

Hope High School

Carfield, Skelmersdale, Lancashire, WN8 9DP

Inspection dates 19–20 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- The behaviour and attitudes of students, particularly those in Key Stage 3, are unacceptable.
- Students' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has remained well below average.
- Most teaching lacks the quality to ensure students learn effectively and make good progress academically and in their personal development. Most lessons fail to capture students' interest.
- Teachers and support staff do not work together to manage students' behaviour effectively in and out of the classrooms.
- Students show little respect for others and for property. They are often removed from class as a result of poor behaviour.
- Attendance is low and has deteriorated since the previous inspection. Exclusions are too high.
- The curriculum lacks a clear structure and does not meet the varied needs of students.
- Leadership is weak. Leaders do not provide strong guidance on how to manage challenging behaviour. Consequently, the morale of staff is deteriorating and their confidence in the school's leadership is being eroded.
- Leaders have had little impact on improving the achievement and behaviour of students, despite substantial support from the local authority. The school is less effective than it was at the last inspection.
- Governance is weak and the governing body does not provide the level of support and challenge the school requires.

The school has the following strengths

- There is some good and better quality teaching in Years 10 and 11 in English and art. In these lessons students make reasonable progress.
- Staff at all levels show resilience in a very challenging working environment. They are professional and dedicated to the students' well-being.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 10 lessons covering all year groups from Year 7 to Year 11. They also observed students in their tutor groups, during morning break and over lunchtime.
- Discussions were held with staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and with representatives of the local authority. Inspectors analysed seven staff questionnaires and documentation provided by the school, which included records of students' attainments and progress, action plans and safeguarding information. Inspectors also examined students' work in workbooks and in displays around the school.
- Inspectors were unable to establish parents' opinions of the school beyond a single phone call. No responses were registered on Ofsted's on-line questionnaire, Parent View. No correspondence was received from parents.

Inspection team

Brian Padgett, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

John Ashley

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Information about this school

- The school provides for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Many of the students have additional identified conditions and disorders. All students have a statement of special educational needs.
- The school serves a wide geographical area. Approximately a quarter of students live locally, within Skelmersdale. However, a number of students travel a considerable distance to the school from as far away as Preston.
- Nearly all students are boys. The proportion of students who are supported through the pupil premium is high at over 80%. Two students are in the care of the local authority. (The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or are in the care of the local authority).
- Not all students join the school at Year 7. Some join partway through their secondary education. Most students leave the school at the end of Year 11 but students may be re-integrated into mainstream secondary schools before then. A small number of students on the school's roll do not attend any school. They receive education off-site through organisations appointed by the local authority.
- The school received a monitoring visit from Ofsted in November 2011 and this inspection judged that the school had made inadequate progress since its previous inspection. Shortly afterwards, the school moved to new, purpose-built accommodation at its current address.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is always good or better throughout the school by:
 - teaching lessons that capture students' interest and help them learn at a brisk pace throughout the lesson
 - raising teachers' expectations of what students can achieve in lessons
 - making sure support staff contribute to learning in all lessons
 - providing more opportunities for students to improve their personal and social development in lessons and to work together.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - quickly establishing a vision and clear goals for school improvement
 - ensuring systems to improve learning in classes are consistent, rigorously followed, adequately staffed and fully supported by leaders and managers
 - training staff to become expert at managing challenging behaviour and improving their level of knowledge and understanding of students' learning difficulties and how to overcome them
 - building on better practice within and external to the school
 - developing training programmes to improve staff expertise in managing complex and challenging behavioural needs
 - implementing a rigorous programme to check and improve the quality of teaching.

- Review the content and organisation of the curriculum to ensure the varied academic and personal learning needs of all students are better met.
- Improve attendance and reduce the rate of exclusions by developing an effective partnership between school and family that includes those families that are hardest to reach.
- Improve the governance of the school and the governing body's ability to support and hold the school to account for its performance by:
 - securing full membership, including that of parent representatives
 - continuing to attract members who bring a range of relevant skills and expertise to governance.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Students enter the school with levels of attainment that are well below those of most students of their age; typically they are two to three years behind with their work. Overall, they make much less progress than students in mainstream schools and leave school even further behind their peers. There is no difference between the achievement of students eligible for support through the pupil premium and others in English or mathematics.
- Learning is severely limited by poor behaviour and low attendance. Behaviour is most challenging in Key Stage 3 with the younger students, particularly those in Year 7. The loss of lesson time spent dealing with poor behaviour in the classroom, or in time spent out of lessons leads to inadequate progress and levels of achievement that are well below those that students are capable of. The disruption adversely affects the learning of those students who are ready to learn.
- Older students in Key Stage 4 are more mature in their attitudes to work and they behave better than students in Key Stage 3. By the end of Key Stage 4, students, including those educated off-site, achieve a range of qualifications and accreditations: entry-level examinations, awards for functional skills, vocational qualifications and the lower grades in GCSE examinations.
- The highest levels of attainment and the best progress are seen in the subjects where students are practically involved. These subjects include art, design and technology and physical education. Students are also successful in horticulture.
- Students are beginning to make more progress in literacy, in reading and in writing, as a result of a recent increased focus on these basic skills. However, most students have a great deal to catch up on in their reading, writing and mathematics.
- Students' achievement was higher in 2010 than it is now.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Teaching is inadequate because it is ineffective in raising students' attainment or in ensuring that they make adequate progress. Students are not helped to overcome the significant barriers to learning that led to them being enrolled at the school.
- The methods teachers choose to help students learn are not carefully thought through. In part, this is because their knowledge of students' individual needs is not good enough. At other times it is because the students start lessons unwilling to learn and the teachers lack strategies to overcome this reluctance.
- Staff are dedicated to helping students achieve. They have good relationships with most students. Teachers prepare thoroughly for lessons. The assessment of students' levels of attainment has improved and clear guidance is provided to students preparing for examinations. However, the levels of expectation, marking and target-setting vary too much in quality between different teachers.
- Support staff undertake most of the behaviour management on the corridors. However, they are not generally well deployed in lessons in helping students learn. This separation of responsibilities is not proving effective.
- Some teaching of good and better quality was seen in Years 10 and 11. In these better lessons, work of a practical, active and challenging nature caught the attention of students so their engagement levels were high and students were motivated to succeed.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are inadequate

