

# Bramhall High School

Seal Road, Bramhall, Stockport, Cheshire, SK7 2JT

## Inspection dates

23–24 October 2014

| Overall effectiveness          | Previous inspection: | Good                        | 2        |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
|                                | This inspection:     | <b>Requires improvement</b> | <b>3</b> |
| Leadership and management      |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |
| Quality of teaching            |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |
| Achievement of pupils          |                      | Requires improvement        | 3        |

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Achievement in English and in mathematics has declined. Consequently, not enough students make good progress in English and mathematics.
- The achievement of middle-ability boys and disadvantaged students is not as good as that of their classmates. This is particularly evident in English and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching over time has not led to good progress for enough students. The way in which teachers mark work and feedback to students is having only limited impact on students' learning and progress. Teachers do not use data well enough to plan activities that ensure all students make at least good progress.
- Students' behaviour is not consistently good. Occasionally, low-level disruption slows students' progress in their learning. Some students do not engage enough in their learning when teaching is not good enough.
- Leaders and governors have not prevented the decline in students' achievement nor have they succeeded in ensuring that teaching is consistently good enough for all students to make good progress. Governors have been ineffective in holding leaders to account robustly enough.
- There is too much inconsistency within the school and some staff are reluctant to change what they do in order to improve their practice.

### The school has the following strengths

- The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, is regularly above the government's expected minimum standards. In many other subjects, students attain standards above the national average.
- Leaders know what needs to be improved and have appropriate plans in place to make it happen.
- Relationships between staff and students are good and this creates a pleasant learning environment.
- Students feel very safe and secure in school and the majority of parents agree that their children are safe. Students recognise that behaviour has improved since the introduction of the 'Bramhall Way' behaviour policy.
- Students are friendly, articulate, polite and well mannered. In the vast majority of lessons, they are keen to learn and settle down quickly. They have good working relationships with their teachers.
- The spiritual, social, moral and cultural development of students is strong. They are prepared well for life in modern Britain.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 41 part-lessons. Five of these were carried out jointly with school leaders.
- Inspectors scrutinised students’ work in their books in a range of subjects.
- Inspectors talked to students in lessons, and to groups formally and informally around the school. Inspectors took into account the 133 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).
- Inspectors also took into account 89 questionnaires completed by staff expressing their views about the school.
- Discussions were held with staff, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Documents reviewed included the self-evaluation document, improvement plans, information on students’ achievement, records of students’ behaviour and attendance, documents related to safeguarding, copies of external reviews, and minutes of the governing body meetings.

## Inspection team

|                                |                      |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| Anthony Briggs, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Bimla Kumari                   | Additional Inspector |
| Steven Baker                   | Additional Inspector |
| Fiona Burke-Jackson            | Additional Inspector |
| Barbara Rogers                 | Additional Inspector |

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Bramhall High School is larger than the average-size secondary school.
- The proportions of students who are disadvantaged and therefore eligible for the pupil premium is much lower than average. (The pupil premium funding is additional funding for those pupils eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.) These students will be referred to as 'disadvantaged' throughout the report.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds. A small proportion of students speak English as an additional language.
- A below-average proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs are supported at school action. The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is slightly above average.
- Courses are provided, on a part-time basis, for a very small number of students away from the school site at a donkey sanctuary and two football clubs
- There have been several changes in staffing since the previous inspection, including a change of headteacher and a number of senior and subject-leader posts.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum level expected for students' attainment and progress.

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

- Ensure that governors, leaders and managers communicate the vision for improvement in a more cohesive and collaborative way so that every member of staff fully subscribes to improving the outcomes for all students by:
  - checking that all staff fully understand the reasons why improvements have to be made through a more collective approach and tackling any staff that become a barrier to improvement
  - making sure that subject leaders believe and share the vision and drive for improvement and hold their staff to account more robustly for any underachievement and underperformance
  - ensuring that the additional funding for disadvantaged students is used more effectively in order to narrow the gap between their performance and that of non-disadvantaged students.
- Ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently good throughout the school so that all students make at least good progress by:
  - making sure that all teachers mark work regularly and in a way that ensures that students are left in no doubt about exactly what they have to improve and how to improve it
  - ensuring that teachers use the available assessment data more robustly in tracking the progress of individual students and groups of students, including disabled, those with special educational needs, disadvantaged students, middle-ability boys and the most able in every lesson and taking swift action to eradicate any potential underachievement.
- Improve students' behaviour and attitudes to learning by:
  - removing inconsistencies in teachers' use of the new behaviour policy and their expectations of how well students should behave in lessons
  - ensuring that all activities maintain students' interest so that they do not become distracted or disengaged.

