

# The Byrchall High School

Warrington Road, Wigan, Lancashire, WN4 9PQ

**Inspection dates** 10–11 April 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
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

- Teaching is not consistently good. Not enough lessons are planned so that the work is at the right level of difficulty, is interesting and provides enough time for students to learn by themselves. Some teachers do not check sufficiently well on students' understanding during lessons.
- Achievement is not good enough. The overall proportion of students making good progress, particularly in English, does not compare favourably with national figures. High-attaining students, disabled students or those who have special educational needs, are not making enough progress.
- Leaders, managers and governors are not always rigorous enough in checking the quality of teaching, its impact on all students' learning, and their rates of progress. As a consequence, the school's evaluation of its work is over-generous in parts.

### The school has the following strengths

- There is a welcoming atmosphere in the school. Students are proud of their school and are upbeat about their learning. They are safe and well looked after. Students behave well, and attendance is above average. There is little bullying and few exclusions.
- Parents express very positive views of the school. A high proportion believes that their children are happy, and say that they would recommend the school to others.
- There is a wide range of activities that enrich students' experience, especially in dance, drama, music and sport. As a result, their personal development is strong.
- Governors are highly supportive of the work of the school. They are confident in challenging leaders and managers, especially when provided with precise information, against which they can make comparisons, and draw conclusions.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 53 lessons, of which four were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, the inspection team made a number of short visits to tutor groups.
- Meetings were held with three groups of students, governors and school staff, including senior and middle managers.
- Inspectors took account of the 40 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection.
- They observed the school’s work and looked at a number of documents, including the school’s own data on current students’ progress, planning and monitoring documentation, minutes of governors’ meetings, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents pertaining to safeguarding.

