

Whitworth Community High School

Hallfold, Whitworth, Rochdale, Lancashire, OL12 8TS

Inspection dates 4–5 December 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students achieve well across the school. Standards are improving at a faster rate than other schools nationally. In 2014, students attained significantly better results in many subjects than in previous years.
- Progress is good. It is particularly strong in mathematics and improving rapidly in English. Overall achievement is better now than at the time of the previous inspection.
- The progress of all groups of students, including those who are disadvantaged is now good.
- Teaching over time is good and has driven the secure improvements in students' learning. The school provides good opportunities for students to develop their speaking skills in all lessons and particularly through the popular 'debating society'. As a consequence, the students are developing as confident, mature and articulate young people.
- Students demonstrate good attitudes to learning. They attend regularly and arrive to lessons physically and mentally equipped to learn. They are immensely proud of their school. They consider it to be like a family and wear their uniform with pride.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong. They demonstrate a real care for one another and their teachers. They demonstrate excellent British values, particularly in tolerance of and respect for each other, regardless of background or ability. They feel safe and behaviour is good.
- The headteacher has brought with her a steely determination and set of skills to secure rapid and sustained improvement in all areas especially teaching and achievement. This journey continues with the strong support of governors and the shared vision of all leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teaching is of the highest quality in its impact on students' achievement, including the marking of students' work and teachers' feedback.
- Staff do not always use information on students' achievement to plan work at the right level of difficulty.
- Students' achievement in English, while much improved, is not as strong as in mathematics.
- Teachers' questioning of students does not always allow them the opportunities to consider more deeply their responses.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of subjects taught across the school, several lessons were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Observations of teaching and learning covered a range of subjects for different age groups.
- Inspectors also visited morning registration time and an assembly.
- Inspectors met with six groups of students formally and spoke with students during lessons, break and lunchtimes.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders and representatives of the governing body, including The Chair of the Governing Body and vice-chair. A meeting was held with a local authority representative.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation including: development plan summaries; the school's view of its own performance; 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, performance management of staff and minutes of meetings of the governing body.
- Inspectors carefully analysed the 34 responses from parents to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the 30 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Peter Cox, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Alan Parkinson	Additional Inspector
Andrew Williams	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Whitworth Community High School is much smaller than the average sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students who are disadvantaged, those supported through the pupil premium is slightly below average when compared with most schools. 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.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average.
- The majority of the students are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is very small.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or who have special educational needs is average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.
- A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection. Also, significant changes in English teaching staff has occurred since then.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the overall quality of teaching to outstanding so that all students make rapid progress by:
 - ensuring teachers use the accurate performance data, provided by senior leaders, to plan and deliver exciting and challenging learning for all
 - developing teachers' questioning of students, using the best examples evident in the school, to help check on students' understanding and extend their learning.
- Secure even higher rates of achievement across subjects and particularly in English by:
 - ensuring that all teachers use the better practice seen in English and mark the work of their students regularly and in sufficient detail so that they know how to progress further
 - including precise feedback to students on how to make sustained improvements, that feedback is meaningful and not solely congratulatory
 - insisting on high quality presentation of work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has a clear and steadfast vision for improving the school further. She knows exactly where she wants the school to be and how to get there. She leads from the front and other leaders follow with equal determination and ambition.
- As a result of the accurate analysis of students' achievement and the robust systems put in place to monitor progress, significant improvements in students' learning across all subjects including English have been secured. English has come from a very low base due to past failings of the school. The English department has completely changed from that at the previous inspection. Overall achievement, including that in English, is rising at a faster rate than nationally across many subjects.
- Governors, teaching staff and other adults have much confidence in the headteacher and her senior leadership team to secure further improvements, building on the many successes evident. Middle leaders, including those in charge of subjects, say there are very rigorous systems for checking the quality of teaching as well as students' rates of learning. They are effective and fully involved in driving improvement within their areas of responsibility.
- Leaders and managers know the school well. They are clear about the strengths and weaknesses and have appropriate development plans in place that focus on the right priorities.
- The staff appraisal system has been used very well and ensures all adults are clear on the priorities set by leaders.
- Aspirational targets are set for all students, which are reviewed regularly. Pupil premium funding is used very effectively and as a result of whole-school approaches over time, improvements in the performance of students from disadvantaged backgrounds have been secured.
- Teachers offer good support and advice to students for them to make informed choices when considering life after school, whether it be the world of work or further education.
- Students' performance data are used well by senior leaders. Class teachers have individual data on each student they teach but they are not always using this to plan lessons that will help drive the highest levels of achievement meeting the learning needs of students.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Clear and appropriate pathways are offered at Key Stage 4 and the curriculum at Key Stage 3 includes a strong foundation on building resilience, self-confidence and improved literacy skills.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good 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. There exists a vibrant debating society where any issue can be discussed in an atmosphere of tolerance, respect and trust. Students appreciate being able to debate such issues and see this as gaining a deeper understanding of fundamental British values. Equality of opportunity is promoted well and any form of discrimination, should it appear, is tackled with urgency.
- The school works well to engage parents, this is seen through the very clear website where information is regularly updated. The immediate community, according to students spoken with, has noticed a big difference in the behaviour of students and their smart appearance in their new blazers. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the Parent View survey would recommend the school to others. In previous years, parental response has been much less favourable.
- The local authority provided good support for the school when needed. They consider the school to be good.
- The school's arrangements for keeping students safe are very effective and meet the government's statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have the same confidence in leaders that other adults and students in the school share. They have seen significant change since the previous inspection in the climate for learning, staff morale, community perceptions and above all students' achievement. They are well informed and challenge leaders appropriately, keen to maintain the momentum and improve still further.
 - Through undertaking visits to classrooms and holding meetings with heads of department, governors have a clear understanding of the quality of teaching and learning. They understand how the school uses performance management to tackle underperformance, accelerate improvement and reward good teaching.
 - Governors review data and know how well students in the school are achieving compared to those in

