

Brownedge St Mary's Catholic High School

Station Road, Bamber Bridge, Preston, PR5 6PB

Inspection dates

29–30 January 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Since the previous inspection, achievement overall, and particularly in mathematics, has not been as good as it should have been. As a result, the percentage of students reaching five or more GCSE grades including English and mathematics has fallen and was broadly average in 2013.
- Over the past two years, teaching has not been good enough to ensure that enough students made good or better progress in their studies.
- The quality of marking is inconsistent and on occasions, students make the same mistakes over again.
- The challenge for the most able students is sometimes not high enough to ensure that they reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Activities provided for students in lessons are not always exactly what they need to make the progress they should.
- Strategies to promote students' speaking skills are not fully embedded.
- The curriculum does not yet meet the needs and interests of students closely enough.
- Strategies to promote positive aspirations for students are not fully developed.

The school has the following strengths

- There are excellent intervention programmes to support students who find the work difficult. As a result, students known to be eligible for free school meals and those with special educational needs made better progress than their classmates in 2013.
- Teaching is improving and there are examples of outstanding teaching in both key stages.
- Parents and staff hold the school in high regard.
- Students feel safe; behave well and on occasions, outstandingly well. The school's work to ensure its students are secure is outstanding.
- The dedicated headteacher, supported well by a talented senior team, has put in place well-thought-out strategies to further raise achievement. Accordingly, attainment and progress are now rising rapidly in English and mathematics.
- Governors know the school well and hold the leadership to account with rigour.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 32 part-lessons. They also attended a school assembly. Three lesson observations were made jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors spoke to four groups of students, including senior prefects and the head girl and head boy. They also held discussions with members of the governing body, including the Chair, heads of faculty, pastoral leaders, and staff responsible for the intervention programmes, the special educational needs coordinator and the senior leadership team. In addition, they met with a representative of the local authority.
- They took account of the 142 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View.) They also considered the 35 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the school at work and considered internal and external student attainment and progress data, students' files and exercise books, school development planning and the school's view of its own performance. They also looked at the ongoing impact of the school's former specialist status in sport, mathematics and computing, and scrutinised documentation in relation to child protection, safeguarding, attendance and behaviour.

