

# Harper Green School

Harper Green Road, Farnworth, Bolton, Lancashire, BL4 0DH

## Inspection dates

8–9 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	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		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

- A significant proportion of students do not reach the standards of most students nationally in English and in mathematics.
- In the past, some students including boys, the most-able students and students supported by pupil premium funding have made slower progress than students nationally. Currently, not enough students make more than the expected rate of progress and so achievement requires improvement.
- Teaching does not sufficiently challenge students to reach the levels of which they are capable. Many teachers take up too much lessons time talking and this leaves too little time for students to complete activities.
- Subject leaders do not always make sure teachers use recorded assessments to plan teaching that is well matched to the stages students have reached in their learning.
- Not all subject leaders act decisively to improve teaching in their subject. There is not enough good teaching to ensure students make good progress.
- Leaders and managers have not evaluated the quality of teaching accurately in the past, so teaching has not enabled students to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Governors have not always been rigorous enough in challenging senior and subject leaders in their evaluation of the quality of teaching and students' progress.

### The school has the following strengths

- In the last 12 months, leaders, governors, managers and staff have successfully improved the attainment and progress of students, particularly boys and students supported by pupil premium funding. Attainment is rising, particularly in mathematics.
- The numbers of exclusions has been reduced significantly and attendance has improved and is now average.
- The school provides exceptional support for students who have particular individual needs so they can make progress in lessons.
- Newly appointed leaders have improved the assessment systems in the school. Students' progress can now be easily checked easily.
- Students behave well in lessons and around school. They say they feel safe and are helped to attend and behave well by the extensive and varied support arrangements developed by school leaders.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 53 teaching sessions and 50 teachers. They held discussions with the headteacher and senior leaders about teaching, attendance, behaviour and safeguarding and about assessment and students' attainment and progress. They also talked to students in lessons informally, to several groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body and three governors.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of students' written work, data from assessments and school records to measure improvement in students' progress, behaviour, teaching, the curriculum and safeguarding documents. They also looked closely at the school's evaluation of its work and the school's plans for further improvement.
- The responses of 104 staff to the questionnaire were considered and the inspectors took into account the school's records of parent, staff and students' views and 19 parents' responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). The lead inspector spoke to two parents who had requested a telephone conversation to discuss the progress of their child.
- An inspector visited and spoke to a group of students attending a curriculum session at Bolton Wanderers Football Club.

## Inspection team

Nell Banfield, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Barbara Dutton	Additional Inspector
Johan MacKinnon	Additional Inspector
Mark Shenton	Additional Inspector
Kathleen Harris	Additional Inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

- Harper Green School is a larger than average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is three times higher than that found nationally.  
The proportion of students supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is lower than that found nationally.
- The vast majority of students are of White British heritage and a small but increasing proportion of students are from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is higher than that found nationally. This is additional funding for those students known to be eligible for free school meals, for students who are looked after by the local authority and for the children of service families.
- The school works in close partnership with the local authority.
- The school has specialist status in the performing and visual arts and has been awarded the gold Artsmark. It holds a number of national awards, including the Schools Extra Award, the Community Team Award and the Information and Guidance Bronze Award.
- A small proportion of students follow courses away from the school site at Rathbones and Bolton College.

