

# Gateacre Community Comprehensive School

Hedgefield Road, Liverpool, Merseyside, L25 2RW

**Inspection dates** 7–8 May 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
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

- From their starting points, the progress of students in many subjects, including science, languages and humanities, is not rapid enough.
- The quality of teaching is not consistent in enabling students to make good progress in some subjects.
- Teaching does not always meet the needs of students, particularly the least able, whose progress is too slow in several subjects, including mathematics.
- Marking does not always offer students appropriate direction to help them make improvements to their work. When comments are made by teachers, students do not routinely respond to these.
- Students do not always display positive attitudes to learning. At times in lessons, teachers do not have high enough expectations of students' behaviour. Equally, students are not always given appropriate tasks; which means they can lose focus.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, with the support of senior leaders and governors, has prioritised making improvements in the quality of teaching in English and mathematics. As a result, the progress of the most able and middle-ability students is now good in these subjects.
- Teaching and achievement in art and drama are strong across the school.
- The sixth form is good. Effective leadership has improved teaching. This, together with good advice and guidance, enables many students to go on to attend the university of their choice.
- The school's leaders have made significant improvements to the overall attendance of students, including supporting students at risk of very high levels of absence. Leaders are aware that more still needs to be done.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited 48 part-lessons taught by 47 teachers. One of the lessons seen was observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors observed and spoke to students during lessons and at lunch and break times. Inspectors also met formally with groups of students from Key Stages 3, 4 and 5.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders. A meeting also took place with members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including arrangements for safeguarding, performance management, monitoring reports and records of the school's work, student attendance figures, information about students' attainment and progress, and students' work.
- Inspectors were able to analyse the online questionnaire gauging the views of parents (Parent View). There were 101 responses.

## Inspection team

Fiona McNally, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Osama Abdul Rahim	Additional Inspector
Clive Hurren	Additional Inspector
Pamela Hemphill	Additional Inspector
Fiona Dixon	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized secondary school.
- The large majority of students are White British; a much smaller than average proportion of students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of students eligible for support through pupil premium funding is above average. The pupil premium funding is additional funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement for special educational needs is well above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.

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

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good in all areas, and supports at least good progress of students in all subjects, by:
  - ensuring that activities and resources support the needs of different groups of students, particularly the least able
  - improving questioning so it is consistently effective in all classes and helps students to think and work things out for themselves
  - ensuring teachers check students' understanding more regularly and use the information to move the learning on for different groups of students, especially the least able
  - improving the quality of marking and feedback so that students get specific guidance to help them make improvements to their work and also have adequate opportunities to respond to the feedback they get.
- Improve students' behaviour and safety by:
  - ensuring all teachers apply the school's good policies for managing students' behaviour, ensuring punctuality to lessons and effective use of time
  - working with families to continue to make improvements to the students' overall attendance and continue to reduce the number of students who are excluded from school.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Students come into the school in Year 7 with levels of attainment well below average. From these low starting points, students go on to leave Year 11 with levels of attainment in most subjects, including mathematics, science, humanities and languages, which, although improving, are currently still below average. As such, their progress is not fast enough and students' overall achievement, therefore, requires improvement.
- By the time students leave Year 11, the proportion achieving five or more GCSE passes at grade A\* to C, including English and mathematics, is well below average. Nevertheless, it is clear that current students are now doing better than they were in the past.
- In 2013, the proportion of students exceeding the expected rate of progress, particularly in mathematics, was below average, but students currently in the school are now making faster progress. In the current Year 11, for example, students are set to meet national expectations for the proportions making expected and more than expected progress in both English and mathematics when they take their examinations later this term. It is also clear that Year 10 students are making similarly improved progress.
- The proportion of students achieving GCSE grades A\* and A is below average in all subjects, including in mathematics, science, humanities and modern foreign languages. However, a significantly higher than average proportion of students achieve A\* to C in art and drama.
- Overall achievement in the sixth form is good. Students enter Year 12 with attainment significantly below average and leave Year 13 with attainment that is still below average. However, the careful planning and organisation of the courses on offer, coupled with wise and supportive guidance, means that a high proportion of students go onto take up places at university after Year 13.
- The progress of the most able and middle-ability students, in English and mathematics, continues to improve and is now good.
- The progress made by the least able students is not good enough in mathematics. Expectations of what these students can achieve are not always high enough and the resources used do not always support students to get better at learning to do things for themselves. As a result, when some of the least able students are not closely supported by an adult, they are not always able to fully access their work and do not demonstrate good attitudes to learning.
- The progress of students currently in the school (as seen in lesson observations, the scrutiny of students' work, and the school's own data) shows that students in the current Years 10 and 11 are on course to reach higher attainment in GCSE English and mathematics and other subjects than seen for many years.
- Students supported through the pupil premium, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, do not do as well as other students. The in-school gap in attainment between these groups has been, on average, over one grade's difference in each subject. However, current data for eligible students presently in school shows that, like many other students, they now make faster progress in English and mathematics and that the attainment gap is closing.
- Some students are entered for GCSE examinations in mathematics in Year 10 or early in Year 11. In the recent past, students' outcomes from this early entry have been in line with the outcomes achieved by other students at the end of Year 11 and, as such, were not high enough. In line with the faster progress being seen for many students in mathematics, students who were very recently entered early for GCSE mathematics have gained higher results. These better outcomes strongly reflect the improving picture of the progress students are making in mathematics.
- The improvements seen regarding the corresponding achievement of different groups of students show the school recognises the importance of providing all students with equal opportunities, although senior leaders recognise there is still work to be done to ensure all students, particularly the least able, achieve as well as possible.

