

Sale High School

Norris Road, Sale, Cheshire, M33 3JR

Inspection dates 19–20 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
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

- More-able students do not make the progress they are capable of, particularly in English and mathematics. Consequently, too few have achieved the very highest grades at GCSE in recent years.
- Although teaching is improving, not enough is good or outstanding. Teaching over time has not been of a consistently good standard to ensure that all students, especially the most-able, make good progress.
- Teachers do not use assessment information consistently well and often provide work that is not matched to students' needs.
- Teaching has been particularly weak in mathematics. As a result, students' achievement in this key subject has not been good enough.
- Faculty and subject leaders do not ensure that the information provided about student progress is used by teachers to set work that enables students to make at least good progress in their learning.
- The monitoring and evaluation of the quality teaching is not rigorous enough to secure consistency.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and senior team, supported by the governors, are driving school improvement. As a result, more students are now making expected progress. Attainment overall, and especially in mathematics, has risen markedly over the last two years.
- As a result of the determination and high expectations of senior leaders, students' attendance and behaviour have improved. Students behave well, feel safe and are proud of their school.
- Senior leaders have established a good system for improving the quality of teaching, which is leading to improvements in teaching. As a result, current students are achieving better than their predecessors.
- Predictions for examination results in 2013 are very encouraging and if achieved will show a significant improvement on previous years particularly in mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 39 lessons and 37 teachers. Four lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders. Tutor periods were observed, as was one school assembly.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents including those relating to how the school cares for and protect students, development planning, the monitoring of the quality of teaching and also information about teachers' performance management and their professional development.
- Discussions were held with school leaders and managers, including several middle leaders. Discussions took place with four members of the governing body including the Chair and a separate meeting was held with two representatives from the local authority. Inspectors also met with four groups of students. Year 11 students were not in school throughout this inspection.
- Inspectors took account of the 49 parental responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) as well as the school's own evidence of feedback from parents.
- The 45 responses to the staff questionnaire given out during the inspection were analysed.

Inspection team

Anthony Briggs, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Linda Clare	Additional Inspector
Denah Jones	Additional Inspector
Lynne Selkirk	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized 11 to 16 secondary school.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is above average.
- The proportions that are supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are broadly average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average. 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 children who are looked after by the local authority.
- Most students are from White British heritage. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is broadly average.
- The school uses 11 alternative places, Manor High School, Trafford College, Cargills, NTAS, Rathbone, Lostock High School, Aimhigher, Manchester Health Academy, Cherry Manor, Woodsend Pupil Referral Unit and Flixton Centre, to meet individual students' learning, behavioural and social needs.
- A high proportion of students arrive at the school at points other than the start of the academic year.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards that set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good or better teaching by:
 - ensuring that teachers set work that meets the needs of all students and especially challenges the more-able students, particularly in mathematics
 - ensuring that teachers plan lessons which challenge individual and group thinking and discussion rather than focusing on the completion of tasks
 - ensuring that teachers provide clear explanations, probing questioning and regular checks on students' understanding before moving on to a new task.
- Increase the proportion of students, particularly the more-able, that make good progress in all subjects, but especially in English and mathematics.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the monitoring of teaching is more robust
 - focusing more on the impact teaching has on the quality of learning
 - increasing the effectiveness of faculty and subject leaders in improving the quality of teaching and learning within their subject areas.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students' prior attainment on entry has risen steadily and is now below, rather than significantly below average. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE grades at A* to C, including English and mathematics, has risen significantly to just below the national average in 2012. Students' achievement has also improved. School data and inspection evidence confirms that this improvement is likely to continue this year. For example, 63% of students have already achieved at least a grade C in mathematics, which is a significant improvement on previous years.
- The percentage of students securing the higher grades of A* and A at GCSE has been significantly lower than the national picture for several years and does not appear to be improving. In 2012, 11 subjects saw a decline in the highest grades. This is, in part, because work is not planned accurately enough to ensure that the most-able students make the best progress.
- The school's latest data show that more students are on track to make expected progress in English and significantly more in mathematics. Improvement is also predicted in several other subjects. The proportion of students expected to make good progress in mathematics is also set to rise significantly. However, in English the overall proportion of students expected to make good progress this year is predicted to decline.
- The school has previously focused on ensuring that as many students as possible gained a GCSE grade C in English and mathematics. In order to achieve this, students were entered for GCSE examinations early. Until this year, some students who gained a grade C early, but were expected to get a B or higher, stuck with their grade C and focused on other subjects. This resulted in significant underachievement for the most-able students. This policy has been reviewed and now, if any student entered early does not make at least good progress, they will be re-entered for the examination.
- The school uses the pupil premium funding appropriately. The attainment gap in English and mathematics between those students known to be eligible for free school meals and those that are not, when average point scores are measured, is closing and is now less than the equivalent of one GCSE grade behind. Appropriate use is also made of the Year 7 catch-up funding for those students who did not achieve the expected levels in English by the end of Key Stage 2. However, it is too early to measure the full impact of this.
- Students who are disabled and those with special educational needs, along with the small numbers who speak English as an additional language, make similar progress to that of their classmates. Students that enter the school during the year, rather than at the start, make slower progress than those that have been in school since Year 7.
- The small number of students who attend the off-site provision generally achieve appropriately in relation to their starting points.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although over half of the teaching observed during the inspection was good or outstanding, too much teaching requires improvement, including in mathematics. The quality of teaching is inconsistent across subjects and within subjects. As a result, students do not make good progress over time.
- The strengths of the best lessons were the very things missing from many of the weaker ones. Teachers do not always give sufficient care to ensuring that the work provided for students is matched accurately to their needs. Occasionally, teachers had a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to lesson planning, giving all students the same work to do, irrespective of their abilities. Some teachers believe that appropriate matching of work can be achieved by splitting learning objectives into three categories of: must, should and could. This is flawed as it assumes that all

students start from the same starting point. Consequently, the most-able students are not stretched and the less-able often struggle.

