

# Longdendale High School

Spring Street, Hollingworth, Hyde, SK14 8LW

## Inspection dates

18–19 September 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		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
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

- The gap between the achievement of students supported by the pupil premium, those with special educational needs and their peers is not closing quickly enough.
- Although rates of progress in mathematics are improving, they are still below national expectations.
- Although there is some good and outstanding teaching, there is still much which requires improvement. In less effective teaching, lesson activities do not meet the needs of students of different abilities.
- There has been a steady improvement in overall attendance and a reduction in persistent absence rates over recent years. However, the gap between those students with special educational needs, those supported by the pupil premium and their peers is not closing at a fast enough rate.
- Senior and middle leaders have not ensured that all policies and procedures are applied consistently across the school.

### The school has the following strengths

- The attainment and progress of students in English is very strong.
- The headteacher and his deputies have high expectations. Since the last inspection, they have taken effective action to bring about improvements in students' behaviour and achievement.
- The curriculum successfully meets the needs, aspirations and interests of the students.
- Governance is strong. Governors are very supportive but they are also proactive in holding the school to account.
- There is a welcoming atmosphere in the school. Students are polite and friendly.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 35 lessons taught by 34 different teachers, of which two were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Four groups of students met with inspectors. Discussions were also held with staff, including senior and middle leaders and newly qualified teachers. A meeting was held with the Chair of the Governing Body and four other governors. A meeting was also held with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 59 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), and of 44 questionnaires completed by staff.
- Inspectors read a range of documents. These included information on the school's self-evaluation, school improvement plans, data relating to students' current progress, policies and records on safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

## Inspection team

Anne Seneviratne, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Marie Cordey	Additional Inspector
Patrick Feerick	Additional Inspector
Kathleen Harris	Additional Inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

- Longdendale High School is an 11-16 specialist language college. It is an average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are looked after by the local authority and children of service families) is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students or those with special educational needs supported at school action is slightly above national average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is lower than that found nationally.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- A small number of Key Stage 4 students access alternative provision through Age UK and Rathbones.

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

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by making sure all teachers:
  - use information about students' targets and current achievement to set tasks at the right level, which are neither too hard nor too easy
  - challenge students more and have higher expectations of what they can achieve
  - plan activities that encourage students to think for themselves and take more responsibility for their own learning
  - use questioning more effectively to check and develop students' understanding
  - mark students' work thoroughly, explaining clearly what they need to do to improve.
- Improve students' achievement further by:
  - ensuring all students make at least good progress in all subjects relative to their starting points
  - building on the improvements secured so far to ensure that gaps in achievement for students supported by the pupil premium, and those with special educational needs, are closed quickly
  - raising the attainment and progress of all students in mathematics.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of the school's leadership further by:
  - ensuring all the school's policies and procedures are applied consistently and their impact on all groups of students is monitored and evaluated
  - ensuring that all departments are led effectively
  - narrowing the attendance gap for students with special educational needs, those supported by the pupil premium and their peers in school.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Students enter the school with standards which are above others nationally. The percentage of students attaining five A\* to C grades, including English and mathematics has increased significantly over recent years and was above the national average in 2012. The number of students attaining three or more A\* or A grades in 2013 rose to a third of the cohort, which reflects the greater focus given to meeting the needs of the most able.
- Over the last three years, students have achieved well in English. There has been an improving trend in the progress that students make in this subject, with percentages achieving and exceeding expected progress in 2012 being considerably higher than the national percentages.
- The very strong performance of students in English is not matched in mathematics. Although the percentages of students achieving expected progress in this subject are improving, they remain below national expectations and not enough students exceed expected progress.
- The gap between the attainment of students supported by the pupil premium funding and their peers is closing but not at a fast enough pace. The gap between these groups in the number of students attaining five A\* to C grades with English and mathematics is narrowing but it remains too wide. In 2012, students supported by the pupil premium achieved over a grade below their peers in English and mathematics. The same pattern is repeated when progress comparisons are made with gaps narrowing, but not quickly enough. Senior leaders have used the pupil premium funding primarily on extra staffing as well as extra provision and resources. Case studies of individual students demonstrate how this has led to improved attendance and achievement for some students.
- The headteacher is not aware that the school has received any Year 7 catch-up premium funding, but nevertheless, the school has set up a Year 7 nurture group. The students in this group last year made accelerated progress with their literacy, which had a positive impact on the progress they made in other subjects across the curriculum.
- The gap between the achievement of students with special educational needs and their peers is narrowing, but again this is not at a quick enough pace. In 2012, the progress of these students was significantly below that of students nationally in this group. The school has recognised that it needs to take a more strategic approach to improving the achievement of this group of students and this is now being led by a senior leader.
- The school's arrangements for alternative provision are rigorous and effective. The students who attend are very positive about their experiences. They are all working towards achieving a vocational Level 2 qualification as well as developing their English and mathematics skills.
- In 2012, the school's policy of entering students early for mathematics prevented some students from making the best possible progress in this subject. The majority of students are still entered early for mathematics, but they will all take the examination again in the summer of Year 11 in order to achieve the highest possible grade.
- In the majority of lessons observed during the inspection, students' learning and progress was good. Where this was not the case, this was usually because the learning activities did not create opportunities for this to happen.
- The school's library is very limited which is detrimental to encouraging students to read for pleasure. Reading is promoted in Key Stage 3 during tutor time and each form has its own selection of books from which to choose.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- There are variations in the quality of teaching across the school and it is not consistently good.
- Often, where teaching requires improvement, lessons lack the appropriate level of challenge. Teachers do not take enough account of individual students' targets and current achievement when planning lessons. This means that students are not given the opportunity to make good

progress.