- Poor behaviour is at unacceptable levels. It is at a similar level to the behaviour observed during the monitoring visit in November 2011. There has been no improvement.
- Unacceptable behaviours include students shouting and swearing at staff, throwing furniture, walking on desks, texting on mobile phones during lessons and damaging doors. In these conditions, effective teaching and learning cannot take place. When students leave the class, under supervision or of their own accord, they often return unprepared to learn.
- Such extreme behaviours have necessitated locking off sections of the school and the use of safe spaces for students who must be isolated for their or others' safety. Students vent their frustrations on the fabric of the building and the sound of banging and shouting echoes through the school at times. Girls and boys are equally challenging.
- Unsafe behaviours occur, such as students climbing out of classroom windows and smoking in groups during breaks.
- Staff report some days are worse than others. They report that matters were even worse at the time of transfer to the new school during 2012, when students' absence and exclusions peaked.
- Staff are aware that even small changes to routine can act as triggers for poor behaviour and non-attendance. Students are not improving the management of their behaviour and attitudes to others to any degree and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is inadequate.
- Attendance is far too low. It has hovered around 80% for some time and is lower still since September 2012. Exclusions and incidents involving physical restraint are too high. However, students educated off-site improve their attendance and return to school to sit examinations.
- There are some positives. Behaviour improves over time. Students in Key Stage 4 are noticeably better behaved than those in Key Stage 3. Students who are referred to the out-of-school service appear to be making reasonable progress. Also, although students appear to have no respect for their school in the damage they cause, some displays and areas of the school are rarely, if ever, damaged because students feel that they have ownership of them. A particular case in point is the art room, which is full of high quality art work, including pottery, which students have created. It is also true of the books in the reading room and of the plants in the outdoor areas.
- Staff are stretched to cope when particularly poor behaviour erupts in a classroom. The new system for managing challenging behaviour is not proving fully effective. This is because some students are highly uncooperative and there is inconsistency in implementation. The absence of key staff is keenly felt in these circumstances.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- In dealing with crises and deteriorating behaviour amongst students, the school's leaders have lost strategic vision and direction. The promotion of a positive ethos to which staff and students can subscribe is absent. Students and staff are unable to meet together as a whole, say in the morning or in assemblies, because of the likelihood of poor behaviour. The school is worse for the absence of such communal gatherings that build common values and celebrate success.
- The local authority has provided a wide range of support for managers to help deal with issues raised in the monitoring visit of 2011, including the development of a more effective system of behaviour management, to help school self-evaluation and to raise standards of literacy. It has seconded one of its behaviour experts as an associate headteacher to help support the headteacher in the absence of key staff. Nevertheless, all of these strategies have been ineffective and have been undermined by students' unacceptable behaviour.
- While aspects of sound management are in place, such as clear procedures for safeguarding, staff appraisal, the monitoring of teaching and learning and the tracking of students' progress, staff morale is low. Staff are losing confidence in the ability of the school's leaders to bring about improvement.
- The content and organisation of the curriculum have shortfalls. There have been recent

initiatives based on the identification of students' needs, such as the promotion of literacy skills. There is no suitable strategy to improve their numeracy skills. Nor is there a clear programme to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and how this is taught. The curriculum is not tailored to meet students' academic and vocational interests. The organisation of the curriculum for some students in Key Stage 3 with the most challenging behaviours is not working well enough.

- The school does not sufficiently engage with its parent body. It was unable to provide up-to-date evidence of parents' views to inspectors. There are no parent governors to represent parents' interests on the governing body. Although parents and carers are widely distributed, the lack of parental involvement means the school's partnership with parents is ineffective and that an invaluable mutual source of information and support for parents is missing.
- The pupil premium is allocated appropriately. Nearly all students at Hope High are known to be eligible for the additional funding. The school uses this funding to provide further educational opportunities for all groups. However, leaders cannot point to improved achievement as a result of the additional funding.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is weak. The governing body is under strength. It is in the process of attracting governors with specific skills of relevance to the school. However, it is not yet in a position to challenge the leaders or hold them to account for the performance of the school. For example, governors have no knowledge of the salary progression of staff and whether rewards are awarded appropriately, except for those of the headteacher. The governing body has not held the school's leaders sufficiently to account for the school's poor performance or for the health and safety of pupils and staff.

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	119898
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	401884

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	47
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gill Lawrence
Headteacher	Nick Joseph
Date of previous school inspection	6 July 2010
Telephone number	01695 721066
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