

Balshaw's Church of England High School

Church Road, Leyland, Lancashire, PR25 3AH

Inspection dates 17–18 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Under the exceptional leadership of the headteacher, students and staff flourish at Balshaw's. Governors and all leaders and managers waste no time in tackling the slightest weakness so students' achievement is outstanding.
- Students make outstanding progress from their starting points. Results in GCSE examinations in English, mathematics and science have been significantly above average for the last three years and continued to improve in 2013.
- Much of the teaching is outstanding and across the school it is consistently good. Excellent lesson planning, highly effective questioning and very knowledgeable and enthusiastic teachers who use a rich variety of resources all combine to capture and hold students' interest. Sharing this excellent practice even more widely within and across departments is a school priority.
- In a very small number of lessons, although teaching is good, teachers do not always give students sufficient time to reflect on their answers and develop their understanding of more complex ideas.
- Students, parents and staff are fulsome in their praise of the school. Students behave extremely well. They say how very safe they feel and are particularly appreciative of the exceptional personal support which the school gives them. Within the school there is a unique sense of community where students and staff feel valued and morale is high.
- Students want to succeed. In lessons, they are keen to put forward their ideas and their excellent attitudes to learning make a major contribution to the outstanding progress they make.
- Governors, leaders and managers at all levels are never complacent. They continually and accurately evaluate the quality of the school's work and have a relentless drive for further improvement. Hence, the school has the capacity not only to maintain current high standards but to improve further.
- A very rich curriculum caters for the needs of all groups of students. A wealth of courses and extra-curricular activities ensure that the needs of those who, for example, want to study astronomy, gain the skills needed in the construction industry or learn origami are all equally well catered for.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 40 lessons of which two were joint observations with senior staff. The headteacher and lead inspector also made several shorter visits to classrooms. Inspectors listened to students read.
- Discussions were held with parents, students, staff and governors.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at students' books, progress data, safeguarding information and other documentation.
- One hundred and forty-eight responses to the on-line questionnaire, 'Parent View', were considered as well as those from the school's own parental surveys and from school staff.

Inspection team

Ann Ashdown, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Fiona Burke-Jackson

Additional Inspector

Mary Liptrot

Additional Inspector

Chris Griffin

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is an average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families, is well below average.
- A well-below average proportion of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, and a similar proportion speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs who are supported at school action is well below average while the proportion supported at school action plus and with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The school meets and exceeds the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The school has specialist status in engineering.
- Twenty-six Year 10 and Year 11 students attend vocational courses at Runshaw and Preston Colleges. Ten Year 10 and 11 students attend construction courses at a local construction firm.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is outstanding by:
 - giving students time to think deeply, reflect on their answers and further extend their understanding of complex ideas
 - share excellent practice even more widely within and across departments to further reduce differences in students' achievement between subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- From starting points which are just above average, students make outstanding progress to reach standards which are high in English, mathematics and science.
- GCSE examination results have been consistently high for the last three years and show an upward trend. Students achieve especially well in, for example, English, mathematics, science and technology. In subjects where examination results have been slightly lower, for example in modern languages, the school has immediately addressed these relative weaknesses, offered support and further training for staff and results have quickly improved.
- All students have excellent equal opportunities to succeed and any gaps in progress or attainment between groups of students, such as those eligible for free school meals, are quickly identified and are being rapidly closed.
- Work in students' books, and that displayed on walls and the school's detailed tracking of students' progress all indicate that current students are making outstanding progress. Current Year 11 students are on track to meet their challenging targets and reach even higher standards this year.
- Students who attend courses in vocational subjects at local colleges and with local employers are making excellent progress. They behave very well, are kept safe and attend regularly. Students say how much they enjoy these courses and are developing very valuable workplace skills through successfully completing them.
- Students make excellent progress in their reading and develop excellent literacy skills. Extra funds (Year 7 catch-up funding) are used well to provide specialist teaching for students with below average literacy and numeracy levels. Paired reading with older students in the well-equipped resource centre provides younger students with both the expertise and the environment in which their enjoyment of books can flourish.
- In 2012, a gap between the attainment and progress of students eligible for free school meals and other students was immediately identified. Quick action ensured this gap narrowed in 2013 but the school robustly maintains its efforts to close the gap completely. Excellent use of pupil premium funding has, for example, included providing a summer school and employing a member of staff to track their progress and identify individual needs. As a result, tracking shows that the gap in attainment between those eligible for free school meals and other students is likely to narrow to 4% this year.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language make the same excellent progress as their peers because they receive timely and sharply focused help from teachers and teaching assistants. The most-able students achieve very well. For example, in GCSE English in 2013, the proportion of students achieving A* and A grades was double the national average.
- In the small number of cases where students are entered early for examinations, results indicate that they achieve their full potential.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teaching is consistently good and much of it is outstanding so students enjoy learning and make excellent progress.
- In outstanding lessons, the pace of learning is rapid because teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic and communicate a love for their subjects to their students. They have very high expectations of their students who respond by showing excellent attitudes to learning. They cooperate well in pairs and groups and are keen to propose their own knowledgeable views and balanced opinions.
- Lessons are carefully planned and work closely tailored to the precise needs of all groups of students. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and successfully

work things out for themselves.