## The quality of teaching requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is not consistently good. The school has made significant improvements in the quality of teaching in English and mathematics. As a result, there is good achievement in these areas for the most able and middle-ability students. However, there is not yet enough good teaching, particularly for the least able students and in subjects such as science. This is why teaching requires improvement.
- Too often, students are confused about what is expected and insufficient checks are made to clarify misconceptions to aid them to move on quickly in their learning. At times, this means the most able students are given work that is too easy. However, more often it means that the least able students are not able to fully access the work they are given and are not confident to work on their own. In this way, teaching does not always set high enough expectations for the students.
- The quality of teachers' questioning is not consistent. When questioning is effective in promoting good learning, it requires students to think more deeply about the subject matter and also encourages them to develop their ideas and contribute to discussions and debates. For example, in an English lesson for middle-ability students in Year 8, the questioning by the teacher elicited a lot of information from the students, showing them to be knowledgeable about the text and highly engaged in their work. The teacher's questioning and prompting ensured students made specific and regular reference to parts of the text and used ambitious language. In turn, students demonstrated high levels of confidence and offered differing opinions in front of their peers. The skilful questioning supported the discussion and also meant the students worked very effectively as a group.
- However, this is not consistently the case across all subjects. At times, questions do not probe students' understanding and often only require short or rather superficial answers from students. This restricts the development of students' thinking skills and also leads some students to become disengaged with their learning and lose focus. It also means that some students become too dependent on their teachers and less able to think for themselves.
- The quality of marking is inconsistent across, and within, subjects. There is good marking, particularly in English and mathematics, which is detailed, regular and which offers students specific advice about how they can make improvements to their work. Indeed, inspectors observed students taking full account of the feedback received from teachers' written feedback and acting positively on it. This marking, too, emphasises the importance of neat presentation of work.
- However, too often marking lacks this success in supporting students to improve. In several subjects, such as science and humanities, it is too vague with very little guidance offered to direct students to how they can aim for higher standards in their work. In particular, the marking of the least able students' work often does not identify errors in spelling and grammar, which are then repeated by students. Equally, in some subjects, there is not enough emphasis on careful presentation in books and some students do not show enough pride or care in their work.
- However, there is now effective teaching in the sixth form where students come in with very low levels of attainment. Despite this low attainment, supportive guidance about courses and options, and successful teaching greatly improves the students' chances of going on to university, and many do. Inspection evidence shows that the quality of teaching in the sixth form, and outcomes for students, are continuing to improve further.
- Teaching across the school is improving in response to advice and training especially in English, mathematics, drama, art, and information and communication technology.
- The teaching for disabled students and those with special educational needs comprises of some effective group work and individual support in lessons. However, the use of intervention or specialist support is not always effective in encouraging these students to do their best and, as a result; their achievement requires improvement although the gap between these students and others in school is closing.

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

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. When activities do not closely match the needs of groups of students and capture their enthusiasm, they lose interest and the motivation to learn.
- At times, students are not willing to immediately follow teachers' instructions. In addition, some teachers do not insist that students follow instructions and there are occasions where teachers continue to talk when students are chatting amongst themselves. As a result, some students miss out waste learning opportunities. This contributes to them not achieving well in some lessons. For example, in some subjects, students' work shows that a small number of students do not always finish their work as a result of not using their time appropriately.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. This has improved in response to improvements made by leaders. For example, leaders identified an issue with the number of behaviour incidents related to physical violence. Their work with key students, who have received support to manage their anger, has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of these types of incidents. Students' conduct outside of lessons is good, including in the dining area and in social areas. However, there are a few students who take too long to move between classrooms and arrive late to lessons.
- The school's behaviour records show that there have been a large number of serious behavioural incidents which have resulted in students being excluded from school. Due to the concerted efforts of the leadership team to engage with students and understand the reasons behind their poor behaviour, the number of incidents has greatly reduced over the past 12 months, with fewer students being repeatedly excluded. However, the number of exclusions is still above average.
- The school ensures that students are aware of how to keep themselves safe. There are regular opportunities within lessons and through special events for students to understand how to use the internet safely. Students report that they feel safe and enjoy coming to school, which is reflected in the strongly improved attendance of students. There have been consistent improvements over a number of years.
- Students of all ages have a good understanding of what bullying is and can describe different forms of bullying, including homophobic bullying and cyber-bullying. Students and parents agree that bullying is rare and dealt with immediately and effectively when it occurs.
- A large majority of parents state that behaviour is managed well in the school. Students also believe that behaviour is well managed around school although some of the younger students report that, in class, teachers do not always apply the sanctions in place for poorer behaviour and this can lead to disruptive behaviour in lessons. In some classes, this can become repetitive. Equally, a very small minority of staff feel that behaviour of some students is too difficult to manage in class, which is why they sometimes overlook it.
- Students say all adults in the school care for them greatly. They report that they particularly appreciate the opportunity to arrive to school early or stay late in order to eat and do their homework. Students report that school is always a safe haven. Some students reported that the school's supportive work with them and their families had saved them from being excluded from school and that now they are making good progress and feel safe and happy. Others reported that the school had worked with the local housing authority to move students and their families to other areas of the city, due to the difficulties they were facing where they lived.
- Pupils wear the school uniform correctly at all times. The classrooms and other areas around the school are tidy and well organised. However, students do not always take enough pride in their books, where the presentation of their work is not always neat and well organised.

