

Wetherby High School

Hallfield Lane, Wetherby, West Yorkshire, LS22 6JS

Inspection dates 7–8 October 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Too few students in Key Stages 3 and 4 make good progress from their starting points. By the time they leave Year 11, standards in GCSE examinations are average, but fell in 2014.
- The proportion of students reaching the highest grades in examinations is below average, especially in mathematics. The achievement of the most able requires improvement.
- Teaching has not enabled students to make good progress, particularly in mathematics. Expectations of what students are capable of achieving are not always high enough.
- Information about students' past achievement is not always used well to match work to students' varying abilities.
- Not all teachers are following the school's new marking and assessment policy. Students do not always know what they need to do to improve, particularly in mathematics.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Teaching across subjects is too variable in quality. Too few students reach the highest grades in AS and A-levels. Work, particularly for the most able, lacks challenge.
- Leadership of the sixth form is not yet good. Improvements are evident but new leadership has not yet resulted in more rapid improvement.

The school has the following strengths

- The new executive headteacher and acting headteacher have acted swiftly to reverse the decline in students' achievement in all key stages. They have enlisted the full support of staff.
- Governance is very strong taking firm action to improve the school's leadership. They challenge leadership and teachers in a timely manner.
- Teachers are eager to improve their own teaching. Teaching in Key Stages 3 and 4 is improving quickly. More students are now making good progress, particularly in English.
- Previously wide variances in the attainment of disadvantaged students compared to non-disadvantaged students in the school and nationally, have significantly narrowed. The pupil premium funding is used to good effect.
- Behaviour has improved and is good. Students feel very safe and acknowledge that the school is improving quickly. Attendance is above average.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is good. Students' awareness of British values, along with that of other cultures worldwide, is well supported through a strong programme of assemblies.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 44 lessons and part lessons across the school, including two that were observed jointly with senior leaders. Coaching sessions and an assembly were also observed.
- Formal discussions were held with the executive headteacher and acting headteacher, governors, a group of parents, middle and senior leaders, three groups of students, two teachers new to the profession and a representative of the local authority. Additional informal discussions were held with students in lessons and at break times.
- A scrutiny of students' work was carried out during lessons and as a separate exercise to identify the current progress of students and trends over time.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents. These included those relating to the performance of staff, the progress students in all year groups make over time, safeguarding, special educational needs, child protection procedures, minutes of the meetings of the governing body, external reviews by a national leader of education and those that relate to school leaders' own view of the recent achievement of students and school improvement.
- Inspectors observed behaviour in lessons, at break time and in the school canteen and assessed the quality of provision for inclusion and its policies and procedures.
- The inspectors took account of the 75 responses to Ofsted's online survey (Parent View), 45 responses to the staff questionnaire, two letters and two emails from parents, and a telephone conversation with a parent.

