

Holden Lane High School

Milton Road, Sneyd Green, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST1 6LG

Inspection dates 16–17 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students make good progress across a range of subjects. The proportion of students achieving five GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has risen steadily over three years and is now above average.
- Attainment in English is above average because teaching is typically good and sometimes outstanding.
- Teachers expertly match work to meet students' needs. There are examples of outstanding teaching across several subjects, including English, science and geography.
- Students feel extremely well-cared for because relationships with staff are highly positive. Behaviour and safety are good.
- Senior leaders demonstrate a high degree of ambition, drive and determination for the school to succeed.
- Leaders rigorously check the impact of all aspects of the school's work. As a result, achievement, teaching and behaviour have improved rapidly.
- Governors have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and are proactive in challenging the few remaining weaknesses.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Attainment in mathematics is improving but students are not yet making the same rapid progress as in English.
- The achievement of students eligible for the pupil premium is rising but it is not as good as that of other students.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 37 lessons, one of which was observed jointly with a senior leader.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and subject leaders, groups of students, the Chair and members of the Governing Body and representatives from the local authority who support the school's work.
- Inspectors considered the views of the 14 parents who responded to Parent View, the online questionnaire, and analysed the results of the staff questionnaire to which 57 replies were received.
- Inspectors looked at the school's data on students' progress, lesson plans, minutes of meetings of the governing body 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

Liam Trippier

Additional Inspector

Dr Osama Abdul Rahim

Additional Inspector

Stephen Wall

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than most secondary schools.
- The majority of students are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children that are looked after by the local authority and those from armed services personnel families, is above average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The Executive Principal has oversight of the academies in the multi-academy trust which includes a local primary and secondary school and two studio colleges.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Nineteen students, in Years 10 and 11, attend off-site alternative provision for part of their learning at a range of providers, including Reach, Phoenix, Groundworks, Sporting Stars, Unity and Stoke-on-Trent College.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment further in mathematics by increasing the numbers of students who make better than expected progress.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by monitoring the progress of students supported by the pupil premium more closely, and implementing carefully-targeted plans to ensure they achieve as well as other students.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils **is good**

- Achievement is good because students make good overall progress across a range of subjects.
- The proportion of students achieving five GCSE grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has risen steadily over recent years as a result of senior leaders' strong focus on improving students' achievement. In 2013, above average numbers of students achieved the English Baccalaureate.
- Students achieve better results in English than in mathematics. In English, students make exceptional progress because teaching is typically good and sometimes outstanding. Much higher numbers of students make good or better progress than average.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers nationally. Their achievement is improving strongly under the focused leadership of this area of the school's work.
- Students supported by the pupil premium are also making similar progress to their peers nationally and their achievement is rising strongly. Senior leaders are committed to equality of opportunity and acknowledge that the in-school gap in attainment between students known to be eligible for free school meals and others needs to close further because in Year 11 these students are approximately two-thirds of a grade behind their peers in both English and mathematics.
- Achievement in mathematics is improving rapidly with more stable and experienced staffing in the department. Students' progress is now in line with that expected nationally but not enough students are making better than expected progress. The school has discontinued its policy of early entry in GCSE mathematics, because this impeded students' good progress in the past.
- Year 7 catch-up funding is being used to accelerate the progress of weaker readers with extra support from teaching assistants, small group teaching and a specific reading programme. A number of students have made over a year's progress in their reading in a short period of time.
- Small numbers of students in Year 10 and 11 attend alternative off-site provision at external providers for part of their learning. Strong systems are in place to check their progress, attendance and welfare. Students' success on these courses gives them the confidence to believe they can achieve well in other subjects. As a result, many also make good progress in English and mathematics.

