

# The Hawthorne's Free School

Fernhill Road, Bootle, Liverpool, L20 6AQ

## Inspection dates

5–6 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires Improvement	3
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires special measures.

- Many students make poor progress, particularly in mathematics. The leadership of mathematics is inadequate.
- The most able students are not challenged enough in lessons. As a result, they do not make the progress they are capable of.
- Students who are supported by the pupil premium funding make less progress, attain lower standards and are absent more often than other pupils. This additional funding has not been used effectively.
- Boys attain much lower standards than girls.
- Students' attendance has deteriorated over the year. Girls' attendance and the attendance of students in their GCSE year are of particular concern.
- The performance data collected by leaders is not accurate enough. Data is not used well to make the necessary improvements to teaching.
- The Governing Body does not know where much of the underperformance lies in the school and so only provides limited challenge.
- Senior leaders have an overgenerous view of the performance of the school.

### The school has the following strengths

- The curriculum promotes the students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development well. As a result, they are respectful, polite, and friendly and they behave well in and around the school.
- Students are happy in the school. They feel safe and are complimentary about the 'family feel' of the school.
- The leadership of special educational needs is effective. As a result, the progress of students with special educational needs is beginning to speed up and their attainment is improving.
- The school works well with parents, frequently collecting their views.
- Links between the school and colleges, employers and universities have raised students' aspirations.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 17 lessons. In addition, they looked through students' work and the school's own records of the quality of teaching. Inspectors observed an assembly and gathered additional evidence from around the school.
- Inspectors spoke to a group of seven students and listened to them read. They also spoke to students around the school, and in class, and took account of the results of the school's survey of pupils' views from December 2013.
- Inspectors considered 34 responses from Parent View, which is Ofsted's on-line parent questionnaire, the results of the school's own survey of parents and carers, as well as the views of a parent governor. In addition, an inspector spoke to a parent on the telephone.
- An inspector had a discussion by telephone with the headteacher of another school, which is educating a small number of Hawthorne's students.
- Inspectors spoke with four representatives of the Governing Body and took into account a letter from the Vice-Chair of Governors. They scrutinised minutes of Governing Body meetings.
- An inspector spoke by telephone with an external consultant who is working with the school and who takes part in the head teacher's performance management discussions.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders and teachers who lead on aspects of the school's work, including the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) and assistant headteachers.

## Inspection team

Allan Torr, Lead inspector

Elizabeth Haddock

Derek Barnes

Her Majesty's Inspector

Additional Inspector

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

- The school opened in September 2012 on the site of a secondary school closed by Sefton local authority. Many of the students initially came from the closed school and a nearby Roman Catholic high school that closed at the same time. The free school was established to maintain secondary education in the community and was established by a group of teachers and parents.
- The school is much smaller than other secondary schools and the number of students on its roll is falling. There is a larger proportion of girls than average. Almost all students are White British.
- The Pupil Premium is funding granted to schools to support students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, who are looked after by the local authority, or who are children of parents and carers in the armed forces. Over half of the students at Hawthorne's are supported by this fund, which is almost twice as many as in other secondary schools.
- Approximately one in five students has been identified as having special educational needs at the school action stage. This means that the school provides the support and teaching for these students. There are almost twice as many students at this stage at Hawthorne's than in other secondary schools. The proportion of students with special educational needs at school action plus, or who have a statement of special educational needs, is more than twice that in other secondary schools.
- A very small number of students are educated off site at Harmonize Free School in Liverpool.
- The school met the floor standards for 2013 (these are the minimum attainment and progress expected by the government for secondary schools).

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in all subjects, particularly in mathematics, by:
  - making sure the most able students are challenged in every lesson, make at least expected progress and achieve the highest grades
  - maximising opportunities to correct and extend literacy and numeracy skills in all subjects.
- Make effective use of the pupil premium funding so that students who are known to be eligible for support make at least expected progress and the gap in attainment between them and others narrows. An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how the deployment of the funding may be improved.
- Improve leadership and management, including governance, by:
  - making sure data are clear and accurate to enable leaders at all levels, governors and teachers to use them effectively to raise standards, accurately track students' progress and challenge performance
  - making sure leaders' judgements about the quality of teaching are based upon students' progress data and learning within lessons, so that there is an accurate view of the school's performance

- ensuring the leadership of mathematics improves the quality of teaching and improves students' mathematical knowledge and skills.
- Raise students' attendance, including that of students who are supported by the pupil premium, by:
  - providing positive rewards and encouragement for good attendance and punctuality
  - reinforcing with students and their parents the importance of coming to school on time and the consequences of poor attendance.

