

Walton le Dale Arts College and High School

Brindle Road, Bamber Bridge, Preston, Lancashire, PR5 6RN

Inspection dates 1–2 July 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Despite some fluctuation, the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C including English and mathematics is average and rising.
- The proportion of students making the progress expected of them and the proportion exceeding expectations in English and mathematics have improved and are now close to the national figures.
- Students who have special educational needs achieve well because of the strong support that they receive.
- Teaching is usually good with some that is outstanding. Teachers know their subjects well and establish strong, working relationships with their classes.
- This is a school where every individual student is valued equally.
- Highly effective care, guidance and support ensure that students feel safe.
- Students are proud of their school. They behave respectfully and maturely to each other and the adults working with them.
- Attendance has improved in recent years and is above average.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are equipped well for future success and life in a multicultural society.
- Leaders and managers at all levels know what the school does well and where it could do better. Teamwork is strong across the school in the pursuit of further improvement.
- Governors are knowledgeable and supportive. They hold the school to account effectively.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough students make more than the progress expected of them in English and mathematics because targets for students' progress are not always high enough.
- Teaching does not always set activities that are challenging enough, especially for the most able, and marking does not always show students how to improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 34 lessons taught by 34 teachers. Three of the observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors scrutinised samples of students' written work across a range of subjects.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior and middle leaders, two groups of students and three members of the governing body. An inspector also met with a representative from the local authority. Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation including: self-evaluation and development plan summaries; data relating to students' attainment and progress; information on attendance; documents and records about behaviour and safeguarding; records of the monitoring of teaching and learning and of performance management; and minutes of meetings of the governing body.
- Inspectors took account of 60 responses from parents to the online questionnaire (Parent View) as well as summaries of surveys of parental views carried out by the school. In addition, inspectors also took account of 51 staff questionnaires.
- During the inspection, students in Years 10 and 11 were not in school. Inspectors looked carefully at school data relating to their progress and achievement and at a sample of their written work in a variety of subjects.

Inspection team

Stephen Wall, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Osama Abdul Rahim	Additional Inspector
Jacqueline Rothery	Additional Inspector
Peter McKay	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Walton le Dale is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is above average and growing. The pupil premium is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- A large majority of students are White British. Nearly all students speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- A small number of students in Key Stage 4 attend Myerscough College for one day a week to study vocational courses.
- The school enters students early for GCSE in English and mathematics.
- The proportion of students who join the school at other than normal times is well-above average.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to improve the quality of teaching and its impact on students' learning and progress by ensuring that:
 - activities are always challenging enough, especially for the most able
 - students are always clear about what is expected of them before they start work on their own and that they understand fully the key words essential to completing the tasks
 - marking is of consistently good quality in showing students what they need to do to improve their work further.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management on raising achievement further by setting more demanding targets for students' progress in each class and holding staff rigorously to account for ensuring that students achieve them.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the school with levels of attainment that are generally significantly below those expected and sometimes well below those expected. For example, the Year 11 cohort who left the school in 2013 joined the school with very low levels of attainment. This was compounded further by an influx of students between Years 7 to 11, some with records of very low attainment and poor attendance.
- Because of this, the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE grades at A* to C including English and mathematics in 2013 dipped to below average. School data, confirmed by inspection evidence from scrutiny of work and discussions with senior staff, show that attainment for the current Years 10 and 11 students is now at least average and rising, representing good progress from their previous starting points.
- Most students make the progress expected of them from their individual starting points. In 2013, for reasons already stated, the proportion making better progress than this in English and mathematics was below national figures. School data, again confirmed by inspection evidence, show that the proportions making more than expected progress are now much more healthy and are set to be close to or above the 2013 national figures in the coming years.
- In 2013 the attainment of students known to be eligible for free school meals was approximately one GCSE grade lower than their classmates in English and mathematics. However, this wide gap was largely the result of a very high proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals having special educational needs and/or joining the school late with low levels of prior attainment. School data and inspection evidence show that, currently, the gap in attainment between students supported by the pupil premium and other students is closing rapidly and securely.
- The vast majority of the most able students make the progress expected of them. The proportion doing better than this is not consistently as large as it could be, however, because the most able are not always sufficiently challenged.
- Students who are disabled or with special educational needs achieve well because of the strong and effective support that they receive.
- The school checks meticulously on the attendance, behaviour and safety of the few students who attend part-time provision off site. School data show that most make good progress on their vocational courses.
- The school provides good support for students who join the school at other than normal times. Most make at least the progress expected of them from their often very low individual starting points.
- The school enters students early for GCSE in English and mathematics. The results are used both to motivate students and to allow the school to reorganise teaching sets and intervention to boost students' achievement. There is no evidence that early entry has anything but a positive impact on achievement.
- Scrutiny of work across the school and discussions with students about their work show that the school caters well for the development of their reading, writing and mathematical skills. Students have many opportunities to write at length in different subjects and many opportunities to apply their mathematical skills to solving problems in, for example, science and design technology. Those who join the school with weaker skills in reading benefit significantly from support and intervention provided by Year 7 catch-up funding. School data show that the vast majority make significant and rapid gains in improving their reading ages and comprehension skills.
- The fact that different groups of students make similar progress and achieve well shows the school's strong and effective commitment to providing equality of opportunity.

