

Todmorden High School

Ewood Lane, Todmorden, West Yorkshire, OL14 7DG

Inspection dates

14–15 March 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		Requires improvement	3
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

- Some groups of students are not making rapid enough progress from their starting points in the key subjects of English, mathematics and science. This is particularly the case for those students who are more able, for some students with special educational needs and those students supported by the pupil premium.
- New strategies being implemented by the school's leaders have not yet resulted in achievement which is consistently good.
- The school's strategies to develop students' skills in literacy and numeracy across all subject areas are underdeveloped.
- The deployment of the pupil premium is not yet effective in narrowing the gaps between the performance of these students and their peers.
- Teaching is not yet consistently good enough to secure good achievement for all.
- Checks on the quality of teaching are not yet rigorous enough and there is insufficient emphasis placed on the link between teachers' performance and the salary they receive.
- Some students do not engage with their learning as well as they could and choose to adopt a passive approach.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Achievement is not consistently good enough when taking into account students' starting points.
- Students with special educational needs and those eligible for free school meals are more likely than others to be excluded for short periods and have generally poorer attendance.

The school has the following strengths

- New leadership arrangements are resulting in a clear focus on what the school's priorities are and what needs to be done to make rapid improvements. As a result, some improvements can already be seen in the quality of teaching and through the emergence of more positive assessment information about the performance of students' currently attending the school.
- The school's leadership, including governors, is working with other school leaders and the local authority to continue the work to improve leaders at all levels.
- Students have a very positive view of their school, recognising recent improvements in behaviour. They have a clear understanding of their role in continuing this improvement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 34 lessons by 33 teachers. Inspectors also observed two intervention sessions, where students were being supported for their individual learning needs.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders including the Chair of Governors, members of staff, and groups of students, a parent and representatives of the local authority and a National Leader in Education who, with the help of The Gorse Academies Trust, is supporting the school's drive for improvement.
- The views of 55 parents who responded to on-line questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into account, as well as the views expressed in the schools parental surveys.
- Inspectors also considered the views of 42 teachers and support staff who responded to an internal school questionnaire.
- The inspection team examined documentation including records of students' current progress and the schools view and its accuracy of its own performance. Inspectors also scrutinised documentation relating to behaviour, attendance, child protection and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Gary Kelly, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Michael Blaylock	Additional Inspector
Barbara Dutton	Additional Inspector
Christine Addison	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Todmorden High School is a smaller than average sized secondary school, the vast majority of students being of White British heritage and speaking English as their first language.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for those students known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority, is above average.
- The proportions of students supported by school action, school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is also broadly average.
- A small number of students in Year 10 and 11 study vocational subjects part-time at a local off site learning and skills provider, Mixenden, as part of their Key Stage 4 curriculum provision.
- Since the last inspection, significant changes to the school's leadership and governance have occurred. The school currently has a temporary headteacher, with a permanent headteacher expected to be in place from September 2013.
- There are firm partnership arrangements with The Gorse Academies Trust which is being led by their National Leader in Education.
- The school has Arts College England, Arts Council, and Investors in People, Healthy Schools and Food for Life awards.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to be consistently good or better in order to improve achievement, particularly in English, mathematics and science, and in the sixth form, by:
 - ensuring students make good and better progress and attain in line with and above national averages for five grades A* to C including English and mathematics in their GCSE examinations
 - ensuring planning for lessons is targeted to individuals and groups of students, challenging all students, but especially the more able and those with special educational needs, to achieve their best
 - providing students with more opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning, including becoming more active in their learning
 - ensuring students are better informed about their progress and what needs to be done to improve through consistently good marking and feedback.
- Improve leadership at all levels, including governance by:
 - ensuring leaders at all levels have the skills to rigorously monitor the continued improvement of teaching and achievement
 - developing the skills of governors so they can better hold the school to account, particularly when linking teachers' progression up the salary scale to their performance
 - ensuring pupil premium funding is more accurately deployed to improve standards for the students it supports
 - developing, implementing and checking closely on the success of a whole school approach to improving students' skills in literacy and numeracy
 - developing improved communication routes with parents about all aspects of the school.
- Improve behaviour and attendance by:
 - reducing the numbers of students from vulnerable groups who are absent from school too often due to poor attendance and because they have been excluded for short periods of time.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because some groups of students, particularly the more able, some who have special educational needs and those supported by the pupil premium, are not progressing in their learning as well as expected.
- At the end of Year 11, students' attainment is below national average standards for students achieving five grades A* to C including English and mathematics in their GCSE examinations.
- Standards in English over the last two years have been broadly average but not enough more able students make more than expected progress in this key area. Standards in mathematics and science has in the past been significantly weaker, although school leaders have taken steps to improve this performance in recent months, the schools most recent assessments in these subjects show improvements in current and predicted results.
- The school's strategy in entering students early for exams has been reviewed and modified because this has hindered progress in mathematics and science in particular, preventing some students from achieving as well as they should.
- The school's assessment information shows that progress is improving for the current Year 10 and 11 cohorts and for Key Stage 3 year groups in English mathematics and science.
- Although the picture in the sixth form is more positive, with students attaining broadly average standards from their starting points, achievement requires improvement because there is still some inconsistency in standards and teaching between subjects and groups of students.
- Gaps still exist between the point scores in national examinations for those students eligible for free school meals and other students. Latest assessment information indicates some improvement in this picture in 2013 although the gaps are still not closing quickly enough.
- The new leadership team has reviewed and improved the tracking and intervention programmes for these students and those with special educational needs.
- The achievement of students with special educational needs and disabilities requires improvement because some of these students are not achieving as well as they should.
- The school's new leadership has identified underperforming subjects at GCSE and sixth form level and plans have been put into place to address these issues, with some early evidence of improvement.
- Achievement seen in lessons during the inspection was variable. However, in the majority of lessons observed, students made good or better progress, suggesting that the school's plans to improve teaching and achievement are showing early signs of impact.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because in some lessons learning is too slow and teachers planning does not take into account the full range of abilities. Where this is the case, students are not challenged enough, or their work is too easy. In these lessons, there was little evidence that work had been planned for individuals and groups of students with varying abilities. The quality of students' work in books was also variable, which demonstrates inconsistent quality in teaching over time.
- The quality and use of assessment is inconsistent. In some lessons teachers do not adapt their planning to fully meet students' learning needs and do not make enough use of good quality feedback to help students know how to improve their work.
- The marking in books seen by inspectors varied from being very strong, personalised to each individual with a clear focus on progress and improvement, to more basic marking which was less informative and focussed towards right and wrong answers only, with little guidance. These inconsistencies were seen across departments and subject areas.
- In some lessons observed, the pace created by the teaching was too slow and overly teacher led which resulted in some students losing concentration and sitting quietly but inattentively. In

