

Poynton High School and Performing Arts College

Yew Tree Lane, Poynton, Stockport, Cheshire, SK12 1PU

Inspection dates

21–22 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The gap between the achievement of students supported by the pupil premium and that of their peers is not closing quickly enough.
- Senior and middle leaders do not monitor rigorously enough. Consequently, inconsistencies in expectations exist, such as in the quality of marking and feedback.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is not a high enough priority. Good and outstanding teaching practice is not shared effectively to raise the standard of teaching across the school.
- The special educational needs of students are not identified precisely enough. The impact of the teaching and support they receive is not monitored and evaluated effectively to check whether they are making the best possible progress in their learning.
- Governors do not find out enough important information for themselves about the school's work. They are not rigorous enough in holding leaders to account, particularly about the progress being made by all students.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher is an astute, highly effective leader. He knows his school well and, more importantly, what needs to be done for it to become outstanding again. In the short time he has been in post, his actions have already brought about improvements across the school.
- Students in the sixth form achieve very well and make a valuable contribution to the school community. This reflects the strong leadership in this phase of the school and the effectiveness of the Study Programme.
- For the last three years, the overall attainment and progress of students at the end of Key Stage 4 have been significantly above national averages.
- Teaching is mostly good and some is outstanding, which enables students to achieve well over time. In the majority of lessons, they make good progress and learn well.
- Students behave extremely well around the school. They are polite, friendly and respectful.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 49 lessons taught by 49 different teachers, of which three were joint observations with senior leaders.
- Six groups of students met with inspectors. Discussions were also held with staff, including senior and middle leaders and newly qualified teachers. A meeting was held with the Chair of the Governing Body and four other governors. A meeting was also held with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of 117 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), and of 86 questionnaires completed by staff.
- Inspectors read a range of documents. These included information on the school's self-evaluation, school improvement plans, data relating to students' current progress, as well as policies and records on safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.
- The inspection was carried out following two complaints made to Ofsted that raised serious concerns about the quality of the leadership and management of the school and the contribution made by the school to the well-being of students. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector decided that an inspection of the school should take place to follow up the whole-school issues that were raised.

Inspection team

Anne Seneviratne, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jane Jones	Her Majesty's Inspector
Andrew Henderson	Additional Inspector
Tudor Griffiths	Additional Inspector
Derek Davies	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Poynton High School is an 11–18 specialist performing arts college. It is much larger than the average-sized secondary school, with more than 300 students in the sixth form.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are looked after by the local authority and children of service families) is well below the national average.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students or those with special educational needs supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below that found nationally.
- The school meets the current government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- A small number of Key Stage 4 students access alternative provision at Stockport College.
- The headteacher joined the school in September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of the school's senior and middle leadership by:
 - prioritising the monitoring and review of the performance of different groups of students, particularly those who are supported by the pupil premium, so that any gaps in achievement are closed
 - sharing good and outstanding practice with all staff, to raise further the standard of teaching and learning across the whole school
 - ensuring that the special educational needs of students are identified precisely, so they can be supported through high-quality teaching and appropriate interventions, and that the impact of these actions is monitored and reviewed regularly, to enable these students to make the best possible progress in their learning
 - developing further the skills of senior and middle leaders so that they can monitor rigorously and use this information to eradicate any inconsistency in expectations and weakness in practice, and evaluate the impact of their work.
- Improve the rigour with which governors hold leaders to account and find out for themselves important information about the school's work:
 - an external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved
 - an external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Achievement data for the last three years show that from above average starting points, students make good progress to reach high standards by the end of Key Stage 4. The percentage of students attaining five A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, has been significantly above the national average for the last three years. This strong picture of attainment has been a hallmark of the school's work and its local reputation for the last decade.
- In 2013, the proportions of students making and exceeding expected progress, in English and mathematics, from each different starting point, were above national figures.
- However, underneath these very positive headlines, lies some variability and gaps exist between the achievement of groups of students. In 2013, students supported by the pupil premium funding attained slightly over a grade below their peers in English and mathematics. Only 33% of this group gained five or more A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, compared to 77% of their peers. This picture is the same when progress comparisons are made. Over the last three years, there has been little evidence that these gaps are narrowing and some have widened. Since September, closing the achievement gap for these students has been the top priority for senior leaders and they have used the pupil premium funding on extra staffing provision and resources. Convincing evidence shows that this is having an impact. In English and mathematics, the Year 11 cohort, when compared to the same stage last year, shows a big decrease in the gap at expected and more than expected levels of progress. Although gaps exist in other year groups, these are not large and some students funded by the pupil premium are doing better than their peers.
- Students with special educational needs have not achieved well in the last two years at the end of Key Stage 4. Current achievement data relating to this group are unreliable as identification of academic needs is not done precisely enough. Tracking information about gains made in spelling and reading ages also raises concerns about the reliability of assessments. However, the support provided for vulnerable students in the inclusion centre enables them to make progress with their learning.
- Students achieve well in the sixth form. In 2013, examination results in both AS and A level improved on the previous year and compare favourably with national figures. At AS level, all attainment and progress measures are significantly above national averages. At A level, after a slight decline in 2012, the value-added measure is now strong but not significantly above the national average. Current progress data indicate a continued improving trend at both AS and A level. The small minority of students who start their post-16 studies without a grade C in English or mathematics are successful in achieving this grade during their time in the sixth form.
- The school's arrangements for alternative provision are rigorous and effective. The small number of students who attend college are very positive about their experiences. They are all working towards achieving a vocational Level 2 qualification and are very clear about how these experiences will help them move onto their post-16 courses.
- The most able students are entered early for GCSE mathematics and then have the opportunity to study GCSE further mathematics.
- There are very effective links with the primary schools and transition is a clear strength of the school. This helps students to make a strong start to their Key Stage 3 learning. The Year 7 catch-up premium funding has been used to provide more literacy and numeracy support. The majority of students eligible for this funding last year accelerated their progress in English and mathematics.
- In the majority of lessons seen during the inspection, students' learning and progress were good and occasionally outstanding. Students made the strongest progress in lessons when teachers had high expectations of what they might achieve and the contributions they might make.
- Students are encouraged to read widely and often. They are given time to read for pleasure during English lessons and tutor time.