An external review of governance and of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how these aspects of leadership and management may be improved.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher has a clear and unwavering vision for improving the school. She knows exactly where she wants the school to be and how to get it there. However, the way in which the vision manifests itself in actions is less clear. Some staff are not only reluctant to change but are actively resistant to what is being proposed. They feel that they are being pushed on the journey of improvement, rather than led from the top. Consequently, not all staff are united and the speed of improvement has been hindered as a result of a culture of inconsistency across the school.
- Middle leaders understand their roles and responsibilities and feel suitably held to account for the outcomes in their subject areas. Nevertheless, there is too much inconsistency of practice within subjects and some middle leaders are not tackling this with enough rigour or sense of urgency. Strengths of middle leadership can be seen, for example, in the performing arts where previous difficulties with drama have been tackled head-on and the picture is now much rosier. In some subjects, there is not enough improvement and students' progress remains variable.
- The systems for checking on how well the school is doing link well to the school's priorities for improvement. The management of staff performance is appropriate. Salary progression is broadly linked to the school's priorities and students' progress. Leaders have recently increased the range of evidence they use to evaluate the quality of teaching in the school. Less focus is being given to pre-notified lesson observations and more emphasis put on the outcomes for students in relation to the progress they make.
- Masses of data are churned out in relation to virtually every aspect of the school's work. However, very little analysis of this data is actually done in order to use it to improve future outcomes. For example, class teachers have individual data on every student they teach but they are not all using this data in a way that results in them planning lessons to meet the learning needs of students. Similarly, because the data is rarely focused on specific groups of students, leaders and teachers alike are missing some obvious information about the progress of particular groups, such as disadvantaged students and those students with special educational needs.
- Tracking systems have been unreliable. For example, senior leaders expected the outcomes in 2014 to be 10 percentage points above those achieved. Similarly, in English and in particular in mathematics, the outcomes took everybody by surprise as they were considerably lower than expected. Predictions for 2015 are much more positive than those of 2014. However, because leaders are not strong at evaluating and analysing data, the accuracy of these predictions is questionable. Not enough external moderation has been undertaken in order to validate the predictions.
- Leaders and managers know their school. They are aware of the strengths and weaknesses and development plans focus on the most appropriate aspects that need improvement. However, they have underestimated the significance of some of the weaknesses and have not drilled down enough to eradicate the root cause of the underperformance in English and, more recently, mathematics. There is another barrier to improvement that has not been tackled successfully: a significant minority of staff do not believe that the school is well led and managed. Consequently, not all staff are fully on board with driving the changes that are expected and needed. This is hindering progress.
- Students' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is strong and helps them prepare for life in modern Britain. Through a range of activities, students are given opportunities to talk about current issues, different religions and beliefs. They value these topics and it is evident that they are gaining a deeper understanding of fundamental British values. Students were observed listening to each other's viewpoints, taking on board different ideas and discussing the importance of individuality. Equality of opportunity is promoted well and any form of discrimination is tackled with urgency.
- The small number of students in the school with physical difficulties and/or special educational needs, benefit well from the personalised support they receive. In many cases, they are making progress similar to that of their classmates.
- Through the use of informative assemblies, special careers events and discussions with careers advisers, students' awareness of the opportunities open to them and the relevant qualifications they need to pursue is secure. This is particularly so from Years 9 to 11 but less developed in Year 8.
- The curriculum meets the needs of most students. Leaders are reviewing the curriculum to ensure that it reflects the new National Curriculum requirements. There is an extensive menu of extra-curricular artistic and sporting activities which are greatly appreciated by students. During the inspection, a visiting author gave an excellent, informative session to students who gained much from it and thoroughly enjoyed themselves. The achievement, attendance, behaviour and safety of the few students that attend alternative provision are monitored effectively.
- The school's arrangements for keeping students safe are very effective and meet the government's

statutory requirements.

