

Whittington Green School

High Street, Old Whittington, Chesterfield, S41 9LG

Inspection dates 21–22 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
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

- In 2014, the attainment of students in Year 11 was below national averages in both English and mathematics. From their different starting points, too few students made the progress they were capable of.
- Boys currently in the school are not achieving as well as girls. This is because they are not always challenged to write at length or explain their ideas fully.
- Teaching typically does not take enough account of students' different starting points, and information from assessment does not always inform teaching as well as it could. This means that not all students, especially ones that are more-able, make good enough progress.
- Not all teachers ensure that students act on the feedback they get to improve their work.
- Targets set for some students, including the more able, are too low. This means that teachers do not have high enough expectations of what students can achieve, and do not give these students the skills and understanding to achieve higher grades.
- Teachers do not manage students' behaviour consistently. As a result, some lessons are disrupted by instances of low-level behaviour. Teachers do not always challenge students' use of inappropriate language.
- Some leaders who are new in post do not carry out their roles effectively because they have not had sufficient support to improve teaching and students' achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher provides strong leadership. After a period of considerable instability, staff and students have a renewed sense of purpose. Her vision for an inclusive school where all can achieve is motivating staff and students to want to do better.
- The achievement of disadvantaged students is rising as a result of well-targeted and well-thought out plans to raise their achievement.
- Leaders and teachers know students well, and pastoral care for students is good.
- Students receive good advice and guidance that helps them make decisions about their futures.
- Students take pride in their appearance and in their school.
- Leaders have taken a determined approach to improve attendance, which is now in line with the national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed students learning across a range of subjects and in a variety of lessons. Some of these lessons were observed jointly with school leaders.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, three members of the governing body and two representatives from the local authority. In addition, the lead inspector spoke by telephone with the school's improvement partner and to the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors met with three groups of students and spoke with other students informally in lessons about their learning.
- Inspectors looked at work in students' books and reviewed information about their progress.
- A range of documentation was reviewed, including the school's improvement plans, school leaders' evaluation of their performance, records of students' behaviour and attendance and minutes of the governing body. Safeguarding procedures and school policies were also scrutinised.
- Inspectors took account of the 16 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the 18 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Deirdre Duignan, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Amanda Carter-Fraser

Her Majesty's Inspector

Beverley Strange

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- Whittington Green is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students who are in receipt of pupil premium funding, at two-fifths of the whole school, is higher than the national average. Pupil premium funding is additional government funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- One-quarter of students have disabilities or special educational needs. This is much higher than the national average.
- The school provides additional support for students with hearing impairments. It is not possible to comment on their achievement without identifying individual students.
- The vast majority of students are of White British heritage, and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The school does not use any alternative provision. There are currently more boys than girls on roll.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in mathematics and English.
- The school receives support from the North East Derbyshire Teaching School Alliance.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Secure consistently good teaching so that all students, particularly boys and those students that are more-able, make better progress by:
 - ensuring that teaching is more closely targeted at students' different abilities and starting points
 - ensuring that all teachers use information from assessment consistently well to plan challenging learning activities
 - increasing the progress made by more-able students by giving them more challenging tasks in class, and ensuring that they know how to achieve the highest grades in their subjects
 - providing more opportunities for boys to write at length and to explain their ideas more fully
 - ensuring that students act on the advice they receive from their teachers to improve their work.
- Secure the highest standards of behaviour from students by:
 - ensuring that all teachers address all instances of low-level disruption in lessons and apply the school's behaviour policy consistently, particularly in response to students' use of inappropriate language.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that leaders of humanities, modern foreign languages and special educational needs have the skills, understanding and confidence to bring about improvements to the quality of teaching and students' achievement in their departments
 - review the target-setting process to ensure that all students, especially those that are more-able, are set more challenging targets
 - securing further improvements to the quality of teaching through ensuring that all teachers have the opportunity to learn from the best practice in the school.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- In 2014, too few students made the progress they were capable of, including in English and mathematics. Attainment and progress across a range of other subjects, including languages and humanities, were below national averages. Leaders' actions to address this has led to improvements for students currently in the school but achievement overall in the school is not yet good.
- Leaders have taken action to improve the quality of teaching and to ensure that judgements about the quality of teaching are more rigorous. However, the quality of teaching across the school has not improved quickly enough for students to make good progress.
- Most subject leaders have a greater understanding of their role in driving improvement and ensure that teachers are held to account for the progress students make. However, some subject leaders are new in post and have not received the support they need to improve teaching and achievement in their departments.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs receive good individual care. However, leadership of this aspect of the school's work, including provision made for hearing impaired students, lacks clear oversight and strategy. Leaders do not evaluate the impact of actions to raise students' achievement sufficiently well.
- Inconsistency in the way students have been assessed, and in the methods for collecting and analysing this information, has meant that predictions for students' achievement have been unreliable in the past. Leaders have taken appropriate steps to ensure that their predictions are more reliable, for example by moderating students' work with partner schools in the Teaching School alliance and with their partner primary schools. The new systems are not fully embedded across departments.
- School leaders have introduced new systems to measure and reward teachers' performance. Judgements about teaching now involve looking more closely at how well students are learning and school leaders use the budget well to reward good performance. Their decisions have helped to eradicate inadequate teaching, but there is further work to do to develop and secure good teaching across the school.
- Teachers receive individual help and support to improve their teaching. There are greater opportunities for teachers to share their expertise and to help others develop their teaching. This is leading to improved teaching in many departments.
- The headteacher has a clear vision for the school, and this has created a greater sense of unity and purpose among staff. Staff and students are in no doubt about leaders' increased expectations of them. Some teachers sought inspectors out to pay tribute to the work of the headteacher in raising standards. As one teacher said, 'She is re-igniting my passion for teaching.'
- Older students, in particular, paid tribute to the work of current leaders in improving behaviour. They were equally clear that not all teachers shared the high standards modelled by leaders.
- The school provides a good balance of academic and vocational subjects, together with an increasing range of extra-curricular activities for students to take part in. Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is promoted well through assemblies, personal, social, and health education (PSHE), and events such as the 'Languages Day'. Students enjoy the opportunity to discuss a range of issues with their teachers, and teachers are using these sessions to challenge students' perceptions and widen their perspectives. These experiences mean that they are increasingly well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Reading, writing and communication skills are developed increasingly well across the curriculum. The re-development of the library, together with increased opportunities to read and to discuss reading, are successfully engendering a love of books and reading in students, who were keen to discuss their reading with inspectors.