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

- Increase the proportion of teaching that is good and outstanding so students increase their rate of progress by ensuring:
  - all teachers use assessments to check students' progress so activities and tasks challenge all students to work to their highest level
  - teachers plan sufficient time for reflection, written work, thinking and for discussion so students can complete a task effectively.
- Improve the impact of subject leaders by:
  - ensuring they evaluate the strengths and weaknesses in teaching in their subject and identify what needs to change so students improve their progress and learn more effectively
  - ensuring they use the good-quality analysis of assessments to raise expectations of the progress all students can make.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Up to 2012, students' attainment in English and in mathematics at the end of Year 11 has been significantly below average. The unvalidated results in 2013 show a strong improvement, particularly in mathematics and attainment is now close to average.
- Previously, when students have joined the school in Year 7, their levels of attainment have been well below average. However, more students now arrive with levels of attainment that are much closer to average.
- In the past, too few students have made the expected rate of progress from their starting points. However, this has now improved significantly. School data shows that in Year 11 in 2013, more students made the expected rate of progress in English and mathematics than did so in 2012 and particularly in mathematics. The progress of boys and those students supported by pupil premium funding particularly improved. Progress of the most-able students also improved but less so than other groups in the school.
- Actions taken by the school aimed at improving students' achievement have been successful across the school. In 2013 at the end of Key Stage 3, most students achieved national averages in English and mathematics. This shows that across the school standards are rising and students now make at least the rate of expected progress from their starting points. Not enough students however across the school make good progress and therefore achievement requires improvement.
- The small but growing proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds, and those who speak English as an additional language, achieve as well as, and sometimes better than, other students. This demonstrates the school's strong and effective commitment to providing equality of opportunity.
- The achievement of disabled students and those with special educational needs requires improvement because, although improving, overtime their progress is variable. While those students supported at school action improved their progress in 2012, those supported at school action plus and with a statement of special educational needs made slower progress in 2013.
- Although the achievement of students supported by the pupil premium funding requires improvement it has improved strongly. In Year 11 in 2012, students supported by this funding, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, achieved standards at GCSE around one third of a grade lower than other students in the school. Pupil premium funding is now used much more effectively to provide a range of tailored support including additional teaching and as a result, this gap was much smaller in 2013, particularly in mathematics.
- The school uses Year 7 catch-up funding to provide well targeted and specialist literacy lessons for individuals who are behind in their reading. This enables them to make up lost ground effectively.
- The small proportion of students who follow courses away from the school site make good progress, the majority attend well and the vast majority gain at least pass grades as a result of the close support provided by the school.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Although much teaching is good, there is still too much inconsistency in quality across the school. Students do not make consistently good progress in their learning. Not enough teaching is good or outstanding in order to enable students to make rapid progress.
- Teachers do not always use assessment or plan activities and tasks so students can make progress to the next stage in their learning. In some lessons, students work through the same steps in the same task and at the same pace. This means some students have to wait for those who work more slowly to catch up. A few students become bored and lose concentration.
- Students do not always have enough time to think and plan their work. As a consequence, they

remain confused or unsure and tasks remain unfinished or are completed too quickly. There are occasions where students are allowed too long to work on a task, time is wasted and opportunities are lost, for example, to apply their skills to a wider range of situations or explore the next stage in their learning.

- When teaching is good however, tasks and activities are planned in suitable steps so their understanding and knowledge are steadily developed. Students make good progress because they are asked questions that make them explain their reasoning and ideas in detail. Teachers judge accurately how long students need to share their conclusions and answers or write thoughtful responses to questions. In a Year 10 English lesson, for example, the teacher probed students' answers to make sure they could identify sophisticated dynamics in a conversation with Alan Sugar in *The Apprentice*. As a result, students made good progress.
- A number of teachers plan tasks which require students to explain their thinking to another student in the class. In a Year 8 history lesson, students were given different historical source material and asked to explain to their neighbour what they had found out from studying the source. At the end of the lesson, the teacher skilfully extended the discussion by asking them what they still wanted to know. This developed students' interest and curiosity exceptionally well.
- Scrutiny of students' books indicated many examples of high-quality marking and feedback to students about how they could improve their work. Suggestions and examples given by the teachers in students' books of how written work can be improved are frequently responded to by students. Some marking, however, is more cursory.
- Students whose reading skills are not well developed follow carefully structured lessons which effectively improve their interest and ability in reading. Students regularly complete extended pieces of writing and their vocabulary is extended by a number of teachers who use word games and refer to word displays in their classrooms.

