

St Wilfrid's CofE Academy

Duckworth Street, Blackburn, Lancashire, BB2 2JR

Inspection dates 13–14 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.

- Achievement is good. Students achieve well in English and mathematics and in a good range of subjects by age 16. They reach above-average standards of attainment in many subjects.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well, including those students who receive support through the local authority resourced provision for hearing impaired students.
- Students are committed to achieving well. Behaviour in lessons is good.
- Sixth-form students are especially good role models for younger students. The vast majority of sixth-form students move on to university courses.
- Students take on many responsibilities and are very good ambassadors for the school. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong.
- Students' conduct around the school is exemplary. Students from a wide range of backgrounds, minority ethnic groups and religions get on well together and show respect for each other and staff.
- Good teaching in the main school leads to good progress over time. Improved teaching in English has resulted in significantly improved achievement in GCSE examinations and at AS level in 2013 following a dip in results in 2012.
- Leaders at all levels, including governors, have a good understanding of the academy's strengths and priorities. They have maintained good standards of attendance and behaviour.
- Leaders have successfully improved teaching and achievement in the main school.
- Alongside a clear focus on improving students' achievement, the academy provides very good care and support, especially for the more-vulnerable students.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The sixth form requires improvement. There is too much variation in achievement and in the quality of teaching between subjects.
- Not enough teaching is outstanding. In a few lessons, students are the passive recipients of knowledge rather than active participants in learning. In some subjects, marking is inconsistent in its quality and helpfulness. Not all students have challenging academic targets.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors made visits to 48 lessons. Five of the observations were observed jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors analysed students' workbooks across a range of subjects.
- Discussions were held with staff, students, governors and a school improvement officer.
- Documents looked at included the self-evaluation summary, the improvement plan, information on students' progress, records of students' behaviour and attendance, governing body minutes and documents relating to safeguarding and child protection.
- Parents' views were taken into account through the 79 responses to Parent View (the Ofsted online questionnaire).
- The views of staff were received and analysed through the 134 staff questionnaires returned.

Inspection team

Gillian Salter-Smith, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Andrew Henderson	Additional Inspector
Sheila Kaye	Additional Inspector
Gary Kelly	Additional Inspector
Bernard Robinson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Wilfrid's CofE Academy converted to become an academy in August 2011. When its predecessor school, St Wilfrid's CofE High School and Technology College, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good.
- The academy is much larger than an average-sized secondary school.
- A below-average proportion of students are supported through pupil premium. The pupil premium is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children who are looked after.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well below average. A below average proportion of students are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs.
- Specially resourced provision for up to 15 hearing impaired students is provided by the local authority.
- An above-average proportion of students is from minority ethnic groups and speak English as an additional language.
- Alternative courses are provided for a very few students at The Heights, A Free School in Blackburn, and at the Blackburn with Darwen Pupil Referral Unit.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' progress and attainment.
- The Acting Principal has led the school since July 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement in the sixth form, reducing variability between subjects by:
 - sharing the outstanding practice in teaching in the sixth form more widely so that it is at least good across subjects
 - ensuring students receive appropriate guidance when selecting courses so that they can achieve their best alongside achieving their ambitions
 - broadening the range of courses available, particularly vocational courses, so that students' needs are more fully met
 - bringing greater consistency to the quality and effectiveness of the monitoring of and support for students' progress.
- improve the effectiveness of teaching so that more is outstanding and students' progress accelerates further by:
 - providing more opportunities for students to develop the skills of independent learning through finding things out for themselves, making decisions about their learning and working in pairs and small groups to share ideas
 - ensuring greater consistency in the quality and effectiveness of marking so that, across all subjects, students benefit from teachers' guidance and make improvements to their work
 - setting challenging and ambitious targets for all students
 - improving further targeted support so that the small number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and those learning English as an additional language do not fall behind and that all the more-able students fulfil their full potential in mathematics especially.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students make good progress from their different starting points across a wide range of subjects in the main school. Standards of attainment are above the national average by age 16.
- Students achieve well in English. Following a dip in results in 2012, particularly for boys and the more-able students, progress and attainment in GCSE English language improved significantly in 2013 for all groups of students. Gaps between the achievement of girls and boys are closing quickly as the school introduces strategies to motivate and support boys. The more-able students achieved well and, in 2013, the proportion gaining A* and A grades and those making better than expected progress increased considerably.
- Students' achievement in mathematics is good: attainment is above the national average. The proportions of students making expected progress or better than expected progress compare favourably with national averages. However, in 2013, the number of students gaining the highest A* and A grades dipped. Early entry of some of the more-able students to mathematics examinations held some students back from gaining the highest grades of which they are capable. This practice has now ceased.
- Information on students' progress, inspectors' scrutiny of work and observations of learning in lessons confirms that good achievement is set to continue. Across Key Stages 3 and 4, students make good progress in response to good and sometimes outstanding teaching, particularly in English.
- The gap in attainment between students known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are not is closing. In English in 2012, students known to be eligible for free school meals were around half a grade behind those who are not. In mathematics, the gap was around three quarters of a grade. Students known to be eligible for free school meals achieve better standards at GCSE than similar students across the country. While the gap in the proportion making expected progress is closing in English, it has widened a little in mathematics in 2013.
- Pupil premium funding is being targeted effectively towards more vulnerable students. Additional academic and personal support for individuals and the greater involvement of parents in supporting their children's progress are working well in supporting students' achievement.
- Funding targeted to Year 7 students who have fallen behind in their academic work is being used effectively to help them catch up. Additional support to improve literacy and numeracy skills is used effectively in the special classes that successfully ease the transfer for some students from primary to secondary education.
- The more-able students generally make good progress. The proportion of students making expected progress is better than the national average in English in 2013. In mathematics in 2012, the proportion of the more-able students making expected progress was better than the national average. In 2013, this figure is not as high.
- Small numbers of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and those learning English as an additional language do not always make as good progress as other students. Class teachers and heads of subjects are held accountable for any students who are falling behind. For the most part they provide effective support that is helping students to catch up.
- The school works hard to ensure that all students, whatever their circumstances and background are given the opportunity to succeed.
- Students have well developed reading, writing and numeracy skills because these are taught effectively. Teachers ensure skills are practised frequently in subjects across the curriculum. Consequently, students are well prepared for the next stage of education and training. All students move on to further education, training or employment at age 16.
- Weaker readers are well supported and wider reading is encouraged across the academy.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make good progress, as do those students receiving special resources for hearing impairment. Support staff are especially effective in giving the right level of support so that students learn to be independent.