Inspection team

James Kidd, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Bernard Robinson

Additional Inspector

Jonathan Woodyatt

Additional Inspector

Denis Oliver

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized school. Following falling rolls prior to the previous inspection, numbers are now rising. There is a below average percentage of girls.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly in line with that usually found.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional funding for those students known to be eligible for free school meals, those from service families and those looked after by the local authority) is below average.
- Most students are White British and there are few students who speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- There are 28 students from Key Stage 4 who attend a range of off-site provision at a variety of colleges and who follow courses including, for example, construction, catering, bricklaying, motor vehicle maintenance, public services, and hair and beauty.
- The school draws support from a range of schools in relation to the teaching of mathematics and curriculum planning. It is a Schools Direct partner of Bishop Rawstorne C of E Academy.
- The headteacher and staff support other schools also, for example in relation to headteacher induction, the teaching of physical education (PE), and the raising of attainment.
- The school has the Coaching Quality Mark and is a placement school for candidates following the National Professional Qualification for Headship.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching and learning in order that students' progress, particularly in English and mathematics, continues to accelerate by:
 - ensuring a greater consistency in the quality of marking in order that students do not make the same mistakes again
 - ensuring that the challenge for the most able is always good enough to enable them to reach the standards of which they are capable
 - ensuring that activities in lessons are exactly what students need to make good and better progress in their studies
 - embedding the work already begun to promote students' speaking skills in the classroom and beyond.
- Further develop the curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs, interest and aspirations of students even more closely.
- Continue to promote the positive aspirations of students.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, the percentages of students reaching five or more GCSE grades A* to C have declined and attainment has been in line with the national picture overall. This demonstrates that students' achievement, from their broadly average starting points on entry to Year 7, requires improvement.
- Moreover, in both 2012 and 2013, in the majority of subjects a below average proportion of students reached the highest GCSE grades of A* and A, demonstrating that the most able did not always make the progress they should have done.
- Nonetheless, standards in both English and mathematics are now rising strongly, as a result of better teaching, better assessment and very well-directed intervention activities to support students who are identified as underachieving or experiencing difficulty with their work. The school is fully aware that its impressive support for students' emotional needs has a direct link to their academic progress too.
- School data demonstrate that the percentages of students now making and exceeding expected progress in English and mathematics are rising and that achievement is accelerating. This is supported by inspection evidence, including lesson observations, discussions with students and a scrutiny of their work. Students in the current Year 11 cohort are showing the potential to reach above average standards in English and mathematics. However, some inconsistencies in academic performance across subject areas remain.
- In addition, following disappointing results in 2013, performance in the humanities subjects is now much better and a well-above average percentage of students have opted for GCSE courses in history.
- As a result of well-directed use of pupil premium funding, for example to provide a range of activities as part of the school's Learning Academy and also through the homework club, the gaps between the performance of students known to be eligible for free school meals continue to close.
- In 2013, for example, the gaps were narrower than seen nationally. In 2013, for example, the average points score in English for students known to be eligible for the pupil premium improved to be only 2.5 points behind the performance of other students nationally. In mathematics, it improved by three points to be only 4.7 points behind.
- The 'Springboard' class, also, is used very effectively to support those students who enter Year 7 with attainment below National Curriculum Level 4. The progress and attainment of these students are rising too.
- Excellent support for disabled students and those with special educational needs ensures that these students often reach better standards than seen nationally. For example, in 2013, the performance of students supported at school action plus was well above the national average.
- The performance of students in Key Stage 4 who attend alternative off-site courses is monitored closely by the school. These students are making good progress in their studies.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because, since the previous inspection, it has not been good enough to ensure that students' progress, particularly in mathematics, was good or better. However, the quality of teaching is improving and during the inspection no inadequate teaching was observed. Indeed, the majority of teaching was good and there were examples of outstanding classroom practice in both key stages.
- The school places considerable emphasis on developing students' literacy skills and, during the inspection, there were examples of students being encouraged to understand and to use the terminology which is specific to a variety of subjects.

- Students generally display a positive attitude to their studies and they enjoy learning. Relationships in the classroom between students and between students and staff are good.
- Students make good and even better progress when they are challenged to reach for the highest standards. For example, in a Year 7 mathematics class, students were delighted when they were required to attempt a GCSE question in relation to distance-time graphs. Not only did this challenge the most able in the class, it also motivated each individual to do their best.
- However, on occasions there is a 'one-size fits all' approach to the activities provided for students in lessons. While middle- and lower-ability students often make good progress in these lessons, the most able are not challenged well enough to reach the standards of which they are capable.
- Students make outstanding progress when teachers' questioning encourages them to give extended answers and to justify their views. In a Year 11 history lesson, for example, students demonstrated their knowledge and understanding when explaining the Reichskristallnacht from a specific point of view and predicting what would happen after the event in relation to Hitler's treatment of the Jews.
- In lessons such as these, students' speaking skills develop rapidly, which supports their progress in all subjects of the curriculum. In some lessons, however, these skills are not emphasised well enough. Nonetheless, the school recognises this and is now building on the debating activities which have already been established and which are popular among students.
- Staff and teaching assistants support disabled students and those with special educational needs very effectively and these students are included in everything the lessons have to offer.
- The quality of marking is inconsistent. There is exemplary practice, which congratulates students on their effort and achievement and which gives them accurate and detailed advice on how to improve. Some marking, however, is cursory and students sometimes make the same mistakes over and over again.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students are very proud of their school and speak highly of the adults who work with them. They value, in particular, the many opportunities they have to take responsibility and to support younger students, those who need help with reading, for example. They are also grateful for the many opportunities they have to act as literacy, mathematics and sports leaders.
- Indeed, the school, through its former specialisms supports primary school pupils in mathematics, their understanding of e-safety and also in sport and games. The school has sporting links with a Muslim girls' school and student sports leaders lead a range of activities in local primary schools.
- Students feel safe in school because, in their words, 'Adults are approachable and protective and prefects and older students look after younger ones.' They add that the school places emphasis on teaching them about internet safety, the dangers of using social media sites and also of cyber-bullying.
- Students' behaviour is good and on occasions outstanding. Any instances of low-level misbehaviour are handled effectively by staff and relationships between students and the adults who work with them are strong. Both fixed-term and permanent exclusions have reduced markedly since 2012.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Parents agree and have a high regard for the school and for how it supports their children. Almost all parents who responded to Parent View believe that their children are safe and happy at Brownedge St Mary's. As one commented, 'We have been delighted with the way students and staff have welcomed our daughter. We could not have made a better choice of school for her.'
- Well-qualified staff in the Extended Learning Centre and also Benedict Room inclusion unit provide academic and emotional support for those students whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. Indeed, the Learning and Resource Centre is alive with activity at the breakfast and lunchtime clubs and during the after-school homework club.