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

- Students move around the school in an orderly way, are helpful to adults, visitors and to each other. Students have a positive approach to their learning, behave well in class and take part in paired and group work responsibly.
- Students say they feel safe in school and spoke very highly of approachable staff who are always willing to help if students require guidance or support.
- Students are very knowledgeable about possibilities of bullying and risks involved in the misuse of mobile phones and social networking. They know about different kinds of bullying and say it is rare in school because students look out for each other. They said if bullying occurred, they would seek out either an adult or an older student, confident that they would help.
- Attendance has improved in recent years and is now average. The number of students excluded from school for poor behaviour has reduced owing to the areas available for quiet retreat, as well as access to adult support, to get help with homework or to discuss and practise strategies to improve their behaviour. The school's reward system recognises effort and commitment and students in Year 7 stated, 'If you're referred (to detention) you don't get to go on the school trip.'

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

- The headteacher knew that teaching needed to improve in order to improve students' attainment and has pursued this goal relentlessly. The local authority's collaborative working group confirmed that the school's judgements about teaching were too generous. They supported the school well in identifying what needed to improve for students to raise their attainment and improve their progress.
- As a result, the checks made on the quality of teaching are now more rigorous. Senior leaders and some subject leaders know what has to change so that teaching becomes more effective.

The necessary changes, however, are being made faster in some subjects than in others.

- The school is using national standards to set targets for teachers to check their performance and this is now more rigorously applied. Responsibility points are now closely linked to effective teaching and students' progress. The headteacher and governors apply this when considering rewards or increase in status and salary.
- There have been effective changes in staff and in staff roles particularly in establishing a newly structured senior team to continue to focus on key areas of teaching and this has strengthened the school's ability to improve further.
- Newly appointed leaders have improved the systems to record assessments of students' progress and now provide subject leaders with accurate and concise data about students' progress over time. However, some subject leaders are not using the data effectively in order to evaluate where progress is improving and where it is too slow. As a result, improvements in students' progress are not consistent across the school.
- Some subject leaders now expect teachers to use assessment data to check students' progress, identify underachievement and plan teaching that matches the stage of students' current learning. As a result, students are making faster progress and attaining higher standards but not in all subjects. Teaching is not improving consistently across the school.
- The vast majority of staff expressed very positive views of the improvement in most students' behaviour and learning, and agreed that students are safe and cared for well.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and some families, in particular, feel their child has made exceptional progress in their personal and social development. The school provides exceptional support for students who have particular individual needs so they can make progress in lessons.
- The curriculum is securely based on the need for students to follow courses in key subjects and to acquire the skills needed to succeed in the future. The courses students follow cover a range of subjects, including vocational opportunities and lead to qualifications which prepare students for the future. There is a range of extra-curricular activities that are popular and many students attend these regularly.
- The personal and social curriculum is an inherent part of the wider curriculum and is supported by cooperative activities in lessons and by students' support for each other. There are opportunities for reflection. In assemblies, students consider, for example, what it means to be inspired and to inspire others. Religious education lessons provide a focal point for consideration of Christian and other beliefs and opportunities and to explore attitudes of different faiths to different life styles. Students explore dishes from other cultures in food technology. Links with the local and wider community are extensive. Students share performances with the wider community through the performing arts and music specialisms. Students' spiritual, moral and social development is strong and prepares students for life in a diverse society.
- The school enters very few students for examinations earlier than the end of Key Stage 4, as they are not ready at this point to achieve their best grades.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements. The school's procedures also ensure that students who attend courses away from the school site are safe.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body is increasingly holding the school to account. It uses information about the school's performance to identify where it could do better. The governing body knows the quality of teaching and fully supports the headteacher and senior leaders in the push to improve its quality further. Governors understand the arrangements for checking the performance of teachers and monitor the links with salary progression. The governing body has a firm grasp on the school's finances, including the effective allocation of pupil premium funding to close the gap in attainment between students that are supported by it and those who are not. Governors take part in the necessary training and use their educational expertise from their own roles. They hold most, but not all, leaders to account for the school's effectiveness.

## 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>	105257
<b>Local authority</b>	Bolton
<b>Inspection number</b>	426179

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>	1,346
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Paul McCarthy
<b>Headteacher</b>	Robert Flood
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	23 November 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01204 572941
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