

Halifax High at Wellesley Park

Gibbet Street, Halifax, West Yorkshire, HX2 0BA

Inspection dates

5–6 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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.

- From their low starting points, students make good progress and achieve well in English and mathematics.
- Teaching is good in most subjects because teachers plan interesting lessons which get students learning actively. There are examples of outstanding teaching in mathematics, drama and history.
- Students' behaviour is good because the school's house system very effectively supports students' social and moral development. Students say they feel safe at school and attendance is above average.
- Students supported by the pupil premium make rapid progress because of the very effective programmes that boost their learning.
- Senior leaders have brought about many improvements since the last inspection. Teaching, students' achievement and their behaviour are now much better. Leaders have high ambition for students and are well placed to continue to drive the school forward.
- Governors understand the school's strengths and weaknesses and hold school leaders to account well, particularly for the quality of teaching and students' achievement. The governing body tries hard to make sure that the local community gets involved in school life.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The proportion of students achieving five GCSE grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, although improving rapidly, is below the national average.
- Not all teaching is as good as the best yet, especially in some modern foreign languages.
- Some teaching is not pitched at the right level for all students. Less-able students sometimes find the work too hard and more-able students are not always challenged enough.
- Students' targets are not always challenging enough.
- School improvement plans do not give specific details about what steps will be taken to improve attainment.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 42 lessons. Six of these were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, two members of the governing body, senior leaders, other staff, an external consultant and groups of students.
- Inspectors took account of the school’s own surveys of parents’ views as there were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors also considered the 84 responses from the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors analysed examination results and scrutinised a range of other evidence including the school’s self-evaluation and improvement plans, records relating to behaviour, safety and attendance, lesson monitoring information, safeguarding documentation and examples of students’ work.

Inspection team

Lisa Fraser, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Steven Beverley	Additional Inspector
Mark Shenton	Additional Inspector
David Thompson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average secondary school.
- The large majority of students are from Pakistani backgrounds and the proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, for those from service families and for students known to be eligible for free school meals) is above average. There are neither students from service families nor children in the care of the local authority at the school.
- The proportion of students who are supported through school action is above average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school recently achieved the Investors in People gold award.
- A small number of students attend off-site alternative provision provided by the local authority at Calderdale College.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better in all subjects, particularly modern foreign languages, in order to further raise students' attainment by:
 - making sure that teachers always plan work which is tailored to all students' needs, particularly those of the least and most able
 - ensuring that support from teaching assistants and other adults always focuses on improving students' achievement.
- Further improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - making sure that school improvement plans are more specific about what actions are to be taken to improve students' attainment in all subjects
 - continuing to improve the school's systems for setting students' targets, ensuring that these are always challenging and that students' progress against these targets is monitored closely
 - implementing agreed plans to further boost students' numeracy and literacy.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Achievement has improved since the last inspection and is now good.
- Students enter the school with skills in reading, writing and mathematics which are significantly below average. From their low starting points, by the end of Year 11 most students make better than expected progress and achieve well in English and mathematics because of the good teaching they receive.
- Achievement is not yet outstanding because, although attainment is improving rapidly, the proportion of students in Year 11 achieving five A* to C GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, is below average.
- Students' achievement varies a little between subjects, particularly where teaching is not as strong. For instance, students do not make as much progress as they should in some modern foreign languages.
- Across the school, sometimes students do not make good enough progress when they are given work that is too easy or too hard.
- Early-entry GCSE examinations in mathematics and English are taken by students at several points from Year 10 onwards. As a result, students' attainment has improved because their confidence has been boosted by early successes. Some students are also taking international GCSE qualifications.
- Students supported by 'Year 7 catch-up' funding are making good progress in improving their literacy and numeracy because of the extra support they receive.
- Additional funding to support pupil premium students is used on a variety of activities which include after-school programmes, summer schools, one-to-one mentoring and a Herd Farm residential visit to help students with their revision. As a result, these students make outstanding progress. In English and mathematics, their attainment is less than a third of a grade behind other students so the gaps in their achievement are narrowing. Overall, these students make better progress than other similar students nationally.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make similar good progress to other students in the school given their needs and abilities and achieve in line with similar students nationally.
- Almost all students go on to college or further education because the school has good links with Calderdale College and a range of other post-16 providers. Students' good achievement means they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- A small number of students study off-site on hair and beauty courses at Calderdale College for two days a week. These are effective because they meet students' needs and interests. A designated teacher makes sure that these students attend, are safe and make progress.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The great majority of teaching observed during the inspection was good or outstanding. No lessons were inadequate but a small minority of lessons required improvement. This closely matches the school's own view of teaching.
- Good teaching over time has been a key factor in improving students' achievement
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good. Students enjoy discussing their ideas and cooperate well when working in pairs or groups.
- Teachers have high expectations and plan interesting activities which effectively build upon what students already know. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge and good encouragement give students' confidence that they can succeed. In a Year 11 mathematics lesson, for example, on the modulus functions, students made outstanding progress because of the teacher's expert knowledge of the topic and skilful questioning.