Inspectors strongly recommend that the free school should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is inadequate

- Students' achievement is inadequate because some groups of students do not attain the standards or grades they are capable of and because their progress is too slow. Students known to be eligible for free school meals, for example, attain well below those students who are not eligible for free school meals. In many subjects and classes, according to the school's own data, the gap between these two groups is getting larger, for example, in Years 10 and 11 in English, mathematics, sciences, history, geography and languages.
- The proportion of students attaining five good GCSEs (A\* to C grades) was well below average in 2013. The current Year 11 students are predicted to attain higher grades but the gap in attainment between boys and girls is predicted to widen, as is the gap in attainment between free school meal students and non-free school meal students. In English, students supported by the pupil premium were approximately a full grade below those who were not supported by the fund. In mathematics, the gap was smaller but the pupil premium students were still approximately a year and a half behind other students. Standards in mathematics are much lower than in most other secondary schools. There are some individual success stories. The few looked-after students make good progress because of the school's actions and interventions.
- Boys attain much lower standards than the girls. In a majority of subjects and year groups they make less progress. The school's data indicate that boys' progress is quickening in some subjects; for example in Years 9 and 10 in mathematics and Year 11 in sciences and geography.
- More-able students are not challenged enough and as a result a smaller than average proportion make expected progress and not enough attain the higher grades at GCSE. In reading, for example, there is limited tracking of students' reading habits, meaning more-able students are not challenged to read and understand more complex texts. In Year 8 in English, the school's data suggest the more-able students make less progress than other students. In a mathematics lesson, for example, an able student finished his work but had no extension work to complete and sat quietly doing nothing for five minutes while waiting for the teacher. In another mathematics lesson, students were not stretched at all.
- Students with special educational needs have started to make faster progress. A group of 36 students, for example, identified with low reading ages, received targeted teaching using an intervention programme. A few weeks later their reading ages had risen considerably and they were better placed to access the full curriculum. Much of the targeted teaching, however, has only been put in place in the last few months. Targeted teaching for mathematics, for example, had been due to start in September but time was lost looking for a mathematician to lead the programme.
- In some classes, spelling mistakes are not corrected and there are missed opportunities to further improve students' use of language. Students' mathematical skills are not as well developed as they should be. The achievement of pupils taught off-site is mixed.

### The quality of teaching

### is inadequate

- Teaching is inadequate because it is not having the impact it should in enabling the more-able students or those students supported by the pupil premium to reach the standards they are capable of. Generally, teaching is not closing the gaps in attainment between different groups of students. There is not enough good teaching to raise standards quickly.
- The teaching of mathematics over time is inadequate. In one set of students' exercise books incorrect answers were marked as correct or not marked at all. In another set of marked books there was no feedback to students on improvement, extension or challenge. The teaching observed in mathematics frequently failed to improve students' mathematical skills or understanding.
- Teaching did not extend students' literacy and mathematical skills. Teachers made errors, or

engaged in only a basic level of questioning which limited students' progress. Students' spelling mistakes were ignored or the teacher spelt words incorrectly. Marking and feedback to students does not improve their learning as there are few opportunities for students to correct mistakes or respond to comments.

- Some additional adults contribute well to students' learning and development. For example, an apprentice working in physical education lessons gave helpful tips to one student. These adults supported students well and made sure they were self-reliant and thought for themselves.
- Targeted teaching of students who have special educational needs is working. Consequently, they are making faster progress and the gaps in rates of progress between them and other students are closing. In one teaching session, a teaching assistant worked with a student extending reading skills. There was a mix of questions that encouraged the student to find and analyse information, helping the student to understand the meaning of new and difficult words.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** requires improvement

- The school's work to ensure students are safe and secure requires improvement. The attendance of some groups of students is below average, including that of Year 11 students preparing to sit GCSEs. Girls' attendance is lower than that of boys. Students supported by the pupil premium have more absence than those who are not supported by the fund. The governors are unaware of trends in absence for different groups of students.
- Students responding to surveys and those who talked to inspectors said they feel safe. They have someone to go to if they feel worried or vulnerable and they have been taught well by the school about how to protect themselves. For example, they knew about how to keep themselves safe when using technology and social networks and how to avoid gang crime or activities.
- The school works well with the police and other agencies to educate students in how to stay safe. In one assembly, a police officer spoke with clarity and conviction about the dangers of recreational drugs.
- The students who spoke with inspectors said that bullying was rare in school. They knew about different types of bullying such as cyber-bullying, homophobia, racism and withdrawal of friends. A few students said they heard comments around school such as 'that's so gay' or teasing because of the way other students and people look. Student surveys, the views of parents and the school's behaviour records confirm incidents are rare. When they do happen, the school follows them up to check that behaviours change and the victims feel safe. Consequently, it is very rare for someone to be either a victim or a perpetrator again.
- Students' behaviour is generally good. Around school they are friendly, polite and considerate, helping each other and showing a good level of respect. Similarly, they show teachers and other adults respect regardless of status within the school. During the inspection at break and lunchtime there was no aggression or jostling, litter was picked up rather than dropped and students responded quickly to adults' requests.
- The number of exclusions is low. The number of internal exclusions is reducing each term and there are few repeat offenders. The students in the unit are predominantly boys and students with special educational needs.
- Students' conduct in lessons is generally good. They usually sit quietly, attentively and respond to the teachers' requests. However, a few students are not punctual or well prepared for lessons. In a Spanish lesson, for example, six students started the lesson without pens and in the Year 7 and 8 assembly, four girls arrived late.

