

Lostock Hall Academy

Todd Lane North, Lostock Hall, Preston, Lancashire, PR5 5UR

Inspection dates 23–24 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- There are unacceptably large gaps in achievement between different groups of students, especially in English. For example, boys' achievement is far behind that of girls, which itself is not good enough. Students supported by the pupil premium make inadequate progress.
- Teaching has not been focused enough on removing these gaps in achievement and is therefore inadequate.
- Often marking is cursory and it does not help the students to improve their work.
- Teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are frequently too low. Work often lacks challenge, particularly in Key Stage 3.
- There have been three headteachers in the period since the previous inspection. This has left the school without clear direction.
- School leaders and governors have been complacent and have let this decline in achievement go on for too long. They have been slow to tackle the underlying causes of poor performance, such as weak teaching.
- Until very recently the school did not have a clear idea of just how poorly students were doing because systems to check on students' progress were inadequate. Underachievement was not spotted quickly enough and action taken was often 'too little, too late'.

The school has the following strengths

- The students in this school are a delight to teach. They are responsive, respectful and reliable. They are excellent ambassadors for their school.
- Students achieve well in some subjects, such as art and physical education.
- The very recently reorganised senior leadership team has begun to tackle the barriers to success with urgency and vigour. This team provides much needed stability and has a clear line of sight on what needs to be done to improve this school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 30 part lessons including several observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. An inspector also observed a group of students from Years 7 and 8 reading to a member of staff.
- During the inspection meetings were held with members of the governing body, staff and students. Telephone discussions were conducted with the School Improvement Partner and also a National Leader in Education, who is headteacher of a local school. In addition, inspectors talked informally with students both in lessons and around the school.
- The inspection team scrutinised a wide range of documentation including information regarding students' achievement, records on behaviour and attendance, a selection of school policies, the school development plan and records of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors took account of the 91 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's on-line questionnaire, and 44 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Joan Bonenfant, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Derek Barnes	Additional Inspector
John Cornally	Additional Inspector
Mary Lanovy-Taylor	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 44 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended), Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- Lostock Hall is a smaller than average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support students known to be eligible for free school meals, children of service families or those looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is below the national average and very few students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is above the national average. The proportion of students supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The vast majority of students are from a White British background and there are slightly more boys than girls in the school.
- A very small number of students attend work-related training away from school for part of each week. The school uses the Eric Wright Learning Foundation in Leyland and also Runshaw College.
- The school meets the current government floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school converted to academy status in September 2011.
- The current acting headteacher has been in this role since July 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good, in order to strongly improve students' achievement, especially in English, and particularly of boys and students supported by the pupil premium, by:
 - sharing existing good practice so that all teachers have high expectations for their students and know what a really good lesson looks like
 - teachers using assessment information when planning lessons and adjusting their teaching accordingly so that all students are challenged and make at least good progress
 - developing highly effective programmes across all subjects to promote students' basic skills in numeracy, but more so in their literacy
 - reviewing schemes of work, particularly in Key Stage 3, to make sure that lesson plans build on prior learning more effectively
 - ensuring that all teachers mark students' work thoroughly, with clear guidance on how to improve, giving students the opportunity to respond to their advice.