## Inspection team

Andy Swallow, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Kathleen Harris	Additional Inspector
Jane Holmes	Additional Inspector
Michael Cooper	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is an average-sized secondary school.
- Byrchall High School converted to become an academy school in September 2012. When its predecessor school, Byrchall High School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, largely those known to be eligible for free school meals, is rising, and above that seen nationally. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those that are looked after.)
- The proportion of students supported through school action is above the proportion seen nationally. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above average.
- There are very few students from minority ethnic groups or for whom English is an additional language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Students follow a range of academic and vocational courses on the school's site, and a small number are engaged in alternative, off-site learning, predominantly at the Western and Ashton Skills centres, Venture Learning, and St Edmund Arrowsmith Catholic High school.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure teaching is at least consistently good, so that in all lessons it generates:
  - stimulating experiences that match individual students' aptitudes, empower them to think for themselves, learn well, and make good progress
  - frequent checking of all students' understanding in lessons so that they work at a good pace, know what to do next, and understand how to adapt their work if necessary
  - regular marking that points out why students are doing well, provides advice about the next steps in their learning, and is clearly acted on by students to improve their achievement.
- Improve students' rates of progress across Years 7 to 11, especially in English, so that a track record of good achievement has been established by the summer of 2014, by:
  - analysing achievement information more rigorously to spot and tackle underperformance sooner
  - ensuring that high-attaining students are sufficiently extended in their daily learning so that more reach the higher grades of which they are capable
  - providing disabled students and those who have special educational needs with better-planned learning experiences, both in lessons and in small groups, so that they can make sense of new information successfully, and use it confidently to show understanding.
- Improve leadership and management, including governance by ensuring that they constantly assess the effectiveness of teaching, and the school's work in general, against precise and challenging targets, and national expectations.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- The attainment of students on entry to the school is generally similar to that of most schools, although rising. The vast majority achieve in line with expectations and, as a consequence, by the end of Year 11 the proportions of students attaining five or more good GCSE results including English and mathematics, are average.
- While overall attainment in mathematics is above average, attainment in many subjects, including English and science, is no better than average, and well below at the higher grades. Some high attainers, disabled students and those who have special educational needs are not currently achieving as well as expected across the school. This is largely due to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, and shortfalls in the quality of learning experiences to meet their needs.
- Well-conceived use of the pupil premium has enhanced small-group teaching opportunities, providing additional time and staffing, and funding additional resources to boost successfully students' reading, writing and mathematical skills. Consequently, students known to be eligible for free school meals, and the small numbers of looked after children, and those from service families, make increasingly good progress.
- The school's information shows that attainment gaps, including average point scores, between students supported through the pupil premium and all others in the school, are closing. In a similar manner, 'catch-up' funding is used judiciously to boost individual Year 7 students' reading and spelling skills, during registration, as well as in bespoke one-to-one and small-group sessions. As yet, it is too soon to evaluate the impact of these arrangements.
- The small number of students from minority ethnic groups or who are learning English as an additional language, are generally achieving in line with their peers. The school is inclusive and pays due regard to promoting equality of opportunity, fostering good relations and tackling discrimination.
- Students following off-site vocational courses make good progress overall because this alternative provision effectively meets students' individual needs.
- In many subjects, students are attaining average outcomes. They communicate with confidence, both orally and in writing, and show good numerical skills. Regular opportunities to read aloud, and to consider a range of different texts in lessons, enhance students' abilities to retrieve specific information and make deductions.
- Almost all parents who responded to Parent View believe that their children enjoy their learning and are achieving well. Inspectors found this to be so in almost two thirds of lessons seen. For example, in a Year 10 mathematics lesson on plotting graphs from increasingly challenging formulae, students persevered very well indeed because of excellent explanation by the teacher, and ample opportunity to work out for themselves whether a graph was likely to be a parabola, or straight line.
- Year 9 students deepened their awareness of prejudice and discrimination through well-planned discussion in pairs and small groups, and via penetrating questioning by the teacher.
- Where students did not achieve as well as they might, teaching was insufficiently stimulating and challenging.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- The quality of the teaching is too variable across the school, and there is too little outstanding practice. As a consequence, it is not yet consistently strong enough to ensure all students make good or better progress, across all subjects.
- In lessons where students make most progress, teaching is inspiring. Teachers plan interesting activities that are relevant and enthuse students of all abilities. For example, Year 7 students were enthralled by references to contemporary tourist attractions and up-to-date statistics, in their work on the benefits of tourism in the United Kingdom. In a Year 11 English lesson,

judicious questioning by the teacher, together with frequent opportunities for students to reflect and share emerging views, developed a good appreciation of how Steinbeck uses images of darkness and light, to emphasise loneliness in 'Of Mice and Men'.

- In such lessons, high expectations and a high level of challenge motivate students to persevere and show resilience in their learning. The school's best teachers encourage students to think and deepen their understanding by working things out for themselves. They check students' learning continuously during the lesson and change their approach if necessary.
- A large proportion of teaching does not provide sufficient challenge. In particular, not enough is expected of high-attaining students in some lessons. They are not always given activities that stretch and excite them, or tested by problems to solve with their peers.
- Some teachers over-explain, and provide too little time for students to work things out for themselves. They take too few opportunities to listen to students, observe or question them at length, to check their understanding. As a result, activities and experiences are often unchanged, despite students' differing needs. This is especially the case for disabled students and those who have special educational needs. Teaching assistants do not always ensure a balance of guidance and independence for the students who they support.
- The quality of marking across the school is variable. In some cases, marking is not frequent enough, and does not indicate precisely why students are doing well or provide detailed feedback on how to improve. The extent to which it impacts on students' subsequent learning is not always clear.
- The reinforcement of students' general communication and mathematical skills, across many subjects, is generally secure. There are good opportunities in history, geography, drama, art and design and physical education lessons to practise key literacy and numeracy skills.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Around the school, students' behaviour is very good. Students are polite and courteous to adults and visitors. Parents indicate how much their children enjoy the many extra-curricular activities and visits on offer. Students are appreciative of the time that all adults devote to solving their problems, enhancing their confidence and self-worth, and contributing to their personal development.
- In lessons, students' attitudes are mostly positive. On occasions, when teaching is not inviting and motivating, the concentration of some students wanes, and they become restless and overly chatty.
- The quality of pastoral care and welfare arrangements is excellent. Students say that they always feel safe in the school. Pastoral staff secure very effectively the well-being of students whose circumstances may render them vulnerable. This is also the case for the small number of students who attend the alternative provision.
- Most students are fully aware of unsafe situations and show confidence in dealing with them, should they occur. They are generally assured in talking about cyber and homophobic bullying, and are active in preventing bullying from happening on a daily basis.
- Attendance is rising and is now above average; exclusions are low.

