

# Highfield Humanities College

Highfield Road, Blackpool, Lancashire, FY4 3JZ

**Inspection dates** 17–18 April 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
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 school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Although the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection, there is still some teaching that requires improvement and a very small amount that is inadequate.
- Although achievement is improving, it is not doing so quickly enough and the proportion of pupils making or exceeding expected progress is not yet sustained over time.
- Teachers do not always set work that helps students to learn well.
- Teachers do not always enable students to apply their English and mathematical skills across all subject areas.
- Although students' work is regularly marked, teachers' comments do not always tell them clearly enough what they need to do to improve. As a result, some students do not learn quickly enough.

### The school has the following strengths

- Students are polite and well-mannered and relationships between students and with adults are good.
- Students are well cared for and say they feel safe in school. This view is supported by a very large majority of parents.
- The curriculum offers a good range of subjects, topics and opportunities that contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The wide range of enrichment activities is a strength of the school and is valued by students.
- Senior leaders and the governing body know the school's strengths and what needs to be done to improve it further. They demonstrate a commitment and determination to raise standards and improve the quality of education students receive.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 42 lessons taught by 42 teachers. Two lessons were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors looked closely at the school’s work, including the school’s analysis of how well it is doing and its improvement plan, the school’s information on students’ progress and students’ work, documents relating to behaviour and safeguarding, and minutes of meetings of the governing body.
- Meetings were held with four groups of students, staff, four members of the governing body and two representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 20 responses from parents recorded in the online questionnaire (Parent View), together with the 105 responses to the parents’ questionnaires carried out by the school in May 2012.

## Inspection team

Alan Parkinson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Janet Peckett

Additional Inspector

Gary Kirkley

Additional Inspector

Geraldine Hutchinson

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Highfield Humanities College is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, those from families in the armed services and those in local authority care.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national average.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below the national average. The proportion of these supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below average.
- The school has a specialist resourced provision for physically disabled students that is managed by the school. There are currently four students receiving support through this provision.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school enters students for some GCSE examinations earlier than usual.
- The school uses Blackpool and The Fylde College and 4techmoto, a privately run organisation, that provide alternative provision for some students.
- Following a complete new build of the school, the school moved into its new building in September 2012.
- In 2011 the school was recognised as a Fair Trade school and in 2012 it achieved the Investors in People award.

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

- Improve achievement to ensure that all groups of students make more rapid progress, that is sustained over time, by:
  - building on the existing good practice to enable students to further develop and apply their reading, writing, communication and mathematics skills across all subject areas
  - increasing the proportion of students making good or better than expected progress.
- Improve the quality of teaching, so that it is consistently good or better, by:
  - always setting tasks and activities that meet the needs and interests of all groups of students to enable them to make rapid progress
  - ensuring that teachers' marking of students' work always provides students with clear guidance on what they have to do to improve and that teachers' written comments are followed up by students.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Students' attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 is in line with the national average. Over the last three years the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at A\* to C including English and mathematics has varied from 50% in 2010 to 55% in 2011 and down to 53% in 2012.
- The proportion of students making expected progress in English fell in 2012 but remained above the national average. However, current data show that the proportions of Year 11 students making expected progress and those making more than expected progress are rising.
- For the 2011-2012 Year 11 cohort all students were entered early for their GCSE examination in mathematics. Although they had the opportunity to retake the examination in Year 11 to achieve a higher grade, the school says that many students that had already achieved at least a GCSE grade C decided to focus their efforts on other subjects rather than improve their mathematics grade. As a result, several students did not achieve the higher grades they were expected to achieve and attainment in mathematics fell. As a result, in 2012, the proportion of students making expected progress in mathematics fell to well below the national average. The school has now changed its approach to early entries and only enters a small number of students early for their GCSE examinations.
- Recent changes to the students' target-setting processes have provided them with more aspirational targets for each subject. This, together with improvements in the quality of teaching, is beginning to have an even greater positive impact on students' learning. Current school information shows that the proportion of students making expected progress and more than expected progress in English and in mathematics is improving across the year groups. However, it is too soon to show that students' progress and level of attainment are improving over a sustained period.
- There are no significant variations between the achievements of different groups of students over time. Disabled students and those who have special educational needs who are supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs progress as well as all other students.
- Students from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language make progress similar to, and sometimes better than, that of their peers.
- In 2012 students supported by the pupil premium achieved well above the national average, and similar to their classmates, in English and approximately half of a GCSE grade lower than all other students in mathematics. However, the school's information on the current students shows that the gaps are closing. This is because the funding is well spent and provides additional staffing and activities to help students at risk of falling behind to develop their literacy and numeracy skills.
- Students who are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium receive additional support to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. As a result, they make good progress and the gap between their attainment and that of all other students is closing in both English and mathematics.
- The proportion of students leaving the school who do not continue in education, training or employment is very low.