- Improve leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - firmly embedding recently established systems to improve the school, particularly in the quality and effectiveness of teaching, and rigorously monitoring the impact of new initiatives on school improvement
 - designing an effective and sharply focused development plan that provides clear direction as to how the school can rapidly become much better. This plan should have distinct milestones and success criteria, so that the school can regularly review its progress at timely intervals
 - undertaking an external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the academy's use of pupil premium, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Ofsted will make recommendations on governance to the authority responsible for the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- In 2012, the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, fell dramatically to significantly below the national average. The proportion of students making expected progress in English and mathematics was also well below the national average.
- In 2013, performance in the above measures improved because the school put in a great deal of support for Year 11 students in English and mathematics. Nevertheless, standards were still below average because many students underperformed in other subjects, such as modern languages and history. Given that students who took examinations in 2013 had prior attainment that was above average overall, this represents inadequate achievement. Current information provided by the school indicates that students are still not making sufficient progress in order to achieve well.
- Over time, many groups of students have underachieved. Boys' achievement trails behind that of most of the girls, particularly in English. Students who start the school with average ability have made, and continue to make, weak progress across a range of subjects.
- The gap between the performance of students supported through the pupil premium and that of other students widened in 2013. The students known to be eligible for free school meals were a grade behind other students in English and almost two grades behind in mathematics. Compared to this group of students nationally, only half of these students made the progress expected of them in English and mathematics. The school's own information on current achievement shows that these gaps are closing quickly in mathematics, but are still stubbornly in evidence across the school in English.
- More-able students have in the past achieved well, but their performance dropped overall in 2013 and a smaller proportion of these students than seen nationally gained the top grades, A* and A, at GCSE. Therefore, the achievement of this group of students requires improvement.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make better progress, given their starting points, than other students. However, overall the progress of these students requires further improvement because there remain some small pockets of underachievement. The school has directed funds available for the Year 7 catch-up programme productively. Students who enter the school with weak reading and writing skills are given intensive support to make up the ground they have lost.
- The very small proportion of students who do work-related training thrive in their placements and, as a result, last year all of them went on to further education or found employment.
- Overall, students' achievement in mathematics is better than in most other subjects. There are indications that standards are starting to rise in English, but not yet quickly enough. The school does not enter students early for GCSE examinations.
- Students achieve well in art and in physical education.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Teaching over time is inadequate because it has not focused enough on tackling the wide gaps in achievement between groups of students. Therefore, not all students have made the progress they should have made.
- The school's systems for checking up on students' progress were, until very recently, inadequate. Therefore, teachers did not have all the information they needed to spot underperformance quickly and do something about it. As a result, many groups of students have repeatedly fallen behind as teachers have not adjusted their teaching sufficiently to sort this out.
- Sometimes teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are too low. As a result, some

students, particularly those of average ability, are frequently given work that is too easy for them. Too often, the work is undemanding, particularly in Key Stage 3; indeed in some subjects the work is no more challenging than what has already been covered in primary school. As a result, students have too much catching up to do in Key Stage 4 to prepare themselves for examinations.