### **The leadership and management requires improvement**

- The headteacher and senior leaders are ambitious for all students. Recent changes to the way in which students' performance targets are set, have raised expectations of staff. As of late, more robust tracking arrangements have been developed that provide a detailed picture of students' achievements, given their starting points. These arrangements are not yet fully in place across Years 7 to 9. As a result, not all senior and subject leaders pinpoint underachievement soon enough, in particular to tackle shortfalls in progress made by some high-attaining students, some disabled students and those who have special educational needs.
- The school's overall procedures to check how well it is doing are appropriate, but the analysis of

its effectiveness is not robust enough. As a consequence, while judgements made about its work are largely accurate, they are not always supported by rigorous comparisons with the outcomes of similar schools, and national statistics. The monitoring of teaching relies too heavily on lesson observations, and does not consider sufficiently students' progress information, to present a typical day-to-day picture. Plans for improvement are over lengthy, and do not feature sufficiently precise targets and measures, against which success can be tested.

- Performance management of staff is well organised, and new appraisal arrangements identify clearly each individual's needs. A range of training experiences is available to develop more good and outstanding teaching. The headteacher makes the right decisions about teachers' movements up the salary scale on the basis of appropriate information about the quality of their teaching.
- The school's curriculum is well matched to students' needs. There is a good range of academic courses, underpinned by the school's former mathematical and computing specialisms, and a small number of vocational opportunities delivered on and off the academy's site.
- Senior leaders are currently reviewing the proportion of students entered early for GCSE examinations, to ensure that this activity does not limit the proportion attaining the highest grades. The 'Excel and Aspire' programme, alongside 'Gold' days, extensive sporting, musical and performing experiences, and an abundance of extra-curricular activities, makes strong contributions to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Parent View indicates that a large proportion of parents would wholeheartedly recommend the academy.
- Good partnerships exist with local schools, colleges of further education, universities and community services. The alternative provision provides well for the students who attend from the school. It meets their needs well.
- Senior leaders actively seek external perspectives on the school's work, including light-touch support from the local authority.
- **The governance of the school:**

Governors are aspirational on behalf of the school and committed to ensuring the best provision for all students. They receive regular information about the performance of the school, including data about how well students are achieving. Minutes of meetings show that they are confident in challenging the headteacher and senior staff. They reveal discussions about the value of spending decisions, in particular the allocation of pupil premium and catch-up funding. For example, governors have authorised additional staffing for small groups, and the purchase of reading materials to accelerate skills' development across Years 7 and 8. They are less assured in determining precisely whether all outcomes are high enough, especially when compared with similar schools and national expectations. Arrangements for the annual review of the headteacher's performance are well-conceived. In addition, governors are aware of the salaries of all staff, together with decisions taken about individual teachers' applications for promotion. Governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138699
<b>Local authority</b>	Wigan
<b>Inspection number</b>	413425

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Academy Converter
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1065
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Paul Tushingam
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alan Birchall
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01942 728221
<b>Fax number</b>	01942 407629
<b>Email address</b>	enquiries@admin.byrchall.wigan.sch.uk



Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit [www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk), or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)  
[Store St](#)  
[Manchester](#)  
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2013