- In the best lessons, students do not all complete the same work and activities. For example, in a Year 8 history lesson, students made outstanding progress in understanding what living conditions were like in 19th century England because the teacher made sure that students worked on different tasks which were appropriate for their level of ability.
- In a few lessons, teachers do not pitch their lessons or students' work at the right level. As a result, some students find the work too easy, other students find the work hard and need more support to help them make progress.
- In a number of lessons, teaching assistants support and guide students' learning well. For instance, in a Year 11 drama lesson, students made outstanding progress in preparing for their examination because the teacher and support assistant worked well together to give high-quality advice about how students' work could be improved. However, in some lessons, extra adult support focuses on improving students' behaviour rather than their achievement.
- Overall, marking is good because students receive teachers' comments on their work which help them understand what they need to do to improve.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Attendance is above average because students enjoy coming to school. Students are keen and eager to learn. Students' behaviour around the school is good. Fixed-term exclusions are below average and permanent exclusions are rare.
- Students are aware of their rights and responsibilities because the school's behaviour policy is clear and consistently applied by staff. Older students say the simple rules help them to learn better in lessons.
- Good assemblies and the school's house system reinforce the school's expectations. For example, in an Auriga house assembly students' good attendance, behaviour and punctuality were highlighted and rewarded.
- Form tutors give students good support to help them develop their literacy and numeracy skills as well as monitoring their attitudes and behaviour during well-organised form periods.
- Personal and physical education lessons help students to understand how to keep themselves safe and healthy. Outstanding teaching in a Year 9 girls' lesson on eating disorders prompted very mature reflection and responses from students.
- The student council is respected by students and makes sure that senior leaders take account of students' views.
- Students say that bullying is rare and they feel safe at school. Some think the school could do more to help them understand prejudice-related bullying. Most parents agree their child is happy at school. Younger students speak positively about the peer support station, run by older students, which offers help and advice if they are having problems.
- Students are successfully encouraged to develop their social skills by participating in an extensive range of regular inter-house competitions.

The leadership and management are good

- The school has made good improvements since the previous inspection. This shows that leadership and management have been effective over time in driving the school forward.
- School leaders' assessment of the school's strengths and weaknesses is accurate but school improvement plans are not always specific enough about what actions will be taken to improve students' attainment.
- Teachers know that they are held to account for students' progress. Governors and senior leaders use information on students' progress and also from checking the quality of teaching to decide whether teachers should be paid more.
- The school recently received a national award because training time is well planned and supports staff to develop new skills. New initiatives, for instance the 'coaching for excellence'

programme and a joint project with Edinburgh University, have given teachers the opportunity to work together to be more creative and try out new approaches. As a result, students are now actively engaged in their learning because teachers plan more imaginative tasks.

- Subject leaders provide a good balance of support and challenge to help staff in their departments to improve their skills.
- Excellent local and national links have enabled senior leaders to learn from the best schools and have increased their determination to improve students' attainment further.
- Senior leaders are working on improving the school's systems for setting students' targets because current targets are not always challenging enough. Middle leaders, known as 'Heads of House', have been very effective in supporting improvements in students' behaviour but do not focus enough on monitoring students' academic performance.
- Good use of external consultants is made to confirm the school's own assessment of its performance. The local authority has taken a light touch to supporting this good school.
- The range of subjects offered is good because students enjoy their learning and make good progress. Senior leaders have clear plans to further boost students' literacy and numeracy skills by increasing the amount of lesson time in these areas in the next academic year.
- All students study citizenship at Key Stage 3 and this supports students' good social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Students in a Year 7 citizenship lesson made good progress in understanding the topic of diversity in the UK. Students also enjoy opportunities to discuss moral and ethical issues in English.
- Students appreciate the good number of clubs and activities which take place at lunchtimes and after school. For example, the science department celebrated National Science and Engineering Week by organising a variety of activities including guest speakers talking about careers in science, and a 'whizz bang room' offering students the opportunity to experiment with chemicals in a safe environment.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors offer a good level of support and challenge to the school, shown in recent discussions regarding changes to the range of subjects offered and pupil premium spending. The governing body understands the arrangements for improving teachers' performance and rewarding good teaching. Governors have worked hard to improve communication with parents and the local community by launching the parents' council. Governors have made sure that the school's finances are secure and keep their skills up-to-date by attending appropriate training courses. All statutory requirements, including those relating to safeguarding, are met.

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	107566
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	405112

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	803
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Janet Sherrard Smith
Headteacher	Jacqueline Nellis
Date of previous school inspection	26 May 2011
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