- In an outstanding science lesson, students very confidently exchanged facts about the names and functions of plant organs. They made excellent progress because varied activities and resources such as 'plant' music, a huge dice (used to select the next student to answer a question), interesting personal anecdotes from the teacher and superb relationships all contributed to the outstanding teaching they were given.
- Teachers' questioning of students is usually highly effective but in a small number of lessons students do not have sufficient time to reflect on their ideas, develop their answers and think more deeply about complex concepts.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs receive skilled help in lessons from teachers and teaching assistants who provide tasks which are well suited to their needs and challenge them to improve their work further.
- Work is marked regularly. In the best lessons, there is a productive dialogue between teacher and students about how the work can be improved to meet examination requirements and gain the highest grades.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students are proactive learners. They behave extremely well around the school and show great respect and kindness for each other, for all staff and for visitors. The school's Christian ethos is evident in many aspects of staff and students' work.
- Records show that attendance is well above average, exclusions are rare and isolated incidents of poor behaviour or bullying are dealt with very effectively.
- Students, of all ages and abilities, relish the many opportunities to take responsibility which they are given. Older students spoke very enthusiastically about their varied work as school stewards, subject ambassadors and prefects. Equally enthusiastic were those who looked after the school garden and kindly gave one of the inspectors plenty of healthy vegetables to take home with him.
- Students are immensely proud of their school. They feel very safe and talk freely about the sense of community the school engenders. They are hugely appreciative of the enormous amount of personal and academic support that all staff give them. They describe the headteacher as being 'at the very heart of the school'.
- Parents echo their children's views of the school. They are overwhelmingly positive about the way in which the school keeps their children safe, promotes their progress and nurtures their skills and talents.
- Students have an exceptionally clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They are very well informed of the dangers of some types of internet use and of, for example, the misuse of drugs and alcohol. Their awareness of what constitutes bullying and unacceptable behaviour is excellent.
- The school makes the very best use of specialist help to ensure that all students and particularly those who are vulnerable receive the expert help they need.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The wise, dedicated and outstanding leadership of the headteacher is instrumental in allowing all students to achieve success and staff to flourish at this school. She is very well supported by knowledgeable and challenging governors, talented leaders and managers at all levels and a highly effective teaching, administrative, technical and premises staff.
- Very robust management of the performance of staff, high quality training and constructive support when this is needed all ensure staff feel valued and continually improve their work. Self-evaluation is thorough and accurate, there is no hint of complacency and all staff continually seek to improve their work.

- Teaching is monitored very effectively and students' progress is tracked carefully. Where there are differences between the attainment and progress of students in different subjects, departments are given constructive support and these relative weaknesses are quickly tackled. Teachers' best skills are shared both within and outside the school. However, sharing further this excellent practice, particularly the complementary skills of new and more experienced staff remains a school priority.
- At Balshaw's discrimination is not tolerated and the skills and talents of all are equally valued.
- All safeguarding requirements are fully met. Staff are very well trained and highly aware of, for example, child protection and risk assessment procedures.
- The local authority provides very light touch support for the school.
- The curriculum meets the needs of all groups of students exceptionally well. A wealth of academic and vocational courses is on offer and a huge range of enrichment activities supplement the curriculum further. The positive impact of the school's specialism in engineering is seen in courses provided, results in science, mathematics and technology and links with other schools and local businesses. School trips and visits, links with other countries, sporting, musical, dramatic, artistic and work-related activities abound and all add to students' enjoyment of learning. The school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. Through, for example, work experience, careers fairs and mock interviews they are well informed and prepared for the next phase of their education and the world of work.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are hugely knowledgeable about the school and provide excellent challenge and support in equal measure. They are very well informed about performance data, the management of staff and how they are rewarded, and the quality of teaching. Finances are very well managed and the impact of the spending of extra funds such as the pupil premium is closely monitored.

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	119775
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	426271

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	928
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Callaghan
Headteacher	Josephine Venn
Date of previous school inspection	4 June 2009
Telephone number	01772 421009
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