- The very few students taking part in alternative provision away from the school site achieve similarly to other students.
- Achievement in the sixth form requires improvement. Attainment at A level is broadly average and stronger than at AS level. Attainment at AS level is improving. Most students achieve well and the vast majority gain a university place when they leave the academy. English has been a focus for improvement and many students now make good progress. However, progress between subjects varies.
- In the sixth form, achievement in physical education, sociology and psychology is consistently strong and high proportions of students take these subjects. Achievement in vocational subjects is strong. There are still subjects where students do not achieve their full potential, especially at AS level.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching over time is good. Some teaching is outstanding. No inadequate teaching was observed during the inspection.
- Students make good progress because learning is usually well-planned to include a range of activities that interest and motivate students. Teachers' secure knowledge of the subjects they teach enables them to plan clear progressive stages in learning and pose challenging questions to individuals.
- Relationships between staff and students are highly supportive. Students appreciate the unending support that most staff provide for them through clear explanations and extra learning sessions.
- Teachers know the individual students very well indeed and, for the most part, make sure that every student has work that challenges them or, indeed, that they have the right sort of support to help them make good progress. However, students' academic targets set by the school are not always challenging enough, especially for the more-able students.
- Homework is well planned and an integral part of learning in most subjects. Students often assess their own and each other's work carefully so that they develop a clear understanding of what is required to reach good levels of achievement.
- Teaching assistants for students with hearing impairment and for other disabled students or those with special educational needs are well deployed. They pose equally challenging questions of students. They encourage students to work independently and not be reliant on support
- The quality of teachers' marking is variable. The best marking gives clear guidance and challenges to students so that they act on the guidance and improve their work. Marking is especially effective in English. Many subjects ensure that basic literacy is included in the marking. However, in other subjects, marking is not always frequent enough or precise enough in its guidance to be of real benefit.
- Students enjoy learning and say they make the best progress when they work in pairs and groups to share ideas, make decisions about their learning and find things out for themselves. This good practice is not yet wholly consistent across subjects. In a few lessons, the pace of learning is slower because students do not take an active enough part in their learning.
- Teaching over time in the sixth form requires improvement because it results in variable achievement across subjects. Most teaching observed during the inspection was good or outstanding. In most lessons, teachers posed a high level of challenge in the learning tasks they gave to students. In physical education, sociology and psychology, students' commitment to their studies and enjoyment were tangible and excellent. The close checks on learning ensure that teachers' on-going support is well targeted. Where teaching required improvement, this correlated with subjects where students do not reach their full potential. The checks on students' progress and quality of on-going support are less effective in some subjects.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The vast majority of students are highly committed to learning and achieving well. Most are ambitious and want to succeed. They enjoy learning, especially when they work in groups and pairs and plan tasks for themselves.
- Students behave well in lessons and have a calm and mature attitude to learning. Disruption to learning is uncommon. The vast majority of students show respect for each other and adults.
- Students' behaviour and conduct around the school is most often exemplary. They are considerate and careful when negotiating narrow corridors. Students from a good range of minority ethnic groups and different faiths form a harmonious community.
- Students take on a wide range of roles and responsibilities. Most are proud of their school and are good ambassadors for their school.
- Students feel safe and secure in school. They know how to keep themselves safe in many situations, including when using modern technology. Staff know students well, especially disabled students and those with special educational needs. Staff work in close partnership with external specialist agencies to provide for students' needs.
- Incidents of bullying are infrequent. Students are confident that adults sort out any concerns they have quickly and effectively. Students are aware of many different ways in which bullying can occur. The school recognises that the education of students in relation to bullying and lesbian, gay and bisexual persons has not been extensive enough. The personal-development programme now includes this element of bullying for all ages of students.
- The rate of attendance is consistently above average. Few students are excluded.
- Sixth-form students have very positive attitudes to their studies. They have a growing confidence in their abilities to succeed. They appreciate the support they receive and value highly their very good relationships with staff.
- Sixth-form students provide excellent role models for younger students. They take on responsibilities with maturity, such as paired reading with younger students and involvement in house activities.