The quality of teaching**is good**

- Good teaching has been a key factor in the consistently high level of overall student achievement at all key stages over recent years. Most teaching is good and there are pockets of outstanding practice, which means that in the majority of lessons, students make good progress and learn well. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is particularly strong.
- Students generally show high levels of engagement. Teachers in the performing arts, the school's specialism, give students opportunities to take on leadership responsibilities where they support each other's learning. Students are actively engaged in their learning and they make very good progress. This was also seen in a food technology lesson where the teacher's skilful planning and delivery allowed all students to take responsibility for their learning and make outstanding progress.
- In the majority of lessons where teaching is good or better, teachers use their expertise and passion for their subject, coupled with their knowledge of their students, to enthuse and involve them in the lesson. They ask probing questions to extend students' understanding and use a range of assessment throughout the lesson to inform the learning and ensure that all students are making good progress.
- In the minority of lessons where the quality of teaching is not as good, teachers do not always provide work or activities which enable all students to make the best possible progress. In these lessons, questioning rarely promotes dialogue and debate and, as a result, it does not always secure or develop all students' understanding. In some of these lessons observed during the inspection, teachers did not have high enough expectations of what their students could achieve, particularly the most able.
- In students' books, there are examples of effective feedback where students are given precise guidance on how to improve, and evidence that this leads to a higher standard of work. However, this is not consistent and there is variability in the quality of marking across, and sometimes within, departments.
- Students spoken to during the inspection think that the quality of teaching they receive is generally good. They feel they learn better when the teacher creates opportunities for them to be actively involved and take responsibility for their own learning. They do not find it helpful when teachers make excessive use of textbooks and worksheets, which is particularly the case in physics.
- Teachers do not always use teaching assistants effectively to support the learning of students during the lesson.

The behaviour and safety of pupils**are good**

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Nearly every parent who responded to 'Parent View' said that their child felt safe and was well looked after at school. This was echoed by those students spoken to during the inspection. Substantial evidence provided by the headteacher, linked to the wider issues raised by the complaints to Ofsted, demonstrates that the school has robust systems and procedures which contribute strongly to helping its students stay safe. Leaders in school are proactive in ensuring that safeguarding measures are strong. Staff work extremely well with parents and outside agencies to make sure students' welfare needs are met.
- The behaviour of students is good. Students behave extremely well around school. They are polite, friendly and respectful to adults and one another. Students enjoy their learning and are keen to do well. When they are given the chance, they grasp the opportunity to work together and also on their own, responding maturely and demonstrating initiative. Discussions with students revealed that although there is only a small amount of low-level disruption in lessons, this is not dealt with consistently by different teachers.
- A questionnaire carried out with two form groups and discussions with groups revealed that the majority of students feel that bullying is rare in school and that when it occurs, it is dealt with robustly. However, some students feel that casual use of homophobic language still exists in

school, despite recent assemblies and staff training on this issue. Students have a good understanding of e-safety issues and this is given a high profile in school.