- The local authority has provided ongoing support for the school since its previous inspection. Following the 2013 results, a joint review of the provision for English was undertaken and recommendations for improvement made. Similarly, the local authority undertook a review of the provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs. This review also gave clear indications of what needs to be improved. Governors have also taken advantage of the training offered by the local authority.
- Communication with parents is achieved through regular reporting and well-attended parents' evenings. Leaders are aware that there is much more work needed here in order to build better relationships between the school and parents. Those parents that responded to the Ofsted parent view were positive about almost all aspects of the school but not overwhelmingly so.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body has provided support to school leaders but have been less effective in challenging leaders about the quality of education. Governors are informed about students' achievement through a wealth of graphical data that is provided to them regularly. Despite this, governors were surprised and disappointed by the outcomes of the 2014 examinations. The information about the school's performance they have been provided with was less than accurate and was not checked.
  - Governors are linked to subject areas and this enables them to have a closer more 'hands-on' approach to what is happening in certain subject areas. Information about the quality of teaching provided to governors does not always contain sufficient detail about what exactly needs to be improved. They have a reasonable overview of what is done to reward good performance and how underperformance is tackled. However, governors are not always able to hold leaders to account with sufficient rigour and challenge.
  - Governors have a good grasp of the finances and manage the budget prudently. They are aware of the amount of pupil premium funding the school receives but are less clear about how the money is spent and what the impact is on the progress of eligible students.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils

## requires improvement

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. The vast majority of students at Bramhall High are delightful. They are respectful, welcoming, friendly and very polite towards visitors and each other. A minority of students are less mature and were observed behaving inappropriately on occasions.
- The behaviour of most students is positive and this helps them make progress in their lessons. In many lessons, students are polite and compliant. During activities that are focused sharply on progress and learning. Students display a thirst for knowledge and understanding, they are enthusiastic and really enjoy their learning. Some students do not engage enough in their learning where teaching is less effective. Occasionally, low-level disruption hampers the progress being made because it is not effectively managed by teachers.
- Students say that behaviour has improved as a result of the new behaviour policy. They appreciate the positive impact this has had on behaviour, especially in lessons. Students say that not all teachers apply the behaviour policy consistently and they find this frustrating. They report that fewer lessons are disturbed by low-level disruption and that most lessons are undertaken in a calm and purposeful atmosphere. School data show a significant reduction in exclusions. Nevertheless, a relatively high proportion of staff indicated on the questionnaire that behaviour is not good in the school nor is it well-managed. Parents also indicated that behaviour was not as good as it could be. Inspection evidence confirms that behaviour requires improvement.
- Students are proud of their school. They respect their environment. For example, there is very little litter and no graffiti evident. They enjoy the vast majority of their activities. They move maturely around the school, between lessons, at break time and at lunchtime and get on well with each other during social times.
- Attendance is broadly average overall. The data produced by the school are not rigorously analysed in order to spot any patterns or plan effective interventions.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.

