

Tarporley High School and Sixth Form College

Eaton Road, Tarporley, Cheshire, CW6 0BL

Inspection dates

5–6 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The ethos and culture of the school develops both students and staff equally well and creates an enthusiasm for learning.
- All groups of students make rapid progress during their time in school and standards are well above the national average.
- Through well thought out and targeted spending of the extra money provided, the school is rapidly closing the gap that existed between the achievement of students eligible for support through the pupil premium and that of other students.
- Teachers are highly knowledgeable and enthusiastic; they have a determination to secure the best possible outcomes for all groups of students.
- Students do not always reflect sufficiently on teachers' comments about their work and then improve it. Some opportunities to develop students' thinking further through extended discussion are missed.
- Teaching assistants and other support staff make an invaluable contribution to the achievement and well-being of students.
- Students behave themselves extremely well and are eager to learn; they respect one another and their teachers.
- Students feel very safe in school and have a thorough awareness of e-safety.
- The sixth form is outstanding. It is highly successful in helping students to move on to higher education, training or employment.
- Leaders at all levels, managers and governors are relentless in their drive to bring about further improvement, particularly to the quality of teaching and students' achievement.
- A strong focus on the professional development of staff is a key factor in developing high quality, innovative teaching.
- The curriculum is tailored to meet the needs and aspirations of students extremely well. The rich variety of extra-curricular activity has a positive impact on students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.
- Governors support and hold the school to account very effectively and have a first-class understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 36 part-lessons, including several jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors met with four groups of students of different abilities including from the sixth form, and talked informally with others in lessons and around the school. An inspector also listened to a group of Year 8 students read.
- Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders and representatives of the governing body. They also spoke informally with many teachers.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents including the school’s self-evaluation and development plan, evidence about the work of the governing body, data relating to students’ current attainment and progress, records of students’ behaviour and attendance, and documents pertaining to safeguarding.
- Inspectors took account of the 128 responses to Ofsted’s online questionnaire, Parent View, three letters from parents and 14 inspection questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Sally Lane, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Barbara Dutton	Additional Inspector
Christine Addison	Additional Inspector
Bernard Robinson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Tarporley High School and Sixth Form College is an average-sized school.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional government funding to support students known to be eligible for free school meals, children of service families and those looked after by the local authority) is well below the national average.
- The majority students are White British with a very small proportion of students from minority ethnic groups. Very few students speak English as an additional language.
- A small number of students attend alternative provision for part of each week. The school uses Mid-Cheshire College to provide level 1 vocational courses.
- Strong links are in place with all partner primary schools to ensure continuity of learning and progress from Key Stages 2 to 3. The school is part of the Rural Excellence Action Partnership to share best practice with the three other rural schools.
- The headteacher is a local leader of education and has supported new headteachers in nearby schools.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Tarporley High School and Sixth Form College converted to become an academy in August 2012. When its predecessor school, Tarporley High School and Sixth Form College, was last inspected by Ofsted, its overall effectiveness was judged to be good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase opportunities for students to deepen their thinking by providing more opportunities for them to engage in extended discussions.
- Encourage students to reflect on, and respond to, oral and written feedback, in order to improve their work still further.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Students enter the school with attainment that is above the national average. By the end of Year 11, their achievement is significantly above national averages. In 2013, 76% of students gained five or more A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics.
- The most able students achieve highly. Their attainment in English Baccalaureate subjects is well above the national average because expectations of them are high.
- The proportion of students making expected progress and the proportion making better-than-expected progress is high compared with national figures. This has an impact on their attainment and ensures students are well prepared for progression onto the next stage of their education or training.
- Students who enter the school with literacy and numeracy skills that are below those expected for their age receive effective support, including that funded through the Year 7 catch-up funding. This enables these students to make rapid progress and so make up lost ground.
- Reading is promoted well throughout the school and a particular feature is made of World Book Day. Students are encouraged to try different types of books and reflect on their preferences, particularly during library sessions. Lower-ability readers thrive on the opportunity to read aloud together.
- School leaders are making excellent use of pupil premium funding to ensure that eligible students receive the mentoring and targeted support they need to make accelerated progress. The gap between the attainment of students known to be eligible for free school meals and that of others in GCSE English and mathematics is narrowing rapidly so that now they are approximately only half a grade behind their classmates. It is clear that school leaders pay close attention to the successful promotion of equality of opportunity for all.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make outstanding progress relative to their starting points. Their progress is far more rapid than similar students nationally. This is because of the excellent partnership between teachers and teaching assistants in supporting these students in lessons and the strong systems that are in place to identify and review the impact of support.
- The school uses early entry to GCSE in English and mathematics with great success. The students for whom this is appropriate are carefully selected based on their rates of progress. In 2013, 41% of students achieved an A* grade in mathematics GCSE and went on to study statistics or further mathematics to prepare them for their A-level studies. This approach is having a beneficial effect on enabling these most able students to reach their potential and challenging them still further.
- The very small proportion of students who attend part time, off-site learning at Mid-Cheshire College make similarly strong progress to their peers. There is regular liaison between school and college, ensuring students' progress is well monitored.
- Achievement in the sixth form is outstanding. From average starting points, students' progress is significantly above national averages by the end of Key Stage 5. Almost all students successfully complete their A-level courses, enabling them to successfully move on to higher education or career options. Rigorous tracking arrangements are in place with support that is both timely and appropriate contributing to the strong success rate.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- High-quality teaching over time has a remarkable impact on students' progress, particularly in the key areas of English and mathematics.
- Teachers are knowledgeable and self-assured. Students learn at a rapid pace because they are engrossed by a daily diet of challenging planned activities and group work. Students' individual needs are well known to staff and work is set at appropriate levels to stimulate interest and