### The quality of teaching

### is good

- In the best lessons, where sometimes outstanding teaching was seen, teaching is very well organised and planned. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and use effective questioning to encourage students to think for themselves and develop their understanding. In these lessons students are keen to learn and make good progress.
- Teachers set activities that interest students and enable them to apply their skills and knowledge to real-life situations. For example, in a Year 9 mathematics lesson students were using their

mathematical skills to find the amounts of ingredients needed to make larger or smaller cakes.

- Many opportunities are provided for students to work well together, to share and develop ideas and review each other's work. This helps to make learning enjoyable and effective. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and their enthusiasm motivates students to achieve well.
- Pupils say they enjoy their lessons and feel that they are well taught. Many opportunities are provided for students to work well together, to share and develop ideas and to review each other's work. The good relationships between pupils and teachers, and between pupils themselves, promote positive attitudes to learning and help to make learning enjoyable and effective.
- In some lessons, where teaching is less effective, teachers do not always plan tasks and activities that enable students to learn well and make rapid progress. This is because the activities are either too easy or too hard.
- Teachers do not always provide opportunities for students to develop and apply their reading, writing, communication and mathematical skills across a range of subjects.
- Some marking of students' work by teachers is good and provides students with clear and specific written comments that tell them what they need to do to improve further. However, this good practice is not consistently applied across all areas. In addition, teachers do not always ensure that the students follow up their comments. As a result, students do not always make rapid progress.
- Teaching assistants are used well in lessons and make a significant contribution to pupils' learning, particularly to support disabled students and those who have special educational needs. They help students to learn, develop skills and achieve well.

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

- Students are polite and courteous to each other, staff and visitors. Behaviour in the vast majority of lessons and around the school is good, although some students say that it could be even better.
- Students say they feel very safe in school. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, for example by learning about road safety, e-safety and using the internet.
- Students have a clear understanding of the different forms of bullying. They report that bullying is rare and any instances are dealt with quickly.
- The school has established very effective partnerships with parents. For example, the Year 11 parent and pupil review day, held in September, and the special subject evenings, focusing on English, mathematics or science, provide parents with information that helps them to support their children in their learning and contributes to students' positive attitudes.
- The school has established effective partnerships with external agencies that enable effective support to be given when problems arise with students whose circumstances make them vulnerable.
- The responses to Parent View and to the parental survey carried out by the school indicate that a large majority of parents agree that students behave well, are not bullied, are well cared for and feel safe at school.
- The school provides many opportunities for students to take on positions of responsibility such as prefects, supporting staff on duty at break and lunchtime, as members of the school council or as sports captains. Some older students help younger students with their learning, such as reading, or help them with friendship issues. Students are also proactive in raising funds for organisations such as cancer charities, the Salvation Army and Trinity Hospice. This enables them to develop as responsible individuals and make a significant contribution to the school community.
- Although attendance is still slightly below the national average, it has improved rapidly since September 2012. This is due to the strategies that the school has successfully implemented to reduce the number of persistent absences.

**The leadership and management are good**

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governing body have accurately identified the school's strengths and areas for further improvement. They demonstrate a strong commitment to raise standards further and have a clear focus on raising attainment by improving the quality of teaching. The recent approaches already implemented are successfully improving the quality of teaching. As a result, students are learning at a faster rate.
- The school's systems for observing lessons and checking the quality of teaching are good and provide teachers with accurate feedback on their performance. This information is used well to provide a relevant programme of staff training and to advise the governing body about teachers' pay awards.
- The courses and opportunities offered to students meet their interests well. The school makes very good use of alternative provision for some students to provide appropriate courses and work placements that enable them to be successful. This supports the school's aim of providing equal opportunities for learning and success for all students. The attendance of students on college courses and work placements is good and the school takes all reasonable steps to ensure they behave well and are safe.
- The school has developed very effective partnerships with local businesses and organisations. This has enabled the school to offer students a wide range of enrichment activities including industry days, 'super learning days', work experience and residential visits to Ullswater in the Lake District. This is a strength of the school and is valued by students. It provides students with opportunities and experiences that help to develop their personal and academic skills and prepare them well for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- The school's curriculum and enrichment activities contribute well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Since the previous inspection the school has received very effective and valuable support from the local authority. This has included support and advice on behaviour management, teaching and learning, training for governors and support in English, mathematics and science.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body is well-informed and challenges and supports the school's leaders well. The governing body has a good understanding of the school's performance over time, knows the strengths of the school and has an accurate understanding of what needs to be done to improve the school further. Governors check on the quality of teaching well and use performance management to set appropriate and challenging targets. They give appropriate attention to the connection between the quality of the work that staff do and the arrangements for pay. The governing body has a good understanding of the school's finances, including the pupil premium. This funding is used to provide additional teaching and learning opportunities to improve the English and mathematical skills of students who are at risk of falling behind. Safeguarding policies and procedures meet the statutory 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>	119732
<b>Local authority</b>	Blackpool
<b>Inspection number</b>	405884

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1098
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Alan Fisher
<b>Headteacher</b>	Ian Evans
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 March 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01253 310925
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