- Students feel safe and secure in their school. They know that adults are prepared to go the extra mile to sort out any problems they may have. They know about different types of bullying, including that related to homophobia and say that bullying throughout the school is rare. Students know how to keep themselves safe, including when they are using modern technology.
- Key messages about effective ways to deal with bullying, including racist and cyber-bullying are delivered strongly. One student stated, 'Everyone knows teachers will not tolerate racism and there will be consequences for using terms like 'gay' in a derogatory way.' Students say that students in school who are openly gay are fully accepted.
- Risk assessments and relevant documentation for trips and visits are up to date with clear procedures in place that are well adhered to. Arrangements are in place for monitoring and quality assuring alternative provision.
- The vast majority of parents who responded to the Parent View online survey agreed that their child was safe and well cared for. Inspection evidence backs up this view.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- The lack of consistency of teaching throughout the school means that not all students are guaranteed that every lesson will be a good lesson. This 'luck of the draw' approach to how much progress a student will make has not been tackled robustly enough, particularly by middle leaders. Consequently, the impact of teaching on students' achievement varies from subject to subject and even within subjects.
- The staff team is not a united unit.. Some teachers understand fully the need to improve outcomes for students and. Others believe that there is no need to improve their practice because they think outcomes are good enough. This blinkered approach is resulting in low expectations of students and declining outcomes over time. Senior leaders have tried to tackle this but are often met with stiff resistance to change.
- Relationships within classrooms are strong and students are keen to learn where the work is matched to their needs and engages them and maintains their interest. Excellent relationships were observed during physical education, drama and music sessions. During such activities, students demonstrated a real thirst for knowledge and love of learning. Occasionally, students' concentration wanes because they are not particularly interested in the task on offer or teachers fail to set high enough expectations of their behaviour.
- Students enter the school with high levels of literacy and they are given many opportunities to develop their oracy skills. Opportunities to read a wide range of books are on offer and many students continue to develop their reading at home. Most teachers give appropriate focus to literacy and numeracy skills in a range of subjects. Consequently, students are numerate, articulate and well read.
- Teachers have access to a substantial amount of data. Not all use it effectively to inform future planning or to assess just how well different groups of learners are making progress over time. Some teachers are confused about the target-setting process and do not accurately record how well a student is actually achieving in relation to what is expected of them. This makes it difficult for them to plan the next stage of learning.
- Teachers have secure subject knowledge which they pass on to the students effectively. As a result of clear explanations and well-structured tasks most students are able to develop their skills and understanding. On occasions, teachers do not provide students with the opportunity to understand fully a key concept and secure their knowledge before moving on to new work. This results in potential misconceptions further down the line, which then become barriers to progress.
- The way which teachers mark students' work and give them points for improvement is patchy. For example, some teachers offer very clear advice so that students know exactly what to do to improve their work in order to make better progress. Other teachers freely compliment students for their work but fail to give them the pointers they need to help them improve. Little evidence was seen of students responding directly to teachers' feedback. In some cases, marking is done at the end of a topic and no opportunity is then given for the students to put into practice the suggested improvements before moving on to a new topic.

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Students join the school with attainment that is significantly above the national average and have done so for years. Results in 2013 in relation to the proportion of students gaining five GCSE grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, were broadly average. In 2014, results increased slightly and look likely to be much more positive in relation to the 2014 national average. However, not all students are performing as well as they should.
- The progress students make in relation to their different starting points in English and in mathematics was lower in 2014 than it was in 2012. English saw an improvement this year, but mathematics declined. The progress of middle-ability boys and lower-ability students overall, remains a concern as these groups underperform compared to their classmates.
- The achievement of disadvantaged students requires improvement. The gap between disadvantaged students and others nationally is closing for attainment but not in relation to progress in English and in mathematics. In 2014, disadvantaged students were approximately one GCSE grade behind others nationally in English and in mathematics. The in-school gap in attainment between disadvantaged students and those who are not, is also closing but disadvantaged students were still over half a GCSE grade behind others.
- The achievement of disabled students and those with special educational needs requires improvement, particularly in relation to the progress they make in English, mathematics and science. Teaching assistants understand their roles and are supportive to students in classes, particularly those with special educational needs.
- The progress of the most able students improved in English but remains a concern in mathematics. While school predictions indicate that they will do much better in 2015, evidence from the inspection indicates that their progress slows when their learning is not extended in lessons.
- Those students who follow courses away from the school site benefit from the activities on offer and their achievement is similar to that of other students in the school.
- The school no longer enters students early for GCSE examinations in mathematics. Leaders believe that this has been a disadvantage to the 2014 cohort but will benefit future cohorts.



## 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> | 106139    |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Stockport |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 448294    |

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>                 | 11–16                                     |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed                                     |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 1,244                                     |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body                        |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Sarah Brown                               |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Heather Cooper                            |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 3 February 2010                           |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 0161 439 8045                             |
| <b>Fax number</b>                          | 0161 439 8951                             |
| <b>Email address</b>                       | headteacher@bramhallhigh.stockport.sch.uk |

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