other schools nationally. They manage the school's financial resources successfully; they are fully aware of the impact of pupil premium funding and other monies that come into the school to help drive up standards.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Students' attitudes to learning in all areas of the school are very positive. This has helped drive up the quality of learning and led to the improvements in rates of achievement seen since the last inspection. Incidents of poor behaviour in lessons, around the school and beyond are very rare.
- Students talk about teachers challenging students of all abilities and ensuring that the very best is drawn out of all of them. Students' enjoyment of school is seen in their regular attendance, which is above the national average. There are very few students who are repeatedly absent and a significant reduction in numbers when compared to previous years. They want to come to school because they enjoy their time in the 'close family' atmosphere created. Students are keen to get to school and to their lessons during the day.
- Students talk excitedly about the improvements seen in the school over recent years. They talk about being listened to, cared for and respected by their teachers. They also report of having a better reputation in the local community.
- The new uniform has given them a greater sense of belonging to the school. A typical student comment was 'the pride I have in my school and the uniform that I wear makes me walk taller'.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Students feel very safe and secure in their school. They know that adults are prepared to sort out any problems they may have. 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. Students are accepting of others' beliefs, backgrounds and sexual orientation. Students say that those in school who are openly gay are fully accepted.
- The vast majority of parents who responded to the Parent View online survey agree that their child was safe and cared for well. Inspection evidence supports this view.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers' secure knowledge, and often great enthusiasm for their subject, helps students enjoy learning and make good and improving progress over time. Expectations of what students can achieve are generally high and teachers provide students with good support to help them learn.
- Across the school and in a significant number of lessons and subjects, students achieve well and make good progress in their learning. This is especially the case when activities are consistently challenging and closely matched to students' abilities, needs and interests. This was seen in a Year 10 mathematics lesson where the students hung on every word that the teacher said and told the inspector that time passed quickly in the double lesson as the teacher kept them interested.
- Occasionally, some teachers do not use information on students' achievement to set work at the right level of difficulty for particular students. For example, on one occasion students were asked to solve a mathematical problem where the question was phrased in such a way that they were unable to understand it.
- Relationships between teachers and students are good. The small number of students in the school enable adults to know almost every student and this helps with students' personal development, sense of belonging and care. Students are generally confident learners who express their ideas and opinions with clarity and maturity.
- At times, teachers do not make the best use of questioning so that deeper and more considered responses are offered by students, thus extending their understanding. Sometimes teachers accept poor quality presentation from students in order to maintain the pace of learning.
- Marking and feedback to students have improved in the last 18 months and are often of a very good quality, leading to students making improvements to their work and grasping the understanding of how to improve and make further gains in their learning. However, it is not yet consistent across all subjects.

Senior leaders are aware of this and this is a focus for improvement.

- Students enter the school with broadly average levels of literacy. Teachers provide many opportunities to develop their literacy skills during their time at school. Opportunities to read a range of books are on offer and many students told inspectors that they continue to develop their reading at home. Students' literacy and numeracy skills are developed across a range of subjects; consequently, students are numerate, literate and increasingly well-read.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students enter the school with broadly average attainment and make good progress achieving well. The proportion of students who attain five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has risen significantly.
- Students' progress in learning in 2014 improved substantially on that made in 2013 and is now much closer to national figures. English lags behind that of mathematics but with a new team teaching this subject students' learning has been much more rapid than that seen in other schools nationally.
- The school's current data is accurate and the projections for 2015 are even stronger. The current Year 11 are making progress in line with other schools for English and mathematics and the much-needed accelerated achievement in English has been secured.
- Other year groups, according to the school's own data and inspection evidence seen in students' books, show overall good achievement for all groups of students from their different starting points.
- Disadvantaged students' attainment, when compared to their peers in school, is improving and the attainment gap is closing rapidly, as is the gap when compared to students nationally. According to the published data in 2013 the gap between disadvantaged students and their counterparts in school was less than half a GCSE grade in English and mathematics. The comparison with other students nationally presents a similar picture in each subject. The school's own data for 2014 shows a further closing of this gap. The progress that disadvantaged students make in English and mathematics is improving also thereby narrowing achievement gaps convincingly when compared to students in other schools across the country.
- The achievement of disabled students and those with special educational needs is as good as that of other students, particularly in relation to the progress they make in English. As a result of carefully-targeted provision, their needs are fully met. The effective deployment of adults means that these students receive good support and students learn well in class.
- The progress of the most able students improved in English and mathematics and looks set to continue to do so in 2015. They achieve well in a range of subjects, making particularly rapid progress when the work set for them is challenging.
- The school has not for some time entered students early for GCSE examinations in English or mathematics.

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	119753
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	442393

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	528
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lila Towers
Headteacher	Mrs G Middlemas
Date of previous school inspection	31 January 2013
Telephone number	01706 343218
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	office@whitworth.lancs.sch.uk

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