endeavour. Students are clear about the aim of each session and for what they are aiming in terms of successful outcomes. They know that their teachers expect them to do their best.

- Effective questioning probes students' understanding of what they are learning but there are limited opportunities for students to engage in extended discussion to deepen their thinking, for example through well-developed explanations or evaluations. Sometimes, there is limited evidence of students being able to demonstrate new learning.
- Teachers regularly check students' work but, sometimes, there is a lack of detail on what and how to improve and not enough opportunities for students to respond to this feedback..
- Teaching assistants are well trained and work very cooperatively with teachers. They are effectively deployed to help to accelerate the progress of individual students. The two teaching assistants who are specifically deployed to help students in receipt of support through the pupil premium are having a considerable impact on their progress and engagement in learning.
- The needs of disabled students and those with special educational needs are planned for well, resulting in very successful learning for these groups.
- In a few lessons, opportunities for developing students' literacy and numeracy skills are missed. However, other opportunities such as World Book Day and library lessons provide excellent support for literacy skills.
- There is a wide range of opportunities across the school year, within and beyond the curriculum, to support the development of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is generally promoted well, for example, through studying the impact of Chernobyl and feelings evoked by music. However, some opportunities to deepen students' thinking by providing more opportunities for them to engage in extended discussions are missed.
- Teaching in the sixth form is outstanding and is of an even higher quality than in the rest of the school. Learning is enhanced to a high level and information from assessments is used especially well to inform teaching and improve learning. Marking is particularly helpful in enabling students to make improvements over time.
- Teachers are very conscientious and highly committed. In lessons, students are enthused and conscientiously engaged due to the respectful relationships they have with their teachers.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Students consistently show highly positive attitudes to their work and a willingness to work collaboratively. They come to lessons prepared to learn and engage readily in learning activities, responding positively to teachers and to each other.
- Around the school, behaviour is calm and orderly and almost all students show courtesy to one another. They are not derogatory, nor aggressive about the physical appearance or ability of other students. They are keen to engage in conversation and show good manners.
- Students wear the correct uniform to a high standard. In lessons, they have the equipment they need and have clear expectations of how they should behave.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Students feel safe in school and have a thorough knowledge of e-safety because the school places great emphasis on their understanding at every opportunity.
- Parents strongly agree that their children feel safe and are happy in this school.
- Students have a good understanding of different types of bullying, including prejudice-based and cyber-bullying through assemblies and in lessons within the curriculum. There is some rare homophobic name calling in the form of banter but this is addressed speedily and effectively by senior leaders. Students say that there are very few instances of bullying and that effective systems are in place to deal with issues very quickly. The school monitors incidents carefully.
- All staff and most parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) feel that the school deals effectively with bullying and that students are well behaved.
- Attendance is above average overall, but is lower for those students who are supported through the pupil premium. This year, their rate of attendance has improved considerably due to

effective intervention and is now higher than the national figure for this group, although still below their peers.

