

Witton Park High School

Buncer Lane, Blackburn, Lancashire, BB2 6TD

Inspection dates 20–21 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	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.

- Most students, as a result of effective teaching, are now achieving well in the school. The expected progress that students make in English and mathematics is above the national average.
- As a result of specific support and guidance, students supported by the pupil premium and known to be eligible for free school meals do well.
- The quality of teaching in a large majority of lessons is good and sometimes outstanding.
- The behaviour of students, particularly within lessons, is good. Students are polite to adults and often demonstrate good levels of maturity.
- Students say that they feel safe and are well cared for.
- The school provides a curriculum for its students that enable them to succeed and achieve their best. There are many opportunities for students to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.
- Leaders, including governors, have high expectations and are ambitious for the school and its community. As a result, there have been significant improvements in both achievement and the quality of teaching.
- The Learning Support Unit is an excellent facility that provides students with high levels of support and care, as well as the right degree of challenge to ensure that they all achieve well.
- The school embraces its community of different cultures, backgrounds and needs.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The achievement of the most-able students, whilst improving, is not yet outstanding across the school.
- Teaching is not yet consistently good throughout the school and more needs to be outstanding. In some subjects, work does not always challenge all students, especially the most-able.
- Systems for checking on behaviour are not as refined as they might be.
- A small number of students do not take sufficient responsibility for their behaviour outside of lessons or understand well enough their role in making teaching and learning outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 45 part-lessons taught by 45 different teachers. Joint observations of lessons were also carried out in partnership with two members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also scrutinised a sample of students’ books.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, the headteacher, senior leaders and heads of subject departments. Inspectors also met with groups of students of differing ages and abilities. A meeting was also held with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including information and work showing students’ progress and attainment, school improvement plans, monitoring documentation and records related to behaviour and safeguarding.
- Inspectors took into account the views expressed by parents through the school’s own surveys. Inspectors were unable to consider the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), as there were insufficient responses registered.

Inspection team

Derek Davies, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Wendy Bradford	Additional Inspector
Mary Lanovy-Taylor	Additional Inspector
Bernard Robinson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Witton Park High School is an average sized secondary school, although numbers are decreasing.
- The school moved into its new building in September 2012.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well above the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children of service families and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language is well above the national averages.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above the national average. The proportion of these supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also above national averages.
- The school exceeds the government's floor targets, which set the minimum expected for students' attainment and progress.
- The school makes limited use of alternative provision with The Heights Free School.
- The school has its own Learning Support Unit but it is not a specially resourced provision.
- The school is in the process of converting to become an Academy.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement further, especially for the most-able, by ensuring that teaching is consistently good and more lessons are outstanding, by:
 - providing challenging activities that match the needs of the most-able
 - ensuring that feedback to students in teachers' marking consistently provides them with the guidance they need in order to improve their work
 - further developing opportunities for students to learn by themselves to develop their independent learning skills better.
- Ensure that all students take responsibility for their behaviour around the school and that they understand their role as active learners in lessons.
- Ensure that leaders develop more refined systems for making checks on behaviour so they have a more accurate picture and can be clearer about any next steps to take to improve it.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students enter the school with standards in English and mathematics that are well below average. In recent years the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSEs at Grade C or above, including English and mathematics, has been increasing and is now similar to national averages. Taking into account the starting points of students, this demonstrates good achievement.
- The expected progress that students make by the end of Year 11 in English and mathematics has been rapidly improving and is now better than the national average. The number of students making more than expected progress is improving, but is below the national average.
- In all year groups students are now achieving well and making good progress. School data show that by the time students reach the end of Year 9, some have made much better progress than what would be expected for that age.
- As a result of effective tracking and intervention, students from minority ethnic groups do well, and often better than others in the school. The support given to students with English as an additional language enables them to improve their literacy and numeracy skills quickly and to achieve well.
- Too few of the most-able students are achieving the higher grades of A* and A, at GCSE.
- Students who are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium receive additional support to develop their literacy and numeracy skills through a nurture group and additional support from the Learning Support Unit in the school. This is helping to support their learning across a range of subjects and ensure that rapid progress is being made. The few students taking courses outside the school receive good support and generally achieve well.
- As a result of effective monitoring and targeted support, the progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs is often very good and demonstrates the school's values of promoting equality and opportunity for all.
- The attainment of students supported by the pupil premium and known to be eligible for free school meals continued to improve in 2013 and is better than the national average. There is little difference in the grades that students achieve compared to others within the school. The gap in the progress that these students make in English and mathematics, compared to other students in the school, has narrowed considerably over the past three years.
- The school encourages reading across the curriculum as well as intensive support programmes to develop reading skills. Registration time is used positively to promote reading.
- Early entry to GCSE examinations in English and mathematics now ensures that students are entered for examinations appropriately so that they achieve their best.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The majority of teaching is good and there is outstanding practice in many subjects across all year groups.
- In the better lessons, there are high expectations and very positive relationships. Teachers have good subject knowledge and also an astute knowledge of every student, enabling them to create activities that both engage and challenge. In these lessons, students are motivated and keen to succeed.
- Some of the lessons observed had students engrossed and captivated, such as an outstanding English lesson where the teacher was clearly passionate about his subject and created a stimulating learning climate where students made excellent progress.
- In a few lessons, where teaching is less effective, teachers do not always provide enough opportunities for students to find things out for themselves. As a result, this does not enable students to develop fully their independent learning skills and their ability to learn by

themselves. Likewise, the level of challenge, especially for the most-able, is too inconsistent in these lessons.