The leadership and management are good

- Senior and middle leaders and governors are strongly committed to further improving achievement and the quality of teaching further. Staff morale is good and leaders have given good attention to raising achievement and teaching and, where needed, have acted quickly and effectively to raise achievement and the impact of teaching on students' progress, for example in English.
- Subject leaders have benefitted from specific training on developing their role. Consequently, checks on students' progress and the quality of teaching in the main school are rigorous. Senior and middle leaders have an accurate understanding of how well the academy is performing and what needs to be improved. Class teachers and subject leaders are held closely to account for the progress of the students under their care. As a result much is done, both in the classroom and beyond, to ensure students likely to underachieve receive the support they need to catch up. However, a few students are not fully meeting their potential, for example, the more-able students in mathematics and some students from minority ethnic groups. Parents are more closely involved in supporting their children when they are in danger of falling behind.
- Senior leaders are prepared to make tough decisions to ensure good quality of staffing and achievement. Teachers' performance is carefully checked and managed. Well-targeted professional development is designed to fulfil the priorities of the academy and support individual staff needs. For example, the focus on improving the skills of heads of subject in holding class teachers to account for students' progress has been a key factor in raising achievement, for example, in English. Support for teachers is clearly focussed on their needs but has not yet resolved some inconsistencies in the effectiveness of teaching.

- The school has used support from local authority improvement officers wisely. This has been particularly effective in supporting the development of middle and senior leaders.
- The curriculum meets students' needs. Reading, writing, numeracy and oral communication skills are well developed across the school. The curriculum promotes students' personal development and spiritual, moral and social development well. The academy is constantly reviewing its curriculum and making changes to help students fulfil their potential within the context of the local and wider community. For example, changes are leading to improving achievement in modern foreign languages.
- The very few students who are educated away from the school site, have their needs met. The arrangements are checked for safety and their appropriateness in meeting needs.
- Arrangements for keeping students safe meet current government requirements.
- Leadership of the sixth form requires improvement. Currently, teaching and students' achievement are too variable across subjects. Improvements have been made in English. Examples of outstanding practice in physical education, psychology and sociology have not yet been successfully shared with other subjects.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors share the Acting Principal's clear vision and strong commitment to further improvement.
 - They review data and understand how the school is performing in relation to the national picture and are aware of the areas to improve.
 - Governors know about the quality of teaching and the procedures that assure the quality of teachers' performance. They have assured that the Acting Principal's performance-management targets are challenging. They look carefully at and support decisions to improve the quality of staffing
 - Governors know how pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding is spent but do not have precise information on how effective the spending has been.
 - Recent re-structuring of the governing body and its committees has brought a greater match between their roles and responsibilities and their background and skills, enabling them to provide greater challenge and support to leaders.

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	136900
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	427343

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,508
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	286
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Val Edge
Acting Principal	Catherine Huddleston
Date of previous school inspection	11 May 2011
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