The quality of teaching is good

- Although a small minority of teaching requires improvement, most is good and some is outstanding.
- Students say that the activities that they are set in lessons are usually interesting and that they enjoy their learning. They say that activities are usually at just the right level of difficulty for them but that sometimes they find the work too easy. This is supported by scrutiny of work in students' books, especially those of the most able students.
- Most teachers plan their lessons effectively with a sharp focus on what they expect their students to learn. However, sometimes teaching does not make it clear enough to students what is expected of them and does not check rigorously enough that all students understand fully the most important new items of vocabulary before they start work on their own. This leads to some uncertainty and slows progress.
- Teachers forge strong and respectful relationships with the students in their classes.
- Teachers are adept at asking questions that make students think deeply and give extended, reasoned answers. This has a positive impact on developing students' speaking and communication skills.
- When teaching gets the level of challenge right and has high expectations of students, they relish meeting the challenge and make outstanding progress. For example, in a Year 8 French lesson for the most able students on the theme of talking about actions in the past tense, teaching took students on a step-by-step series of increasingly demanding activities. Students showed great enjoyment in rising to the challenges and, by the end of the lesson, were able to express themselves with remarkable clarity and apply what they had learned creatively to speak in French about other activities in the past tense that they had learned in previous lessons.
- Teachers mark students' written work regularly. However, the quality of teachers' comments varies too much in showing students what they need to do to make their work better. Students' books do not show that they routinely act on teachers' comments to make corrections or improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Students say that behaviour is generally good in lessons and that teachers treat them fairly. This view was supported by inspection evidence.
- Students are proud of their school. They take good care of the building which is free of litter and graffiti. Students wear their uniforms correctly without being constantly reminded and bring the right equipment to lessons.
- Occasionally, when teaching does not fully engage students or stimulate their desire to learn, students chatter among themselves and do not pay full attention. However, this is the exception rather than the rule.
- The school does its best to support students whose behaviour is poor, including procuring specialist advice and off-site support when necessary. The number of students being excluded either permanently or for a fixed amount of time is low. Exclusion is used as a last resort only after all other avenues have been exhausted.
- Students say that bullying of any kind is rare and that, when it happens, staff deal with it swiftly and effectively.
- School records show that there have been very few instances of bullying or racism in recent years and that appropriate action has been taken in response when incidents do occur.
- School records and discussions with staff confirm that staff receive appropriate training in managing students' behaviour and in safeguarding.
- In recent years, attendance has improved and is now above the national average.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Procedures and policies for safeguarding are fully in place and are reviewed regularly by senior

leaders and the governing body. School records show that staff training in safeguarding is regular and thorough.

- Students show firm understanding of what constitute potentially dangerous or risky situations and how to deal with or avoid them. They are fully aware of the risks presented when using new technologies such as social networking sites.
- A large majority of parents are happy with the quality of behaviour and safety.

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders and managers have an accurate view of what the school does well and where it could do better. They plan for the future effectively with a sharp focus on improving teaching and raising achievement.
- Leaders and managers check on the quality of teaching regularly and rigorously. Inadequate teaching has been tackled and eradicated. Targeted staff training has increased the amount of good teaching and this, in turn, is having a positive impact on students' progress and achievement.
- Middle leaders are keen to play their part in helping the school to improve further. They know what is expected of them and work hard collectively to make the school more effective and to improve the quality of teaching and achievement.
- Procedures for checking on students' progress towards their targets are fully in place and effective. Any underachievement is identified and tackled swiftly.
- Systems for checking on the performance of staff are linked closely to decisions about salary increases. However, the targets set for staff do not focus sharply enough on increasing the proportion of students expected to make better than expected progress, with the result that some pressure to improve this key indicator is lost.
- The range of subjects offered to students is wide and meets their needs. It is complemented by a very wide range of activities in sports, the arts and trips out that are very popular and broaden students' horizons significantly. These activities are central in developing students' spiritual, social, moral and cultural awareness and in preparing them well for life in a multicultural society.
- A very large majority of parents are very supportive of the school. The rise in the number of students seeking first-choice places into Year 7 in recent years reflects the growing reputation in the local community that the school is gaining.
- The local authority provides effective, light-touch support for this improving school.
- Leaders and managers ensure that policies and systems for safeguarding students are fully and actively in place.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body undertakes the necessary training to enable it to understand what the school does well and where it could do better. Governors use their understanding to ask the necessary questions to hold senior leaders and staff to account. From regular reports from the headteacher and other leaders and managers the governing body knows where weaker teaching exists and supports senior leaders in tackling it. Governors keep a close eye on the school's finances, including how the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding is allocated and the impact that that they have on students' well-being and achievement. The governing body ensures that all safeguarding policies and measures are fully in place.

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	119743
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	445974

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	625
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony Pickup
Headteacher	Tony Hill
Date of previous school inspection	15 June 2011
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