

Bedford High School

Manchester Road, Leigh, Lancashire, WN7 2LU

Inspection dates

6–7 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- From their typically below average starting points, almost all students make good progress in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. By the end of Year 11, an average proportion of students achieve five GCSEs at grades A* to C.
- In the large majority of lessons teaching is good and some teaching is outstanding. Teachers' good subject knowledge and their enthusiasm are having a positive impact on students' attainment and progress.
- Students are polite and well-mannered.
- Students' behaviour and their attitudes to learning are good. Relationships between students and with adults are good.
- Students say they feel safe in school and say that they are well cared for. This view is supported by the vast majority of parents.
- The curriculum offers students a good range of courses and opportunities that ensures that they enjoy school. This contributes very effectively to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepares them well for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- The quality of leadership and management from senior leaders and governors is good. They have a clear view of how successful the school can be and demonstrate a clear commitment to raising standards further. They have already been successful in improving teaching and raising students' achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A few lessons require improvement and not enough teaching is outstanding.
- Teachers do not always ensure that work set precisely matches students' needs.
- Best teaching practices are not always shared widely enough throughout the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 36 lessons taught by 36 teachers. Three lessons were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors looked closely at the school’s work, including minutes of meetings of the governing body, the school’s analysis of how well it is doing and its improvement plan.
- The inspectors looked closely at the school’s information on students’ progress and students’ work and documents relating to behaviour and safeguarding.
- Meetings were held with three groups of students, staff and four members of the governing body. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 18 responses from parents recorded in the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), together with approximately 200 responses to a parental survey carried out by the school in June 2013. Inspectors also took account of the 60 responses to the staff questionnaire provided by Ofsted.

Inspection team

Alan Parkinson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Tudor Griffiths

Additional Inspector

Janet Pruchniewicz

Additional Inspector

Fiona Dixon

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Bedford High School is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, those from families in the armed services and those in local authority care.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national average.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is similar to the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school uses Wigan's Pupil Referral Unit to provide alternative off-site provision for some students.
- The proportion of students that leave or join the school at times other than the start of Year 7 is well above the national average. This is mainly due to the closure of a local high school in September 2011 when over 130 students joined the school across Years 9, 10 and 11.
- The school is a member of the Wigan schools' consortia.
- The school has achieved several awards in recognition of the quality of its work. These include the Eco Schools Silver Award, the Bronze Arts Award, Champion School for Musical Futures and the International Schools award.
- Following the death of the previous headteacher, a new headteacher was appointed in September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is always at least consistently good and more of it is outstanding to further increase the proportion of students making good progress by:
 - ensuring that activities even more closely match the needs of all students to enable them to make more rapid progress
 - providing more opportunities for teachers to share best practice in teaching, particularly so that they develop teaching strategies that further engage students and foster students' love of learning in their subject.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students' attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 is below the national average. Following the closure of another local high school, a significant number of students have joined the school at times other than the start of Year 7. In 2013, for example, only 44% of Year 11 students had been in the school since the start of Year 7.
- Over recent years, the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE passes at A* to C, including English and mathematics has increased to broadly in line with the national average in 2013. This represents good progress from their previously lower starting points.
- In English, the proportion of students gaining A* to C grades has risen steadily over the last three years and in 2013 was close to the national average. Similarly, over recent years the proportion of students making at least average progress in English has continued to improve and in 2013 was above the national average.
- In mathematics, the proportion of students gaining A* to C grades has fallen over the last three years. The proportion of students making at least average progress in mathematics fell sharply in 2012 to below the national average. Although it improved slightly in 2013 it remained below average. This is because of the additional students that joined the school to complete their GCSE course; a significant proportion of those students had low levels of attainment in mathematics.
- When the school analysed the progress made by students who had completed the whole of their secondary education in Bedford High School it was found that the proportions gaining A* to C grades including in English and in mathematics were above national averages. Similarly, the proportions making at least average progress in English and in mathematics were also above the national averages and students achieved well in both English and mathematics.
- Current school data show that the rate of progress of Year 11 students is good and is continuing to improve further in both English and in mathematics. This is confirmed by lesson observations and scrutiny of students' work.
- The proportions of students gaining the higher GCSE grades A* to A in English and in mathematics fell in 2013. This is due to an increase in the number of students taking GCSE qualifications and fewer taking the vocational route. However, school data and inspection evidence show that the most-able students achieve well in both English and in mathematics.
- In 2011, at the start of their GCSE course, students known to be eligible for free school meals were achieving approximately three-quarters of a GCSE grade lower than all other students in the school in English and approximately one GCSE grade lower in mathematics. At the end of their GCSE course in 2013, these same students achieved approximately half of a GCSE grade lower in English and two-thirds of a GCSE grade lower in mathematics. This shows that the gaps in attainment are closing. This is because the funding is well spent on additional staffing and activities to provide support to those students at risk of falling behind.
- The school enters students early for their GCSE examination in mathematics, science and physical education. This is to encourage students to achieve even higher grades by retaking the examinations at a later stage. A significant proportion of students achieved higher grades in the 2013 summer examinations.
- Students who are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium and those supported by the pupil premium receive additional support to develop their English and mathematical skills. This funding is used effectively to provide additional teaching resources, one-to-one tuition and small group work; as a result, they make good progress. For example, the accelerated reading scheme for students in Years 7 and 8 is having a positive impact on developing students' reading skills.
- Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs, those from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language are well supported in their learning. As a result, they achieve well and make similar, and sometimes better progress than that achieved by similar students nationally.