these lessons, students were provided with few opportunities to discuss their learning with each other, to test and challenge, and be actively engaged in learning.

- Students themselves have a clear understanding of those lessons and subjects in which they are challenged and provided with regular, accurate, informative feedback and assessment. Key Stage 4 students were quick to sing the praises of creative arts and humanities subjects where they described varied lesson content and opportunities to experience hands on, interactive learning. These students recognised the signs of recent improvements in the quality of teaching and learning in other key subject areas, with particular reference to science and mathematics.
- In lessons where teaching is good or better, teachers use ongoing assessments to plan for the full spectrum of learners needs. Students experience a range of different teaching methods such as active and challenging group sessions and students taking the lead during discussions and presentations with the teacher facilitating rather than leading learning. In these lessons, teachers frequently refer to how well students are doing and activities respond to the progress being made.
- In a graphic design Year 12 lesson where teaching was outstanding, for example, students were making rapid progress due to the teacher planning for each individual's different rates of progress. Assessment information was used to plan diagnostically for individuals. Key to the success of this lesson was the teachers' attention to detail and very high expectations for the quality of work expected from students.
- Improving students' literacy and mathematical skills across the curriculum has only recently become a priority for development. While some lessons include a focus on raising standards in literacy and numeracy, the impact of this work is limited.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Students' behaviour and safety requires improvement because absence, although improving, remains above the national average for secondary schools. In addition, some groups, including students with special educational needs are over represented in exclusion figures. However, the new leadership team has implemented an improved behaviour and rewards policy which is beginning to have an impact in reducing fixed term exclusion rates.
- Students say the schools new leadership has improved behaviour considerably. They told us that in lessons where teaching is good, students are well behaved but occasional poor behaviour is seen in lessons where teaching is less than good.
- During the inspection, students were overwhelmingly positive, approachable and friendly. Inspectors were able to see all the students in the school, alongside adults, enjoying their fundraising activities in fancy dress, which demonstrated the extent of the positive nature of students' behaviour with each other and adults.
- Students' behaviour on corridors and around the school site is orderly and pleasant, despite the generally poor state of the school building and its surroundings. The school has put plans in place to improve the quality of the school building in the near future.
- Students say that they feel safe and secure in the school. This view is echoed by parents' responses to the online questionnaire Parent View. Parents and students believe they are well cared for and those who face particular challenges are provided with effective extra support.
- The school helps students to have a good understanding of different forms of bullying that may occur, such as homophobic or cyber bullying. Students and parents feel that the school deals effectively with bullying incidents.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because plans and policies to tackle a trend of underperformance in the school are too recent to properly demonstrate measureable impact. Improvements to students' progress and achievement have until recently been too slow.