- Students believe that on the rare occasions bullying occurs it is handled well by staff. Students have a good understanding of the many different forms bullying can take and they benefit from the extensive poster campaign, which tells them why the word 'gay' should never be used inappropriately. In addition, racism is not tolerated in school and incidents of racist behaviour are low.
- In addition to a well-organised extra-curricular programme, including subject clubs, educational visits and visitors, students take part in a range of drama and music activities. They also show an enviable generosity of spirit by their support for charity and also by serving the elderly in the local area. The school is now attempting to promote further the aspirations of its students and also of the community it serves.
- Attendance continues to improve and remains high.

The leadership and management are good

- Prior to and since the previous inspection, the leadership had to deal with several curriculum and staffing issues, which were partly as a result of falling rolls and which led to a decline in students' progress and attainment.
- Strong leadership from the dedicated and well-informed headteacher and the talented senior team has led to better assessment and more effective teaching, which in turn has resulted in acceleration in students' progress in both English and mathematics.
- Staff have a high regard for the senior leadership and comment, 'We feel very well supported by the leadership, which provides good in-service training opportunities to help us develop our teaching and therefore the learning of our students.' Similarly, staff believe that performance appraisal arrangements are robust and based directly on the progress their students are making.
- Middle leaders have received bespoke training both internally and outside the school walls on how an accurate understanding of data can bring about improvements in students' achievement. Heads of subject departments now identify any possible underachievement earlier; along with the special educational needs department and also staff who support students eligible for 'catch up' and pupil premium funding, they put in place excellent intervention programmes to help students perform at higher levels.
- The curriculum now comprises a greater range of vocational courses than ever before, but the school leadership recognises that further development of the curriculum is of the essence if it is to meet the needs, interests and aspirations of its students even more closely.
- The school promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development most effectively. Students have a keen awareness of cultures and religions which are different to their own, support a wide range of charities, and, through the connection with a school in Ghana, are proud to do what they can for youngsters less fortunate than they are.
- Safeguarding and child protection policies and practice are exemplary and fully meet current requirements. Discrimination in all its forms is rejected and equality of opportunity is promoted soundly.
- The local authority continues to provide strong support for the school, particularly in relation to leadership development and school self-evaluation.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are actively involved in the life of the school, know it and support it well but also hold the leadership rigorously to account. They ask challenging questions about all aspects of school life.
 - They monitor the spending of pupil premium and 'catch up' funding closely and evaluate the impact of this spending on the progress and attainment of those pupils known to be eligible for support through it.
 - In addition, they consider data on student achievement and are fully aware of trends in progress and attainment over time.
 - Governors oversee the new performance appraisal arrangements and make sure that teachers

only receive financial reward if they meet their classroom targets for students' progress.

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	119784
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	440848

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	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	678
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Livesey
Headteacher	Martin Reynolds
Date of previous school inspection	9 May 2011
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