- The school has a highly accurate view of the quality of teaching. During the inspection the judgements of teaching in all joint observations undertaken by senior leaders with inspectors concurred with the school's views on strengths and weaknesses.
- Outstanding teaching was observed in physical education where effective planning, sequenced activities, precise questioning and high levels of challenge typified these lessons. Likewise, an outstanding science lesson was observed where students worked independently and were able to articulate their views about what they were learning clearly.
- Some marking of students' work, such as in English, is very detailed and provides clear and specific comments to inform students what they need to do to improve. However, this good practice is not applied consistently across all subject areas.
- Literacy and numeracy skills are promoted well in many subjects. The majority of teachers are skilled in developing students' speaking and listening skills.
- Teaching assistants are generally used well in lessons, particularly to support disabled students and those who have special educational needs. They help students to learn, develop skills and achieve well.
- Students believe that they learn well in most subjects and value the additional support that is given to them by all adults in the school. According to the school's own surveys, parents also believe that teaching is good.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students are mostly well-mannered and polite and have a positive attitude. They recognize the improvements made in the school and are proud to be part of its community. Relationships are generally positive and harmonious.
- Students report that they feel safe in school and have appreciated the care and support from staff. They have a good awareness about all types of bullying, including racist and homophobic bullying; students understand how to keep themselves safe, supported by clear programmes and assemblies, such as those observed supporting anti-bullying week.
- Attendance is a clear strength of the school and is above the national average.
- Exclusions, as a result of alternative strategies used by the school, have reduced significantly.
- Whilst punctuality to lessons is good, not all students arrive on time for the start of the school day.
- Staff and students believe that the school has improved especially because of the improvements in behaviour. Rewards and sanctions are used fairly to ensure that there are clear expectations and standards. Low-level disruption in lessons is uncommon.
- Systems used by the school to track attendance, exclusion and behaviour are in place but not sufficiently refined to inform the school of what the next steps are to improve behaviour even further.
- In some lessons, a few students are not actively involved in their learning and a few fail to recognise that their progress would improve if they participated more.
- The behaviour of students outside of lessons, and particularly in areas that become easily congested, is sometimes not as good as the behaviour observed in lessons.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively through a wide range of enrichment activities, as well as in lessons. Links to the community, such as preparing meals for the elderly, and other partnerships provide students with meaningful opportunities to celebrate and consider its diversity.
- Those students who may be particularly vulnerable are looked after and supported well.
- The responses to the school's parental surveys indicate that a large majority of parents agree that students behave well, they are not bullied, that they are cared for well and that they feel safe at school.

- The facilities, both inside and outside the building provide students with many opportunities to interact with each other and the community, such as with the school's own gardening area.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, governors and senior leaders have a good understanding of their school and, through a determined resilience to improve, have ensured better outcomes for its students. Staff performance is managed effectively and this has resulted in the quality of teaching being improved.
- Leaders at all levels are highly ambitious for the school and its role in the community. Systems for monitoring and evaluating how well the school is doing are generally effective, identifying strengths and what the school has to do to improve further. Leaders see that a more detailed analysis of behaviour is required to help to identify any improvements needed in behaviour.
- The leadership of teaching has ensured that staff work together to develop their practice and learn from each other as part of their 'teaching and learning communities'. There are clear priorities for developing teaching and learning in the school.
- Leaders set targets for students that are now based on making at least good progress. Targets are known by students and are mostly used effectively within subject areas. The school's tracking system identifies underachievement early on and encourages teachers to set more challenging targets.
- Heads of subject departments demonstrate a shared commitment to improve further. They understand what the key priorities are and have robust improvement plans to achieve them. All are involved in checking on the quality of work in their departments and ensuring high standards. The leadership of the Learning Support Unit is highly effective and ensures high-quality provision and that staff are skilled in meeting the needs of the students in the unit.
- The school has reviewed its curriculum and ensured that what is provided for students is appropriate and enables them to achieve their potential, whilst also preparing them for future pathways.
- The school has a wide range of enrichment activities which, together with the school's strong links with the local community, contribute well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The local authority is aware of the strengths within the school and the areas for improvement. Support is provided by an advisor as well as external reviews of standards, such as the quality of teaching.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has been structured to ensure that there are close links with all areas of the school. Governors are passionate about the school and have a clear understanding of its performance, particularly in terms of systems for checking the progress of those students known to be eligible for the pupil premium and teachers' pay awards being linked to the quality of teaching and their performance. Performance management is rigorous and is clearly linked to the new Teacher Standards.
 - Governors are aware that they could consider in greater detail the impact of the additional funding that the school receives and how well the school caters for the needs of the most-able.

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	119730
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	426187

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	971
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dave Hollins
Headteacher	Dean Logan
Date of previous school inspection	11 January 2012
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