### **The leadership and management** are inadequate

- Leadership and management are inadequate because leaders' work has been ineffective in ensuring adequate progress for students. Some gaps between different groups of students have widened. Students' attendance has declined rather than improved. There is no track record of

improvement.

- Leaders and teachers do not have accurate and credible performance data. Consequently, they cannot assess students' progress or take effective action if students underachieve. The data system shown to inspectors is based on a starting point that is not always subject-specific. This means that although students in a year group started with different levels of ability in mathematics, sciences, history, English, geography and languages, they are all recorded as the same starting point. If starting points are not accurate, leaders cannot measure progress accurately.
- The assessment systems and the data are not indicating to leaders what they need to know about students' attainment and progress. Governors commented that the data presented are too complex and there is a lack of a clear message: inspectors agree.
- Individual teachers and middle leaders do not make effective use of data to improve students' learning and progress. The mathematics leader's review, for example, identified some strengths and weaknesses in the data but did not detail what they were. As a result, senior leaders and governors were not given the information that they needed about mathematics to make the necessary strategic decisions.
- The school's self-evaluation of teaching is too generous. There is too much focus on teaching style and the structure of lessons rather than the impact of teaching on students' learning. Leaders do not enter students early for their examinations. They do, however, use a mock examination to help diagnose students' attainment and what they need to do before the real examination. The results of these mock exams are often very different to the teachers' assessments.
- There is a clear link between the school's improvement plan, teachers' performance management targets and salary progression. Performance management is taken seriously and the headteacher has already taken steps to tackle inadequacy in teaching.
- The headteacher is highly committed to the school. She has a clear vision and high expectations. Parents and carers and students who completed surveys stated that they believe the school to be well led and managed.
- The headteacher, staff and governors have created a friendly ethos within the school. Although there are gaps between groups of learners, in other respects the school promotes equality of opportunity and makes sure everyone is treated fairly and equally.
- The curriculum contributes well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The extensive range of extra-curricular activities, trips and visits has widened students' horizons and perceptions. For example, they have the opportunity to visit theatres, the ballet, concert halls and to go to New York to observe other cultural settings directly. Students work with primary pupils, and join with senior citizens, to learn about different perspectives. The school is determined to raise students' aspirations. There are many opportunities for students to visit universities, colleges and employers and to gather useful information, advice and guidance about possible careers and future education.
- Although the curriculum for the majority of students is broad and balanced, the alternative curriculum provision is more limited. The students involved do not have a broad range of curriculum subjects that they can study. Nevertheless, the work the alternative provider has done to raise individual students' attendance and their achievement is good. The school is outward-looking and the headteacher has joined the network of schools in Sefton. As a result, leaders at all levels are sharing good practice; however, the impact of this work so far is limited.
- Middle leaders vary significantly in their effectiveness. Some leaders, for example, the special educational needs coordinator and the pastoral deputy headteacher, have clearly improved the school's provision and students' achievement. Others have had little impact.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors had not fully understood that the attainment of students eligible for the pupil premium had worsened compared to other students and that their attendance had deteriorated. This, in part, is due to a lack of clear, accessible data from middle and senior leaders. The monitoring of the impact of the pupil premium is inadequate although governors know how the pupil premium fund is spent.

- Governors have some understanding about the quality of teaching and plan to extend this further by drawing on expertise from within the Governing Body. The school meets most statutory obligations.
- The governors who spoke to inspectors were highly knowledgeable, skilled and committed to the school. There is evidence in the minutes of Governing Body meetings and in discussion with governors that they challenge leaders as well as give support. One governor, for example, noticing the school does not yet comply with the 2010 Equality Act, is helping the school to consider its approach towards including adults and students who may be transgendered and to training in how to tackle homophobia.



## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	138260
<b>Local authority</b>	Sefton
<b>Inspection number</b>	426043

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy free school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	361
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ven Ricky Panter
<b>Headteacher</b>	Lynne Wise
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 9223798
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