The quality of teaching is good

- Students say they enjoy the vast majority of their lessons. They say that they are well taught, know how well they are doing and get good support from their teachers. Many opportunities are provided for students to work well together and review each other's work. This helps students to share and develop their ideas and gain a deeper understanding of the subject and makes learning more effective.
- In the best lessons, where sometimes outstanding teaching was seen, teaching is very well organised and planned. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and their enthusiasm motivates students to achieve well. In these lessons learning takes place at a good rate, students are focused on their work, enjoy their learning and make very good progress. For example, in a Year 8 food technology lesson, the teacher's high expectations and effective questioning encourage students to think for themselves, develop their understanding and evaluate the different methods for making a crumble.
- The good and sometimes outstanding practice seen in teaching is not consistently applied across all lessons. As a result, students do not always engage fully in their learning and further develop a love for the subject.
- In a few lessons where teaching is less effective, teachers do not always plan tasks and activities that enable all students to learn well and make rapid progress, whatever their ability. This is because the activities are either too easy for some or too hard for other students.
- In the majority of lessons, however, and across a wide range of subjects, teachers' provide good opportunities for students to develop and apply their reading, writing and communication skills well. This reflects the whole-school drive to improve students' literacy skills.
- Marking of students' work has improved since the previous inspection and is good. Teachers' comments tell students how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further.
- Teaching assistants are used effectively to support students' learning, particularly for disabled students and those who have special educational needs, those from minority ethnic backgrounds and who speak English as an additional language. This enables them to learn, develop skills and achieve well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The vast majority of students behave well in lessons and around the school. Students are polite, well-mannered and courteous towards each other, staff and visitors. The good relationships between students and teachers and between students themselves promote positive attitudes to learning and help to make learning enjoyable and effective.
- Students say they feel very safe in school because they are well cared for by teachers and other adults. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, for example, with regard to e-safety and using the internet. Students have a clear understanding of the different forms of bullying and report that on the few occasions that any instances of bullying do occur they are quickly resolved.
- The responses to Parent View and to the parental survey carried out by the school indicate that a very large majority of parents agree that students behave well, that they are well cared for and that they feel safe at school.
- The school provides opportunities for students to develop responsible attitudes by taking on positions of responsibility such as members of the school council or as prefects. This enables them to make a significant contribution to the school community. For example, the school council recommended and has successfully introduced changes to the queuing arrangements in the bistro. Students also support the local community such as the Green Grass Centre and work hard to help others by raising funds to support many charities such as the local hospice.
- The school's strong pastoral care system is valued by both students and parents. The school has established effective partnerships with parents and external agencies that enable effective support to be given to deal with any problems that students might have, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. This contributes well to the school's caring ethos and shows the school's commitment to offering all its students equal opportunities to be successful.

- Attendance has fallen in recent years to below the national average. This was partly due to the large numbers of students that have joined the school in recent years. However, due to the effective actions taken by the school to reduce the number of persistent absences, current attendance is now broadly in line with the national average. Punctuality is improving rapidly.

The leadership and management are good

- Since the previous inspection the school's senior leaders and governors have successfully moved the school forward through a very difficult period including the need to accommodate a large number of students due to the closure of another local high school.
- The new headteacher, together with the senior leadership team and the governing body demonstrate a strong commitment to continue to raise standards. They have accurately identified the school's strengths and areas for further improvement through effective self-evaluation processes. They are building on the improvements that have already taken place and have a clear focus on raising attainment further by improving the quality of teaching even further. For example, the development of students' literacy skills has become a priority for the whole school. As a result, students are now developing their literacy skills more effectively across a wide range of their subjects. This shows that the school's leaders have the capacity, skills, commitment and determination to continue to raise standards and improve students' achievement further.
- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. The school's systems for observing lessons and monitoring the quality of teaching are good and provide teachers with accurate feedback on their performance. This information is used well to provide a relevant programme of staff training. However, the school does not always provide enough opportunities for teachers to share best practice in teaching, particularly so that they develop teaching strategies that further engage students and foster students' love of learning in their subject.
- The school's systems for checking students' progress are robust and highly effective. Students at risk of falling behind in their learning are quickly identified and given additional support. This shows the school's commitment to offering equal opportunities for all its students.
- The curriculum provides students with an appropriate range of courses and opportunities that provide breadth and balance and prepares them well for the next stage of their education, training or employment. The school offers very good alternative provision for some students to provide appropriate courses and support that enable them to be successful.
- The school offers a wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities, including trips and visits that provide students with opportunities and experiences to develop their personal and academic skills. For example, the residential mathematics trip to the Conway Centre helps students to develop and apply their numeracy skills beyond the classroom. Similarly, during a very motivational assembly for Year 10 students, led by a world-class boxer, students were encouraged to reflect on their own lives with high expectations for their future. These activities contribute well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school has benefited from valuable support from the local authority to provide training for governors and through the consortium of local schools to share and develop good practice to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is well informed and effectively supports and challenges the school's leaders at all levels. Governors know the school's strengths and have an accurate understanding of what needs to be done to improve the school further. They check on the quality of teaching well and use performance management systems to set appropriate and challenging targets. They give appropriate attention to the connection between the quality of the work of staff and the arrangements for pay progression. The governing body has a good understanding of the school's finances. This includes the allocation of the pupil premium funding and Year 7 catch-up premium which are used to good effect. Governors ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures meet the statutory requirements.

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	106523
Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	429549

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	940
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Whitehead
Headteacher	Helen Phillips
Date of previous school inspection	12 January 2011
Telephone number	01942 486386
Fax number	01942 760034
Email address	enquiries@admin.bedford.wigan.sch.uk

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