

Westhoughton High School

Bolton Road, Westhoughton, Bolton, Lancashire, BL5 3BZ

Inspection dates 12–13 September 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

- Students' achievement is not consistently good in several subjects and requires improvement, especially in mathematics.
- The most-able students are not always effectively challenged in lessons. Consequently, many do not make the progress they should.
- Teaching does not always ensure that students' individual needs are met because teachers are not using data about students' achievement well enough in their lesson planning.
- Although the achievement gap is reducing, students supported by the pupil premium achieve less well than their peers.
- Leaders do not focus closely enough in lesson observations and in their data analysis on the progress made by different student groups at both key stages. As a result plans to improve students' achievement are not implemented swiftly enough.
- Governors are not holding senior leaders to account sufficiently well to ensure rapid improvements in students' achievement and progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Teaching is improving and there are examples of outstanding teaching in key subjects.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Leaders know students well and work hard to secure their well-being.
- Students whose circumstances make them more vulnerable achieve well as a result of strong systems which support their academic and social progress.
- Above average numbers go on to further study, work or training.
- The headteacher is committed to raising standards and has an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- The governing body has managed a reduction in the budget deficit effectively while also making major improvements to school buildings.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 42 lessons, two of which were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, groups of students, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, and spoke with a consultant funded by the local authority who supports the school’s work and a parent who contacted the inspection team.
- Inspectors considered the views of the 185 parents who responded to Parent View, the online questionnaire. They analysed the results of the staff questionnaire to which 36 replies were received.
- Inspectors looked at the school’s data on students’ progress, lesson plans, minutes of meetings and records relating to behaviour, safety and attendance. They also reviewed the school’s checks on how well it is doing and school-improvement plans.

Inspection team

Lisa Fraser, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Paul Latham	Additional Inspector
Patrick Feerick	Additional Inspector
Keith Massett	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized secondary school.
- The majority of students are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after, is average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- In 2012 the last cohort of sixth-form students left the school as a result of school leaders' decision to close the sixth form.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Thirty students in Years 10 and 11 attend off-site alternative provision on mainly level-one courses for part of their learning at Bolton College and Training For You.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise students' achievement, particularly in mathematics, by improving the quality of teaching to at least consistently good across all subjects by:
 - making sure that that teachers use information and data about students' progress to inform their planning so that the work is hard enough for all abilities within the class, especially the most able
 - ensuring there are opportunities in lessons, and in mathematics particularly, for students to learn in contexts which will help them in real-life situations
 - sharing the existing outstanding practice in some subjects to enable all teachers to develop new skills and to establish better teaching.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including middle managers, by using available data on students' achievement and progress to:
 - ensure that lesson observations focus closely on the extent to which teaching impacts on the progress made by students
 - monitor the achievement of all student groups at both key stages, in particular students eligible for the pupil premium, and swiftly implement action plans where necessary to ensure all students make good progress
 - ensure that early entry in mathematics enables the most-able students to gain the higher grades
 - ensure the governing body provides greater challenge for senior leaders in holding them to account for more rapid improvements in students' achievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because students' progress across a range of subjects including mathematics is too variable.
- Students enter the school with average skills in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 11 the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is also in line with the national average. This reflects expected progress but is also indicative that too few students make good progress. In 2013, boys outperformed girls but the gap between the attainment of boys and girls has fluctuated over time. Lesson observations and scrutiny of students' work indicate girls do not always achieve as well as boys across all subjects.
- Students typically achieve well in English. However, their achievement in mathematics is not as strong and consequently their attainment in recent GCSE examinations has been below average. Too few students make better than expected progress and the proportion of top grades achieved by students is also below average.
- Current school data indicate that achievement in mathematics at Key Stage 3 is improving but it is not yet rapid enough to ensure good outcomes for all students at GCSE level. There are improvements, including some outstanding teaching, but inspectors observed too many lessons in mathematics where students were not making the good progress of which they are capable.
- In history, geography and design technology achievement is below average over time because the quality of teaching is not consistently good. In contrast, students achieve well in art and media where teaching is good.
- In the past the gap in attainment between students eligible for the pupil premium and their peers has been too wide. Extra support for these students' literacy and numeracy skills has not been put in place at an early stage because leaders have not made enough use of available data to monitor the achievement of student groups at Key Stage 3.
- Initiatives such as extra support with homework and small group teaching for literacy have been made possible through additional funding. As a result school data indicate that the achievement gap for students eligible for the pupil premium is now reducing. Nevertheless, these students currently in Year 11 are a grade behind their peers in mathematics and three quarters of a grade behind in English.
- Most students whose circumstances make them more vulnerable achieve particularly well because of strong systems to support their academic and social progress, including support from the school counsellor.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs supported at school action are making more rapid rates of progress than other students because many benefit from the extra support offered by the school's well-established Atlas centre.
- Increasing numbers of students, including the most able, gain GCSE passes in biology, chemistry and physics, but not enough are achieving the top grades. The most-able students now in Year 11, who were recently entered for mathematics early, speak positively about the opportunity they have to improve their grades. However, it is not yet clear this enables them to gain the higher grades.
- Year 7 catch-up funding has been used well to support a small number of students who find reading difficult. As a result in seven months the large majority of these students have made accelerated progress of between 10 and 24 months.
- Students who undertake part of their learning in settings away from school speak positively about the valuable 'hands-on' experiences they receive. Leaders monitor their attendance and progress carefully. As a result above-average numbers of students take up apprenticeships.
- Students in the last sixth-form cohort achieved well on a mixture of A-level and BTEC courses.
- Overall, above average numbers of students go on to further study, work or training.