- In lessons where teaching is less than good, teachers do not plan activities to motivate students and encourage them to think for themselves. Students are not given enough responsibility for their own learning. Teachers miss too many opportunities to develop students' independence and resilience.
- In a minority of lessons, teachers do not use questioning to probe students' understanding which means they do not learn as much as they could. However, where teaching is good or better, effective questioning is used to develop students' confidence in expressing their ideas. Teachers in these lessons ask searching questions, challenging students to take their thinking to the next level.
- Where the quality of teaching is good or better, teachers use their passion for their subject and their knowledge of their students to engage, enthuse and involve them in the lesson. They provide interesting work for the students to undertake with many opportunities for them to learn actively and collaboratively. They use a range of assessment throughout the lesson to inform the learning and ensure all students are making good progress. An example of this was in a Year 11 Italian lesson where the teacher's very high expectations were equalled by the levels of expectations which the students had of themselves and each other. The students were making outstanding progress doing challenging work on the imperfect and future tense and they were clearly enjoying doing this in the context of talking about their favourite city very fluently in the target language.
- The quality of marking is variable across subjects. At its best, marking celebrates success and gives specific guidance for improvement, but too often, it lacks detail and does not explain to students how to progress to the next level.
- Teaching assistants contribute positively to the quality of learning across all subjects. Working with either individuals or small groups, they help students to make good progress.

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

### **requires improvement**

- Behaviour is good in most lessons but students' attitudes to learning are variable. Where teaching and relationships are good, students are motivated to learn; they respond maturely and demonstrate initiative. Where students' needs are not being met or the pace of learning is slow, their attention wavers and low level disruption sometimes occurs. This is found disproportionately in low ability sets.
- In the majority of lessons observed during the inspection, teachers managed students' behaviour well. However, they do not always apply the school's behaviour management policy consistently. Students spoken to said that teachers deal with disruption to learning in different ways and some are more effective than others.
- The majority of students spoken to or surveyed during the inspection felt that bullying was rare, but a small number of students, parents and staff had concerns in this area. The school keep detailed logs of racist and homophobic incidents. These are largely dealt with effectively but there are some examples of repeated incidents.
- During unsupervised times there is a generally positive atmosphere with the majority of students being calm and respectful to others. There are some instances of over boisterous behaviour and jostling in the corridor.
- Over recent years, overall attendance has improved and it is now broadly in line with the national average. The overall persistent absence figure has also reduced. However, the gaps in attendance rates for students with special educational needs, those who are supported by the pupil premium and their peers, although narrowing slightly, remain too wide.

**The leadership and management****requires improvement**

- The headteacher is steering the school on a clear journey of improvement. He and his deputies have high expectations both of and for their students and staff, and a determination that Longdendale High School will become a good school in the very near future. The impact of their actions can be seen in students' improved behaviour and achievement.
- Senior leaders have too generous a view of how far they have come on this journey of improvement. Much has improved and there is capacity to improve further, but as the headteacher himself says, some initiatives are still 'a work in progress'. The school's view of its own performance is not sufficiently robust and lacks a detailed analysis of the impact of actions on specific groups of students.
- Policies and procedures are not always applied consistently across the school. This reflects inconsistencies in how effectively some departments are being led. Very strong leadership in English has led to significant improvements in students' achievement in this subject to well above national averages but this is not replicated across all departments. There is an abundance of data generated in school but not all leaders are using this effectively and systematically to identify areas of concern and take appropriate actions. Consequently, the gaps between different groups in school are not closing at a quick enough pace.
- The headteacher has taken strong and decisive action to eradicate inadequate teaching. Senior leaders have placed a high priority on driving improvements in teaching and learning, and consequently, the number of teachers consistently delivering good or better lessons has increased. However, some inconsistencies remain in this area and some of the action points given in the last inspection require further improvement.
- The headteacher has introduced a robust performance management system. Teachers have clear and challenging targets which are linked to the quality of their teaching and the progress which their students make. The system is used effectively to determine teachers' salary progression.
- The curriculum provides well for students' needs, abilities and interests. The school effectively personalises provision, including off-site opportunities which are helping students to achieve appropriate qualifications.
- Leaders have put a great focus on developing a sense of pride and mutual respect within members of the school community. The core values represented in their new motto, 'ASPIRE' reflect the emphasis the school is giving to increasing students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The local authority has recently stepped up their support and challenge to the school. The school is a member of the recently formed 'A+ Trust' which comprises five other schools and the local sixth form college. Longdendale High School will be able to access a wider pool of expertise and good practice through this partnership.
- Procedures for safeguarding meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body is strong and several members have educational expertise which enables them to carry out their role very thoroughly. Governors are supportive of the headteacher and hold him and other leaders to account on all aspects of school life, including how the pupil premium funding is spent and the impact this is having on students' achievement. They carry out regular visits to departments to see the work of staff and students first hand. Governors have a clear knowledge of the quality of teaching in the school and fully understand how salary progression is linked to performance management. They have carried out a skills audit of their members and have taken advantage of a range of training opportunities at both local and national level.

## 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>	106267
<b>Local authority</b>	Tameside
<b>Inspection number</b>	427867

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>	790
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Colin Baldwin
<b>Headteacher</b>	Matthew Bowler
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	23 May 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01457 764006
<b>Fax number</b>	01457 766483
<b>Email address</b>	admin@longdendale.tameside.sch.uk



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