- However, the early impact of new leadership can be seen in the good and better teaching observed during this inspection and in more positive assessment information provided by the school for current year groups.
- New leadership at the school, including the schools partnership with the Gorse Academies Trust, facilitated by the local authority and governors, and a National Leader in Education, alongside the appointment of a new Chair of Governors, have been quick to evaluate the school's performance and effectiveness, introducing plans to stimulate more rapid improvement.
- Expectations have been raised for senior and middle leaders supported by a programme of continued professional development to help make sure that the school leadership is capable of making and sustaining long term improvement.
- The school's leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning and what needs to be done to improve this key area. Although the specific roles and responsibilities of senior and middle leaders are still being developed due to the school's temporary leadership arrangements, there is now a much sharper focus on accountability.
- The school is introducing a range of professional development opportunities for senior and middle leaders to enable them to be able to better eradicate weaknesses in teaching. Some early impact can be seen in the improved profile of teaching since January 2013. This was also seen during this inspection, alongside more positive progress and attainment information for current students in the school.
- However, the school's approach to improving its performance management procedures is still under developed as there is not yet a clear link between progression up the salary scale and performance for leaders, managers and teachers at all levels.
- Despite significant changes being implemented in the school over a short space of time, including turnover of senior leadership, staff questionnaires show that morale is high. Many staff commented to inspectors about the positive impact the new leadership was having in the school.
- The curriculum is developing, including the development of more focussed interventions for vulnerable students and the more accurate deployment of the pupil premium. However, the provision of literacy and numeracy in subjects other than in English and mathematics is weak.
- The school is working to improve its engagement with parents. For example, there are now more opportunities for the school to communicate with parents electronically. However, there is still more to do as too many parents still have a negative perception of the school, particularly in relation to the progress they believe their children are making, the way the school is led and in the quality and quantity of information they receive from the school.
- Students' spiritual, social, moral and cultural understanding is developed thoroughly in assemblies and during personal, social, health and citizenship education lessons. Students were positive about the opportunities they have to think about and reflect on their personal opinions and understanding of issues that impact on them locally and further afield.
- Students believe they are prepared well for their next phase of education, employment or training. This is also true for the small number of students in Year 10 and 11 who study vocational subjects part-time at a local off site learning and skills provider.
- The schools safeguarding and child protection statutory duties are in place and meet requirements. The promotion of equality of opportunity is at the forefront of its work and discrimination in all its forms is rejected.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body, and particularly the new Chair of Governors, provide valuable support to the school. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses but do not yet ask searching enough questions, particularly in relation to progression up the salary scale and the deployment of the pupil premium. Governors have a sharp awareness of the need to improve teaching and teaching in particular areas quickly. The governing body is aware of the trend of recent underperformance and that a lack of stability in permanent leadership could hinder the progress now being made towards improvement. As a result, it is committed to extending and formalising the strong external support it receives from The Gorse Academies Trust. The governing body expects to secure agreement to appoint a new permanent headteacher from September 2013.

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	107564
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	400919

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	724
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	120
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jayne Shackleton
Headteacher	Andrew Whitaker
Date of previous school inspection	16 June 2010
Telephone number	01706 813558
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Email address	admin@todmordenhigh.calderdale.sch.uk

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