Inspection team

Colin Scott, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Mary Lanovy-Taylor	Additional Inspector
Andrew Henderson	Additional Inspector
Lynne Selkirk	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Wetherby High School is a smaller than average sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students eligible for extra support from the pupil premium funding is below the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school makes very limited use of alternative provision, including 'The Works' in Key Stage 4, 'PEP', the shared provision from the locality partnership group and a 'hospital home' agreement.
- The school is part of a soft federation with Carr Manor Community School in Leeds who provide it with leadership support and challenge.
- The executive headteacher took up post in May 2014 and the acting headteacher took up post in September 2014.
- Most students are of White British heritage. A minority come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds.
- The school has recently gained the International School Award from the British Council for its work supporting international cultural awareness among its students.
- The proportion of students with special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in Key Stages 3 and 4, in order to raise students' achievement, particularly in mathematics, by ensuring that:
 - expectations of what students are capable of achieving are high, especially for the most able, so that the proportion of students reaching the highest grades in GCSE examinations increases
 - teachers use information about students' past achievement to plan and provide work that is matched closely to their needs and abilities and is interesting and challenging enough so that they always work hard and do their best
 - all teachers apply the new marking and assessment policy so that students know what they need to do so improve and deepen their understanding of their work, particularly in mathematics.
- Improve the achievement of students in the sixth form so that the proportion of students reaching the higher grades in AS and A-level examinations is at least in line with the national average by:
 - ensuring that teaching in all subjects is good and consistently challenges students, especially the most able
 - further developing leadership of the sixth form so that the quality of teaching improves at a quicker rate.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The executive headteacher and acting headteacher are quickly and effectively reversing the decline in students' achievement seen in 2014. They have successfully enlisted the full support of staff, who are overwhelmingly confident in their ability to bring about improvement quickly. One member of staff noted, 'staff are on board and understand what needs to be done'. This is why the vast majority attend the voluntary weekly teacher training sessions on offer.
- Leaders at all levels and the governors are responding to the higher expectations of them. Leaders, including most middle leaders have an extremely honest and accurate view of the school's performance and know precisely what needs to be done in order to improve the outcomes for students. As a result, change is taking place quickly. Leaders are now clearly focused on ensuring that all teachers have consistently high expectations of students.
- The leadership of teaching is good. Leaders are extremely accurate and realistic in their view of the quality of teaching. Reviews of staff performance are astute, regular and detailed. Immediate programmes of support are put in place to improve teaching. Teaching is improving quickly, especially in English, and students are making better progress as a result. Leaders know, however, that despite improvements, some inconsistencies in teaching remain. Not all teachers yet adhere to the new marking and assessment policy particularly in mathematics.
- Leaders ensure that any additional government funding is used to good effect. Previous gaps in the attainment of disadvantaged students supported by the pupil premium compared to non-disadvantaged students, for example, have successfully narrowed. Year 7 catch-up funding helps those students with lower than expected levels of attainment in literacy, particularly reading, and is enabling them to make good progress and catch up with their peers.
- The local authority has supported the governors and new leaders well in bringing about more rapid improvements. Before the executive headteacher and acting headteacher took up their posts, they commissioned a report by a national leader of education, highlighting key areas where improvements were needed.
- Leaders have strengthened their approach to managing students' behaviour. New routines and higher expectations have already resulted in less disruption to learning in classrooms. Students are happy in school. Any discrimination or bullying is tackled swiftly. The number of fixed-term exclusions has reduced and more students are coming to school more regularly. This is helping to improve students' achievement.
- Leaders have made significant changes to the curriculum. It now offers a more appropriate match to students' needs and to the skills of the teachers. As a result, it now offers better equality of opportunity.
- Support for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding across all year groups is good. Students' awareness of British values, along with that of other cultures worldwide, is well supported through a strong programme of assemblies. The recently introduced Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, to which around 120 students across the school have signed up, is helping to ensure students develop a stronger awareness of both cultural and community issues.
- Leaders ensure that the very few students who access alternative education make good progress and attend well.
- Students in Year 11 and in the sixth form are guided well in their decisions as to which courses to choose. They are well prepared for their early careers and future aspirations.
- A small, but significant, number of parents are yet to be fully convinced by the changes recently made to improve the school. Inspection evidence shows the rapid and positive impact of new leadership. School leaders are now working successfully to communicate this message across the whole-school community.
- Leaders are ensuring that the sixth form is improving, but changes in leadership means that improvements so far have taken place at a steadier rate. The school's senior leadership are now strengthening the capacity of sixth form leadership, including by seeking support from the local authority.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have taken firm action to improve the school's leadership. They are clear in their belief of high standards and good progress. Governors hold a clear vision for the school's future, ethos and new direction. They have welcomed the support they have received from the local authority, which has enabled them to become much more effective in their roles.
 - The governing body knows the school well, is knowledgeable about the data which shows how well the school is doing, including in comparison with others nationally. They are now fully informed by leaders of all aspects of the school's work so that they are able to challenge staff effectively and in a timely manner. This includes a good understanding of the quality of teaching. They know that while teaching

is improving, it is not yet good overall.

- Governors ensure that staff do not automatically progress through the pay scales and are diligent in checking the performance of staff before allowing such progression.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Students say that since the arrival of new senior leaders, they are much happier. They understand clearly the high expectations senior leaders have of their behaviour and say that any classroom disruption is now rare. A typical statement was, 'last year was the worst year in my school life but this year it's been really good'.
- Students are well dressed, punctual to lessons, considerate of others and aware of all of the diverse communities which make up modern British society. They care about their school and arrive well equipped for learning. There is no litter and graffiti is non-existent.
- Relationships between staff and students are caring and productive. This is helping to foster an ambitious working ethos in most classrooms. Staff manage corridor and outdoor behaviour well. Teachers mostly follow the school's system of behaviour management but some students recognise that occasionally, a few teachers are more lax in their approach to managing behaviour.
- Students' attitudes to learning are positive. When the activities in lessons lack challenge, however, a few students lose interest in learning.
- Parents and students speak highly of the new coaching methods. These coaching sessions, made up of small groups of young people from across the year groups and supported by a member of staff, enable students to discuss their weekly successes and any anxieties with their peers.
- A minority of parents who responded to the online survey, Parent View, still believe that students' behaviour is not managed well. Evidence of behaviour seen by inspectors, along with the views of students who spoke independently with inspectors and the school's records of incidents of poor behaviour show that behaviour is much improved and that few instances of poor behaviour now occur.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Procedures to ensure students are safe in school, for example in practical lessons, are impacting positively on how learners look after themselves. Students say they feel safe.
- Procedures to check the credentials of staff are well kept and systems to record any and all types of bullying are in place. Students know where to get help when they have a problem and say that they know how to stay safe when using online technologies. Younger students develop confidence in speaking with adults and older students in their coaching groups.
- Absence rates, including the number of students who are regularly absent, have reduced so that attendance is now above average. There is no difference in the rates of attendance by different groups of students. The attendance of students who attend alternative off-site provision is good.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Although teaching is improving quickly, it still requires improvement because over time it has not enabled students to make good progress, particularly in mathematics.
- Expectations of what students are capable of achieving over time are not always high enough. Students are sometimes not challenged to do well or to work hard.
- Teachers are not always clear enough about what students already know and can securely do. As a result, planned work does not always meet their varying needs and abilities. It does not stretch, challenge, excite or inspire students to achieve their best. Notably, the achievement of the most able students is held back.
- Although a new policy is in place for assessing students' attainment and progress and for marking students' work, not all teachers are yet following this agreed approach. In subjects where it is well embedded, such as in English, students are making better progress. In other subjects, especially mathematics, students do not know what they need to do so improve and do not deepen their understanding of their work.
- The teaching of literacy, including reading, has improved and is good across the school. Students' improved achievement in reading and writing is helping to ensure that they have the basic literacy skills