**The leadership and management are good**

- The headteacher is very well supported by capable senior and middle leaders, and governors, in communicating high expectations to all staff and students. Leaders are accurate in their view of the school's performance and correctly identify its strengths and areas for further development.



As a result, teachers have a very clear understanding of the school's priorities for improvement and there is strong teamwork in place throughout the school.

- The leadership has rightly identified where improvements have been needed and also responded with urgency to the recommendations made by last year's HMI monitoring visit. As a result, students' achievement in mathematics is improving, and continues to improve in English. It is clear that their work to accelerate the progress of the middle and higher-ability pupils has been successful.
- While not all areas for improvement have moved forward at the same brisk pace, leaders have made deliberate and very well-informed decisions to focus on the most important areas to improve first. The rapid impact of the leaders' improvement work in key areas such as mathematics, the improving outcomes in the sixth form, and the reduction in the rate of exclusions demonstrate their effectiveness, clarity of vision, and strong capacity to continue making improvements in other areas of the school, such as raising students' achievement in science.
- Robust performance management of staff is in place. There are regular checks on the quality of teaching, which are accurate. The outcomes of the checks have helped leaders make tough decisions where weak teaching has been apparent. The checks inform leaders which teachers need extra support and help to identify key focus areas for the training of all staff. Consequently, the quality of teaching and students' achievement is getting better.
- The curriculum has been improved in order to suit the needs and interest of students with more precision, and leaders continually look for ways to make further improvements. A recent initiative developed by the English team, for example, introduced a 'word of the week' to emphasise the importance of literacy across all subjects. As a result, students' are using increasingly more sophisticated vocabulary and language, and their confidence in communicating verbally, and in writing, has improved.
- In the sixth form, helpful guidance about higher education options means that a high proportion of students who attend the sixth form gain places at their university of choice. In this way, the leaders' well-considered organisation of the curriculum in the sixth form genuinely improves the students' life chances.
- The school leaders are keenly aware that a key focus now is to ensure that the achievement of the least able students improves and that the teaching of these students, including the extra support in place for them, is a priority for improvement action.
- Leaders have worked hard to ensure attendance has improved overall, and have worked closely with other agencies and families to support students at risk from very high levels of absence. As a result, the number of students who are persistently absent from school has also reduced significantly. However, leaders are not complacent and are keen to continue improvements in attendance, as well as continuing to reduce the number of students excluded from school. The effective work done by school leaders to date in this area demonstrates their ability to challenge and overcome negative attitudes and bring about change for the better.
- Leaders have strong and coherent policies in place to manage behaviour at all levels. However, they are aware that a few teachers do not consistently apply these policies and have put more support in place for some staff.
- Leaders know and understand the students' and their families' needs and make an extra effort to support them; for example, by providing extended hours in which students come to school to use the school's computer facilities to do their homework. There are enriching and meaningful experiences in the classroom and a variety of events and activities outside lessons, such as residential trips for students, for example. These successfully promote the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school uses the pupil premium to ensure that the most vulnerable students have extra support; both in the classroom and after school. The impact of this is that the overall achievement of these students has improved, particularly in mathematics. The in-school gap in attainment between these students and their peers is now narrowing in both English and mathematics.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has worked closely with local authority. Advisory staff

have, among other things, provided support in mathematics and report that the school has worked well with them. As a result, the local authority has confidence that the school is well led and managed and will continue to make improvements to provision and outcomes for students.

■ Safeguarding procedures meet the statutory requirements.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors challenge senior leaders and are now far more aware of the school's data and what they say about the quality of teaching. Governors understand what the school has already done to support and improve the achievement of students, but are realistic that there is still more to do.
- There is effective management of the school's financial resources by the governing body. Governors know how pupil premium funding is spent and can demonstrate how this funding is making a difference to the students supported. They are also aware of where further improvements are needed in this area.
- Governors are aware of the performance management procedures in the school and have been prepared, along with leaders, to make tough decisions in response to weak teaching.



## 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>	104700
<b>Local authority</b>	Liverpool
<b>Inspection number</b>	432131

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>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1,295
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	200
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Derek Brown
<b>Headteacher</b>	Gerard Lonergan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 January 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 235 1400
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