- The school does not use internal isolation and there has been a dramatic drop in the number of exclusions over time particularly for pupil premium students, due to the effective support and mentoring they receive.
- Behaviour is extremely good in off-site provision. The school ensures that students are safe when attending alternative provision and the college endorses the fact that there is good, regular liaison with the school. This ensures that attendance, behaviour and progress are all well monitored.
- Staff are aware of the needs of students whose circumstances make them vulnerable and strong systems are in place to identify and review their needs and the impact of interventions. Provision for disabled students and students with special educational needs is a strength of the school.
- Students in the sixth form have many leadership opportunities including work to help younger students. They act as safeguarding mentors and students can go to speak to them if feeling vulnerable.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The governors and headteacher have a vision of excellence for the school, which other leaders and staff share. There is a sense of drive and purpose and a collegiate responsibility to ensure students achieve their potential.
- The school's self-evaluation is accurate. All leaders have a firm understanding of the school's strengths and areas of further development and are unrelenting in their pursuit of excellence.
- Heads of subjects make robust analyses of their departments, which are monitored regularly. This means that these middle leaders are constantly improving and sharing their successes.
- Teaching is still improving strongly from an already very successful base and is regularly monitored through departmental reviews, effective performance management and coaching. Action research and other aspects of professional development, including sharing of best practice and leadership development, are having a very positive impact on the improvement of innovative practice and 'growing its own' leaders. All leaders, teachers and support staff are very positive about the quality of their professional development opportunities.
- In addition to effective teaching and support, rapid student progress is driven by aspirational target setting, regular checking and support programmes to address underachievement.
- Senior leaders have begun the process of 're-imagining' the curriculum; they are developing the curriculum to ensure the aspirations of students are realised. 'Aspire, Learn, Achieve' is their motto. They have sought the views of students and faculties in the first steps towards innovation and now faculties are making appropriate changes. The curriculum has a choice of courses that meet the needs of students who have different abilities. As a result students are ambitious, whether following an A-level course in the sixth form or a work-related course in Key Stage 4.
- Extra-curricular activities are diverse and appreciated by students. They include everything from the Gold Duke of Edinburgh award to playing the ukulele. Students are given extra time on Wednesday afternoons to join in these activities, many of which are delivered by external providers. Occasionally, their participation is hampered by the lack of transport.
- Strong and well-established partnerships make a valuable contribution to the school's effectiveness. For example, close links with feeder primary schools and superb transition arrangements are used extremely well to ensure the smooth transfer to secondary school for all pupils.
- The school is not part of an academy chain and does not receive support from the local authority. Other teaching school partnerships such as the Cheshire Leadership and Teaching Alliance provide opportunities for leadership development and for sharing best practice, as does the school's work with the Rural Excellence Action Partnership.
- The school uses a variety of strategies to engage all parents and actively seeks face-to-face contact as well as e-communications. Good attendance at parents' and open evenings are an

indication of the positive relationships between school and home. The vast majority of parents would recommend the school to others.

- Independent advice and guidance are provided for students at regular points on their journey through school; these include a career action plan. The impact of this is seen in every single student going on to further education or training after Year 11.
- The director of the sixth form shares the headteacher's ambitious vision for the school and has very high expectations of all students. One student remarked, 'You know they want you to achieve.' Close checks on the quality of teaching and achievement in the sixth form are rigorous and highly effective, showing a marked improvement on the previous inspection.
- All safeguarding procedures are adhered to and statutory requirements are met.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are well qualified and highly committed to supporting the school. The chair of the teaching and learning committee is a national leader in governance and brings much expertise to support the work of the school. Governors have an excellent understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the school and, as a result, they support and hold to account in equal measure. Evidence of this is seen in the exceptionally thorough minutes of different committees where members ask rigorous questions to support the strategic direction of the school. They visit the school regularly, for example to take part in lesson observations or as part of subject review meetings. Their involvement is linked to the school's priorities.
 - Governors hold to account the headteacher and senior leaders in their management of resources, they know about the management of teachers' performance and how the school rewards good teachers and tackles any underperformance. They have a good understanding of the issues regarding the safeguarding of students. They question the impact of the pupil premium funding and are fully aware of the rapid improvements being made, while still continuing to hold leaders to account for the quality of teaching and the achievement of all students.

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	138483
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	426270

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	989
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	140
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Waddington
Headteacher	Sarah Lee
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01829 732558
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