needed to be able to learn successfully in other subjects.

- Teaching across the school is improving quickly and the vast majority of staff are rising to the challenge to improve their teaching with determination. Weekly training for teachers is well attended. Teachers are now more focussed on making sure that expectations of students are high, that activities are challenging and that a closer check is made on students' progress. As a result, achievement is improving. Students acknowledge that teaching is getting better.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students join the school in Year 7 with attainment that is similar to the national average. From their individual starting points, students in Key Stages 3 and 4 make expected progress and so, by the time they leave Year 11, the standards they reach in GCSE examinations remain average. Too few students make good progress.
- The achievement of the most able requires improvement. The proportion of students reaching the highest grades in examinations is below average, especially in mathematics. The achievement of the most able students is held back because work set does not always challenge, excite or inspire them to do their best and reach their potential.
- Unvalidated results of GCSE examinations in 2014 show a fall in standards reached in some subjects and particularly in mathematics. Achievement in mathematics requires improvement. In 2014, the proportion of students making better than expected progress in mathematics fell to just 21%, almost a third lower than the national average.
- School data and inspection evidence shows that the rate of students' progress across the year groups fell last year, with too few making good progress.
- New senior leaders, however, have taken decisive action to reverse this decline. Better teaching and the early identification of students who may be falling behind, means that students' progress is now accelerating, especially in English, where many students are now making good progress.
- In the 2013 GCSE results in English, the attainment of disadvantaged students was almost identical to that of non-disadvantaged students in the school and non-disadvantaged students nationally. In mathematics, the attainment of disadvantaged students was lower than non-disadvantaged students in the school by about a third of a grade and a sixth of a grade lower than non-disadvantaged students nationally. In 2012, these gaps were almost four times wider for both subjects; this reflects much improved achievement of disadvantaged students, many of whom are now making good progress.
- Disabled students, those with special educational needs and students from minority ethnic backgrounds make similar progress to their peers overall. Although their progress is also speeding up, variances in the quality of teaching means that it still requires improvement.
- The very few students who attend off-site alternative provision make good progress.
- The school enters a small minority of students early for GCSE examinations in mathematics. Leaders ensured that only those students capable of reaching the highest grades at that time were entered. This has enabled these students more time to study other subjects to improve their grades.

The sixth form provision

requires improvement

- Students enter the sixth form with levels of attainment that are broadly average and finish Year 12 or Year 13 overall broadly in line with national average. Too few students make good progress from their previous starting points and, as a result, achievement requires improvement.
- Although pass rates overall are close to the national levels, too few of the most able students reach the higher grades. In 2013, at AS-level, 26% of students attained a high grade A* or B compared to 35% nationally, and at A-level 29% attained a higher grade A* or B compared to 51% nationally. Although in 2014, a higher proportion reached the high grades at A-level, it remained below average.
- Although teaching is improving and some is good, overall teaching is too inconsistent in quality across the subjects and, as a result, requires improvement. In, particular, work for the most able students lacks challenge.
- Changes in sixth form leadership have impacted on the pace of improvement. Improvements, such as in teaching, have taken place, but at a steadier rate than in the rest of the school. New senior leaders quickly identified the actions needed to speed up the pace of improvement and some significant changes have already taken place. A revised curriculum, for example, is now offering students fewer but more structured subjects, which are covered in greater depth and which better reflect teachers' particular skills and subject

knowledge. Where students express a desire to study a course not on offer in the school, different local providers support students well to access it. Sixth form leadership, however, is yet to ensure that teaching is consistently good.

- Students say that they are supported well in their decision to join the sixth form. They speak highly of the opportunities afforded to them. They are firm in their belief that since the arrival of new leaders, sixth form provision has improved. They like the 'family feel' to the school, enjoy the extra responsibilities given through the new coaching system and behave well. A higher than average proportion of students completes their sixth form courses than do so nationally.

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	108088
Local authority	Leeds
Inspection number	442201

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	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	742
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	129
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cindy Bentley
Headteacher	Simon Flowers (Executive Headteacher) Lucie Lakin (Acting Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	23 October 2012
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