- Often marking is cursory and lacking in detail. Teachers do not always provide useful information to students on how to improve their work. This holds students back and prevents them from making gains in their learning. Weak marking, observed during the inspection, failed to pick up mistakes, for example in spelling and punctuation. This led directly to students making repeated errors.
- The school has very recently introduced a policy to improve marking and there is evidence to suggest that this is having an impact in some subjects, such as science. However, even when work is marked thoroughly, too often teachers do not provide the opportunity for students to respond to the advice that has been given.
- Teaching assistants are effectively deployed in supporting students with special educational needs, and this is helping these students make better progress than others.
- Good and outstanding teaching is nevertheless evident in some subjects. For example, in one outstanding Year 8 geography lesson, about the causes of flooding, the teaching was strongly focused and well pitched, providing a rapid pace to the lesson. Students were highly engaged and made excellent progress.
- School leaders have recently introduced much more rigorous systems to check on the quality of teaching. Clear expectations and targets for development are starting to improve the practice in the classroom. As a result, much of the teaching observed during the inspection was of good quality. However, this recent improvement has not had time to become embedded and it is too early to see clear evidence of a sustained and positive impact on learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- This area of the school's work is a real strength. There is a very positive ethos in the school and students are encouraged to care for others. For example, students in Year 7 write to pupils in Year 6 in primary school, introducing themselves and easing possible fears the younger ones may have about the move to secondary school.
- Students show great respect to one another and their teachers. Students are polite and sociable. They show pride in their school and say that they feel safe.
- Students demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. Sometimes when teaching is dull they become less engaged but this rarely leads to bad behaviour and there is little disruption to lessons.
- Parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were almost unanimous in saying that they feel that the school makes sure its students are well behaved. As one parent commented, in a letter to the inspection team, 'this school offers excellent pastoral care'. A majority of staff also feel that behaviour is good in the school.
- Students who met with inspectors expressed the view that their teachers prepare them well to deal with the dangers they might meet in the outside world. Students are aware of the different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying and that of a homophobic nature. They say that incidences of bullying or racism are extremely rare and that, when this does occur, teachers quickly step in and sort it out.
- Attendance and punctuality are very good, demonstrating that most students are happy to come to school and are eager to learn. They enjoy the many extra-curricular activities on offer and are proud of their achievements, for example in sport.
- Behaviour is managed well and rates of exclusion are very low. The school ensures the safety of students who attend work-related training away from school as they are accompanied by school staff.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Lostock Hall has had three headteachers in the last 18 months. This turbulence at the top has been a distraction and left the school without clear direction. As a result, little effective action has been taken to turn around the legacy of underachievement that has, for too long, plagued this school.
- This has been a complacent school and self-evaluation is overgenerous. School leaders were shocked when, in 2012, standards dropped so markedly. In order to address this, they relied too heavily on a series of 'quick fixes' which failed to tackle the root causes of such underachievement.
- Up until very recently, the school had inadequate systems to track students' progress. Therefore, school leaders and teachers had no clear idea of just how poorly large groups of students were doing. The new system to track students' progress gives teachers and leaders a much clearer picture regarding students' achievement.
- The school development plan is too wide-ranging and insufficiently focused. The plan lacks clear milestones and measurable success criteria; as a result, it does not serve as a useful tool to drive improvement.
- Leadership and management of teaching have lacked rigour. School leaders had an inflated view of the quality of teaching because they did not take into account sufficiently the impact that teaching was having on learning in arriving at their judgements.
- The school does not successfully promote equal opportunities as there are too many different groups of students who do not do as well as their peers.
- Revised arrangements for managing the performance of teachers are now much sharper; teachers get support that is tailored to their needs and weak teachers are challenged to improve. As a result, there is a growing culture of accountability that is starting to improve practice in some classrooms.
- Across the school, students can choose from a wide range of subjects that meet their needs and interests. Students receive comprehensive advice on the next steps in their lives and the numbers of students that do not go on to further training, education or employment are extremely low.
- There is a wide variety of after-school activities on offer. Students have many opportunities to broaden their horizons through, for example theatre visits, trips abroad and sporting activities. This area of the school's work is undeniably a huge strength, appreciated by parents and students alike. Aspects of the taught curriculum, such as art and the 'life studies' course, make a good contribution to students' physical well-being and also their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school engages well with parents and carers. This is reflected in the very positive view presented in responses to the on-line questionnaire, in which the overwhelming majority of parents say that they would recommend the academy to others.
- In September this year, the senior leadership team was reinvigorated by a complete reorganisation of roles and responsibilities. In a very short time, this immensely committed, enthusiastic and energetic team has started to tackle the stumbling blocks to success that have beleaguered the school. However, as many of the changes that have been put in place are in their infancy, it is too early to say if they have had the necessary impact.
- School leaders have been too slow to harness the support and challenge they should have sought from outside the school. As a result, they lost sight of how the school had fallen behind in comparison to other schools. The guidance that has recently been provided by the School Improvement Partner and also from a local headteacher, who is a National Leader of Education, has been invaluable; the school has embraced the challenge and is now moving in the right direction.

- Subject leaders in mathematics and English, who are relatively new to the role, are starting to have a positive impact as standards are starting to rise in these subjects. However, initiatives to promote literacy and numeracy across all subjects are underdeveloped and have not had time to have an impact on improving students' skills.
- Inspectors strongly recommend that the academy should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.
- Safeguarding procedures meet requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have not challenged the school quickly enough to remove the large gaps in achievement that exist across the school. They particularly regret that they have failed the group of students eligible for the pupil premium. The governing body has not acted sufficiently swiftly to make sure that the funds the school received were targeted at improving achievement for this group of students. They have now insisted that the school tackles this issue with urgency.
 - Governors bring considerable expertise from the outside world and show loyalty and commitment to the school. They have developed much more confidence in holding the school to account and have a good grasp of where the strengths and weaknesses are. Governors have appropriate policies in place to make sure that staff pay is directly linked to the quality of teaching and its impact on improvement.

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	137111
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	427182

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	750
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	William Pitcher
Headteacher	Glynis Brimelow (Acting Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	13 June 2012
Telephone number	01772 336293
Fax number	01772 337083
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