The quality of teaching**requires improvement**

- The overall quality of teaching requires improvement because students are not making as much progress as they should. During the inspection, not enough lessons were good or outstanding. This closely matches leaders' own view of teaching.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge but do not use data well enough to plan activities which meet students' differing needs. In too many lessons students are all asked to complete the same work. Some students find the work too hard. Others find it too easy and do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- The most-able students are not always challenged enough because some lessons focus more on the tasks students need to complete rather than on what they need to learn. In these instances students can be passive and a small minority engage in low-level misbehaviour because teaching is not engaging or motivating. Consequently, many of the most-able students do not make as much progress as they should.
- In mathematics some lessons do not progress beyond mundane low-level tasks. Teachers do not always use a variety of strategies to support students' understanding and there are not enough opportunities for students to apply their skills to real-life situations.
- Not all teachers are meeting leaders' expectations of marking and assessment because some work is not marked thoroughly enough and too few teachers insist that students present their work with due care and attention.
- A small minority of lessons in English, mathematics and business studies are outstanding. In these lessons teachers move learning forward at a fast pace and use a variety of activities which match individuals' needs. For example, students in a Year 10 English lesson on *To Kill A Mockingbird* made outstanding progress in their understanding of the language of intolerance and prejudice as a result of the teacher's careful planning, which ensured tasks were expertly suited to each student's ability.

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

- Students have positive attitudes to learning and show respect for each other and their teachers. Around the school they behave in a responsible manner and are polite, courteous and friendly.
- Following a dip in 2011, attendance has improved and is now broadly average as a result of the school's persistent message that, 'Every day matters.' Leaders have made good progress in improving the attendance levels of different student groups because they have good contact with external agencies and work closely with families. Year 8 students proudly showed inspectors the badges they receive for good attendance.
- Parents and students agree that students are safe in school. School behavioural records are meticulously kept and confirm that instances of bullying are rare. Students understand the dangers of bullying in all its forms, including cyber-bullying and that based on racism and homophobia.
- The school's 'Respect Code' has ensured a reduction in fixed-term exclusions. Students who have just started the school in Year 7 already have an excellent knowledge of the school's systems of rewards and sanctions. Older students speak positively about how behaviour has continued to improve and agree the systems are very fair.
- Senior leaders regularly conduct surveys to gauge parents' perceptions and make improvements. For example, changes to school meals have recently been made following parental feedback.

The leadership and management**requires improvement**

- Leadership and management require improvement because the quality of teaching is not good and students are not making consistently good progress, particularly in mathematics. The school

has not fully addressed the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection.

- Data about the progress of student groups is not used consistently well by leaders at all levels to both assess whether strategies to raise students' attainment are making a difference and determine whether priority areas are improving quickly enough.
- Systems for monitoring the quality of teaching through lesson observation do not focus closely enough on assessing the rates of progress made by different student groups in lessons.
- Strong leadership of behaviour and safety effectively support students' well-being but since the previous inspection leaders have not been quick enough to take decisive action to improve students' achievement and progress, most notably in mathematics.
- The headteacher is committed to raising standards, realistic in his assessment of the school's performance and very clear about which aspects of the school need to improve further.
- The school has reduced the proportion of weak teaching, improved the teaching of languages, is taking steps to improve mathematics and promotes good behaviour and attendance. Leaders have securely managed a difficult period of staffing reductions as a result of falling student numbers across Bolton and the closure of the sixth form. This demonstrates they can improve the school further. However, more urgency is needed in the rate of improvement.
- Leaders have not been afraid to take difficult decisions to eliminate weak teaching. Systems to manage the performance of teachers are used to inform decisions around pay and reward good performance.
- Several relatively new subject leaders have been appointed and speak positively about good training opportunities which have helped them develop leadership skills. The school recognises that more support and challenge is required to enable them to carry out their roles effectively. Some teachers have benefited from the Developing Outstanding Teachers Programme. Good practice is shared amongst the wider staff through 'teaching and learning communities' which meet regularly but not enough has been done to raise the quality of teaching in mathematics.
- The range of subjects offered at Key Stage 4 is mainly at GCSE level with a small number of vocational options. Leaders' recent successful focus on improving teaching in languages has resulted in increased numbers of older students opting to study French. An external review conducted for mathematics has begun to bring improvements but much more needs to be done.
- Performing arts subjects make a significant contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Increasing numbers now learn a musical instrument through peripatetic lessons and impressive numbers of students have participated in recent activities, including the choir and a school production of '*Oliver*'. Students appreciate the good range of after-school clubs available.
- The local authority provides senior leaders with good advice and guidance in identifying areas for improvement but has had less success in delivering the support needed to remedy the specific areas that require improvement.
- Safeguarding requirements are met. The school takes all reasonable steps to ensure the behaviour and safety of students when attending off-site provision.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body is knowledgeable about the quality of teaching, how staff are rewarded and how underperformance is tackled. Governors know how pupil-premium funding is spent and recognise that students eligible for the pupil premium achieve less well. Governors understand published data on the school's performance but are not yet using it sufficiently well to hold senior leaders to account and accelerate the pace of change. Governors' training is a high priority and plans are in place with a local teaching school alliance to enable the governing body to learn from best practice in other schools. Consequently, inspectors do not recommend an external audit since appropriate action is being taken. Governors have successfully managed to reduce the significant budget deficit while also making major improvements to school facilities which are much appreciated by students.

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	105252
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	426329

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	951
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Heyes
Headteacher	Philip Hart
Date of previous school inspection	15 February 2011
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