
- The views expressed by parents, students and staff indicate the majority are positive about the school, and feel confident about taking part in after-school sports clubs and events. A few parents, students and staff felt that a minority of students did not always behave as well as the majority. A number were aware that the changes in teaching staff in some subjects had not always helped students to do their best.
- The school's ethos and curriculum supports students to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Students' understanding of other lifestyles and religions is developed

through visits to different religious centres and a stronger link is being established with a multi-cultural school close by so students can share activities and discussions regularly. In lessons, students discuss the context of different musical traditions, explore what life is like in shanty towns, increase their understanding of how the Kuna Indians use their textile traditions to support their economy and explore the deeper meaning of war and why conflicts happen.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior leaders have taken decisive steps to examine the reasons behind the decline in attainment in 2012 and to improve students' achievement. As a result, the progress of higher ability students in science has improved, a higher proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium are on track to achieve national standards and the pace of improvement in the quality of teaching has accelerated. Newly appointed subject leaders, and particularly the leader of English, are already improving students' progress.
- The checks made on lessons is rigorous and evaluation of the quality of teaching is accurate. Senior leaders recognise that all teaching should be planned and taught by teachers who have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject they are teaching, and are taking steps to ensure that this is so. They are relentless in appointing staff of the highest quality.
- The headteacher has sought additional capacity to improve the accuracy of assessments. The school now knows exactly where there may be underachievement and has used the pupil premium funding wisely to pay for extra support. The funds have been used to appoint skilled staff to help students to do well in tests and in examinations and to teach topics that might have been missed or misunderstood. It is also targeted at students in Key Stage 3 and those in Year 7 who arrive at the school with gaps in their knowledge or weaker understanding in mathematics and/or English. This illustrates the school's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity.
- The school recognises that the curriculum does not enable all students to make the best progress because it is not designed to match carefully the interests and abilities of the full range of students, particularly those who wish to study vocational subjects. The school has already introduced some additional subjects and plans to extend the range further for students in the near future.
- Performance management has not been rigorous in the past. However, robust links are now made between the outcomes for students to teachers' progression through the pay scales.
- The local authority has provided well-targeted support, which has helped the school to improve the quality of teaching.
- The school's arrangements for keeping students safe meet all statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are clear about what needs to improve, the steps the school has taken to improve teaching and why. The school's use of the pupil premium funding is closely monitored by governors and they have scrutinised data that compares the low previous attainment and the recently improved progress of the groups of pupils across the school supported by this funding. All governors have a good understanding of data because they attend training which is frequently updated. The governing body has a clear action plan to target training so that it matches the school development plan and also plans to attend school council and staff meetings so that students and staff are clear who the governors are and what they do. Governors recognise that the arrangements for managing the performance of staff were not sufficiently rigorous in the past and fully endorse the headteacher's actions to link any increase in pay to improved performance.

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	119753
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	405886

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	489
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lila Towers
Headteacher	Margaret Holt
Date of previous school inspection	11 May 2011
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