- Overall attendance and persistent absence have compared very favourably to national figures over recent years. The most recent attendance figures show further improvement and that any gaps which existed between student groups have narrowed. Fixed-term exclusions were very low in the last two years; since September 2013, they have seen further significant reduction.
- Sixth-form students make an outstanding contribution to the whole school community. The house system provides opportunities for them to be excellent role models for the younger students. This was clearly evident when sixth-form students played a key role in a house assembly about Holocaust Memorial Week. All students were attentive and engaged, and the assembly made a strong contribution to the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school offers many other opportunities which contribute to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development but the tracking of who is taking advantage of these activities is not sufficiently robust.

The leadership and management

require improvement

- Since the last inspection, leaders have not continued to develop outstanding practice to drive improvements for all students. Leadership across the school has been reactive rather than strategic and proactive; it has not enabled some students, particularly those eligible for the pupil premium and those with special educational needs, to make the best possible progress.
- Since his arrival in September, the headteacher's very astute and highly effective leadership has fostered a culture of improvement. He knows his school well and, more importantly, what needs to be done in order for it to become outstanding again. In the short space of time he has been in post, he has increased the capacity of the senior leadership team, developed a strategy for raising achievement and introduced a framework for more effective self-evaluation and school improvement. The impact of these actions can be seen already in the current achievement of students, particularly the improved progress of those eligible for the pupil premium funding.
- The sixth form is a strength of the school and this is a result of highly effective leadership. Sixth-form students are guided, supported and taught well, which enables them to be successful in their studies and to progress onto higher education, appropriate training or meaningful employment. They value this and, in turn, they make a very strong contribution to the whole school community.
- The headteacher ensures that the arrangements for teachers' performance management are robust. For example, he has not approved some teachers' targets yet this year and he is working on a one-to-one basis with these staff to adjust them. There is clear evidence that the headteacher and governors use the performance management process effectively to determine teachers' salary progression.
- The school's view of its own performance is not sufficiently robust. This is particularly the case in its judgement of the quality of teaching, which is overgenerous. Rigorous systems to monitor accurately the quality of teaching and learning across the school are not embedded and this area of leadership requires improvement. Driving improvements in teaching and learning is not a high enough priority. Expert knowledge and features of outstanding teaching exist within the school, but these are not shared effectively with all staff.
- The quality of middle leaders across the school is variable and there are particular concerns with the leadership of science. There is no consistent approach to how middle leaders monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in their departments. A lack of rigorous monitoring procedures, strategic analysis and incisive action at this level has resulted in inconsistencies in expectations and some weakness in practice both between and within departments.
- Over recent years, students with special educational needs have not achieved well and leadership of this area is weak. The absence of robust monitoring means that leaders do not have an accurate view of the quality of provision and the impact of interventions on students'

achievement.

- The previous inspection report contained only one area for improvement which was to revise the current system for setting students' targets in Key Stage 4 in order to raise standards even further. This has not happened and targets are not being used in an aspirational way in any of the key stages in school. The headteacher has moved some way towards doing this since his arrival and has ensured that the focus is now firmly on students' progress. However, these data on students' progress are not being used systematically to have the most effective impact on their achievement.
- The headteacher describes the school's relationship with the local authority as 'positive'. He values the support he has received from its human resources staff. The local authority is providing support for the leadership of the science department. Leaders at the highest level in the local authority have 'total confidence' in the recently appointed headteacher.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body have allowed wider issues in the local community to distract them from their core purpose of holding leaders to account for the achievement of all students who attend the school. Recent vacancies on the governing body have been filled with people with a range of relevant skills and expertise and this has strengthened its capacity. Governors now monitor more closely how the pupil premium funding is being spent and are beginning to evaluate systematically the difference this makes to students' achievement. They know that, although improvements have been made since September, they need to be more rigorous in holding leaders to account. They rely on what they are told about matters such as the quality of teaching and how salary progression is linked to performance management rather than finding out for themselves important information about the school's work.

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	111436
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	441263

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
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	1,560
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	314
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Malcolm Adams
Headteacher	David Waugh
Date of previous school inspection	22 October 2008
Telephone number	01625 871811
Fax number	01625 874541
Email address	info@phs.cheshire.sch.uk

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