The quality of teaching **is good**

- The quality of teaching is good with examples of outstanding teaching in several subjects including science, religious education, food studies and the performing arts.
- In lessons, relationships between students and staff are extremely positive. Teachers have high expectations and plan interesting activities, which build successfully on students' previous learning and develop their independence. For example, students in a Year 9 English lesson made outstanding progress in deducing information about the characters, plot and themes in 'Of Mice and Men' by themselves, with the aid of the teacher's exceptionally imaginative and high-quality resources.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge is evident in their well-focused questioning techniques which extend students' learning and provide good levels of challenge. Consistent whole-school approaches applied across different subject areas ensure that work is well-matched to students' individual needs, resulting in the good progress of all. For example, in a Year 7 geography lesson, the teacher's excellent questioning skills made sure that the work stretched the abilities of all students and ensured their outstanding progress in understanding why people live near volcanoes.
- A small minority of teaching requires improvement. Verbal and written feedback received by students varies in quality. Students in Year 11 mathematics benefitted from the teacher's good

advice in simple-to-understand steps which helped them improve their understanding of how to solve linear equations. However in other lessons, marking does not always inform students how to improve because work is simply ticked or only contains encouraging comments.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students are very positive about their learning and appreciate the improvements that have been made in teaching, particularly in mathematics.
- Parents, students and staff agree that behaviour has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now good because leaders' expectations are very clear and they rigorously follow-up any issues which arise. As a result, students follow school rules well and wear their new uniform with pride.
- Students have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe generally and they say they feel safe in school. Students understand bullying in all its forms and identify that bullying is not a serious issue at the school because they are confident that if they do have any problems, a member of staff will be on hand to help them sort it out. Students feel particularly well-cared for because relationships with staff are extremely positive.
- School records indicate that attendance is broadly average and improving as a result of leaders' sharp focus and the rewards and incentives on offer. Inspectors observed good behaviour both in and outside lessons, which contributes to the calm and orderly learning environment.
- Opportunities for students to take on positions of responsibility are numerous. Students in Year 7 spoke enthusiastically to inspectors about their role as 'Executives'. Older students regularly support students in local primary schools with dance, music and sporting activities and act as peer mentors for younger students in the school.
- Behaviour and safety are not outstanding because, in a minority of lessons where teaching is less effective, students can be passive and are not given enough opportunity to learn independently.

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders demonstrate a high degree of ambition, drive and determination for the school to succeed. Self-evaluation indicates that leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, are not complacent and are continuing to drive the school forward.
- School development planning is particularly robust and leaders' use of data to monitor and track students' achievement is a real strength. Leaders rigorously check the impact of all aspects of the school's work on students' learning and well-being. As a result, achievement, teaching and behaviour have improved rapidly.
- Leadership at all levels, including subject leaders and those known as 'heads of year', is strong and is making a difference to students' achievement. For example, the subject leader for English encourages a collaborative approach to planning and teaching which ensures that students in all classes receive consistently good teaching. Heads of Year have had a tremendous impact in monitoring students' achievement and ensuring that behaviour is now good.
- Systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching are good and have made an impressive impact on improving standards. Teachers' performance is linked to the national Teachers' Standards and is used to inform decisions around pay and to reward good performance. Difficult decisions have been taken by senior leaders to ensure that any inadequate teaching is eradicated.
- Bespoke training activities meet teachers' individual needs. For example, support for teachers new to the school is comprehensive and newly qualified teachers receive highly effective support as they benefit from both professional and subject mentors.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and prepares students well for the next stage in their learning. Changes to the curriculum in science have addressed problems with underperformance

in some science qualifications. Older students speak positively about the two weeks' work experience placement they complete. Above average numbers go on to further study, employment and training as a result of good systems of independent careers information and guidance.

- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Good assemblies reinforce powerful moral messages and draw students' attentions to the similarities which exist within different religions. In form-time and during lessons across different subject areas there are many opportunities for students to consider and discuss views which may contrast with their own.
- Students appreciate the wide range of organised after-school clubs and visits.
- The local authority provides good levels of support and has had impact in ensuring that 'middle leaders' such as the leaders of subject areas effectively monitor the quality of teaching within their departments.
- 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:**
 - Governors have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and know about the quality of teaching, performance management and what the school is doing to reward good teaching and to tackle underperformance. Governors have a detailed understanding of published data and are keenly determined to reduce the gap in achievement for students eligible for the pupil premium still further. The governing body is committed to supporting the school by attending appropriate training.

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	124385
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	427188

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	782
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Debra Gratton
Executive Principal	John Patino
Date of previous school inspection	20 June 2012
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