- Most teachers ensure that students undertake a variety of activities. While this maintains students' interest in their learning, in reality, the focus of many lessons is on getting through as many activities within 60 minutes as possible, rather than ensuring that students make good progress. In these lessons, teachers did not check the depth of students' understanding before moving on to the next task. This led to slower progress.
- There are pockets of outstanding teaching. In art lessons, students made real strides in their understanding, knowledge and skills of the subject. Teachers have very secure subject knowledge and expertise and in the best lessons, they pass this on well to the students.
- A strong feature of lessons is the good relationships between staff and students, which provide a positive environment for learning. In the best lessons, teachers are skilled at questioning to check the depth of students' understanding before moving on to the next independent or collaborative learning activity.
- Marking tends to be effective and supportive to students. In a number of lessons, students develop their literacy skills through subject-specific vocabulary. In tutor periods, students were observed developing their numeracy skills.
- Teachers do not use data about the progress of students enough to plan their lessons. Only recently have teachers begun to focus on how much progress students should be making.
- Good teaching is often innovative but there are occasions when teaching does not inspire students. When this occurs, students sit passively, listening for lengthy periods of time. As a result, opportunities for independent learning are often missed. Teachers are sometimes too quick to answer simple questions that students should be able to work out for themselves.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students say that behaviour has improved over the years, and is very much better since the arrival of the current headteacher. This was confirmed by scrutiny of behaviour records and by the overwhelmingly positive view of staff about the quality of students' behaviour.
- Inspectors found the students to be extremely polite, well-mannered and courteous. Students believe that their views are listened to and acted on by leaders and show great pride in their school and all it stands for.
- Students' attitudes to learning are good overall. However, when teaching restricts students from being actively involved in their learning, they sit passively and their progress slows.
- The overwhelming majority of parents and staff who responded to questionnaires consider behaviour over time to be good. This is a significant achievement for the school as many of the students that arrive during the academic year have behaviour issues.
- The school gives great credence to the personal development of students. Staff work tirelessly to create a safe and caring environment where students from all backgrounds can flourish. A key component of this is the way in which staff genuinely value students' views and opinions and allow students opportunities to shape their own futures.
- Students say they feel very safe in school and that bullying is rare and when it does occur it is handled very well by the school. They understand how to keep themselves safe and have a good awareness of the risks involved in using modern technologies. Every member of the community has a zero tolerance of discrimination of any kind.
- The increase in students' attendance is a major success story for the school. Attendance has improved significantly since the time of the last inspection and compares favourably with national figures. The proportion of students who are persistently absent is reducing and is much closer to the national average.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher is highly regarded by students, staff and parents. She sees her role as steering the school on a journey of improvement. She has high expectations and a relentless determination to improve the school. The impact of this can be seen in the improved behaviour and rising attendance. She is providing much needed stability after a period of change and uncertainty following the previous inspection.
- Senior leaders understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Much is improving and there is capacity to improve further. However, the significance of the underachievement of the most-able students has been underestimated. Leaders are aware that the current development plan has far too many targets and needs to be more sharply focused and that students' targets do not result in all of them aiming for good progress.
- While the quality of teaching is improving, leaders are not yet ensuring that all teaching is good or better; monitoring is still not rigorous enough. Lesson observations do not give sufficient focus to the impact of the quality of teaching on students' progress. This lack of focus on progress results in some evaluations being too positive. There was some variation in the judgements made by senior leaders and inspectors during the joint observations. In over a third of lessons observed during the inspection, inspectors judged the quality of teaching to be one, or even two grades lower than the school's own evaluations.
- Performance management procedures are appropriate and linked well to professional development. Inadequate teaching is tackled unrelentingly. Leaders have not shirked difficult decisions and have resolved weaknesses such as the inadequate music department with a steely determination. Staff are challenged appropriately, and targeted support provided. If this is unsuccessful, more formal action is taken.
- Faculty and subject leadership is an area requiring further improvement. Although most faculty and subject leaders are held to account for their work by senior leaders, they do not pass this rigour on to the staff they manage. Consequently, there is inconsistency of practice in subjects and teachers do not have a sufficient awareness of the need to ensure that all students, including the most-able, have to make good progress in every lesson.
- The curriculum meets the needs of students well and as a result of courses that are well matched to students' abilities, many students are successful in gaining a qualification.
- A small amount of external support is provided by the local authority in relation to behaviour and attendance and English as an additional language. Recently there has not been sufficient support focused on raising students' achievement.
- Equality of opportunity is promoted effectively and safeguarding procedures meet current requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are supportive of the school and hold leaders to account for much of the school's work. They know how well the school is doing in relation to the headline performance indicators but are less confident about some of the finer detail such as whether students are making more than expected progress. The strengths and weaknesses of teaching are known well and governors understand how the performance of staff is linked to pay progression. They are fully up to speed with how the pupil premium funding is spent and how the school evaluates its impact.

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	106375
Local authority	Trafford
Inspection number	413392

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	704
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anthony Williams
Headteacher	Lynn Nicholls
Date of previous school inspection	13 January 2009
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