- Year 7 pupils who enter the school with low levels of literacy are helped to catch up with their peers through a range of initiatives, including small-group teaching and individual support. However, boys' reading and writing skills are not as well developed as girls', and this is hindering the progress they make in many subjects. It is too soon to judge the impact of leaders' actions to address this.
- The school's motto, 'Dream, Reach, Achieve', sums up the greater ambition that leaders now have for the school. Leaders are successfully raising students' aspirations, for example through the information evening for more-able students, and through opportunities to meet with employers and representatives from local colleges. Such initiatives are increasing students' awareness of the range of opportunities open to them. Students receive good advice and guidance, and state that they feel well-prepared for the next stage in their education and training.
- The increased opportunities for students to take on leadership roles are improving their confidence and social skills. Many of them act as reading mentors for younger pupils and contribute ideas to further improve the school. Shrewd use of pupil premium funding is accelerating the progress made by disadvantaged students. Teaching assistants use assessment information to identify students at risk of underachievement. They receive appropriate guidance on how best to support these students in class in small teaching groups and through mentoring the students.
- Leaders and teachers promote equality of opportunity suitably because their work is informed by a clear vision and a coherent set of values. Students have an equal opportunity to take part in the wider life of the school. The school provides places for students who have been excluded from schools elsewhere or who have previously had difficulty attending school. These students receive good support to improve their attendance and are quickly made to feel part of the school community.
- The local authority has provided effective support to some departments including English, to strengthen leadership and ensure that teachers' assessments of students work are accurate. The local authority school improvement partner and an external advisor help to ensure school leaders have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness.
- The school works well with parents to ensure they are given the support they need to help their children succeed. Nearly all of the parents who completed the online survey would recommend this school to other parents. Staff who completed the questionnaire reported a high level of confidence in the school's leaders.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Since the last inspection, the governing body has undergone significant change. Several new members have joined the governing body. They have appointed a new Chair of Governors, who brings considerable experience to this role. Governors responded well to the recommendations of the external review of governance, carried out after the last inspection, and now play a greater strategic role in the leadership of the school.
 - Governors have undergone intensive training to help them fulfil their responsibilities more effectively. They now challenge what school leaders tell them about students' performance, help school leaders to identify its priorities for improvement and ensure that these are realised.
 - The governing body ensures that teachers are paid according to how well they perform. They set challenging targets for the headteacher.
 - Governors carry out their statutory duties with diligence. Several of them have undergone safeguarding training and work effectively with school leaders to ensure that students are kept safe.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Low-level disruption to some lessons hinders the progress that students make. Students told inspectors that this happens when teaching does not engage them or when they are not set work that is at the right level for them.
- Not all teachers apply the school's behaviour policy consistently. On occasion, students use inappropriate language in class and this is not addressed by teachers. Some teachers do not challenge students who

interrupt learning or use the consequence system to ensure that instances of poor behaviour are not repeated. This slows the progress that students make in some classes.

- The new school uniform, introduced in September, has had a positive effect on students' attitudes. As one student told inspectors, 'We now feel that we're coming to school to learn, rather than just turning up.'
- Students' behaviour around the school building is good. They behave sensibly on the playground, get on well together, and are welcoming and polite to visitors. In so doing, the majority live out the school's values of inclusion, fairness and respect for all.
- Leaders have taken a determined approach to improve attendance, which is now in line with the national average. They have been particularly successful in their work with poorly attending students and their families to ensure that they feel part of the school community and receive appropriate support.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe requires improvement. Students report that there is very little bullying and that it is mostly dealt with promptly by staff. They have some awareness of different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying. However, occasionally, some students' use inappropriate language in class, for example, homophobic language. Teachers do not always challenge this.
- Students, including those with disabilities and special educational needs, are well cared for. They state that they know who to turn to if they experience difficulties. Staff take a personal interest in them and ensure they are listened to. Leaders work effectively with a range of partners, including a family support worker and a school counsellor, to ensure that students receive the support they need.
- Safeguarding procedures meet requirements. Staff receive appropriate training to ensure they know how to keep students safe and risk assessments are thorough.
- Students report that they feel safe and this is a view supported by the parents who completed the questionnaire.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement. This is because it is not securely good enough to ensure that students learn consistently well and make good progress. An inconsistent approach to managing students' behaviour is further impeding the progress they make.
- Teachers do not always plan activities that take students' different abilities into account. Students of different abilities are given the same work to do, with the result that those that are more-able are not always given more challenging work while other students do not receive the help they need to complete tasks.
- Teachers do not always provide meaningful feedback to help students improve their work. In the best examples seen, teachers provide helpful comments and ensure that students act on these in their next piece of work, but this is not always the case.
- Following the most recent monitoring visit, teachers made a concerted effort to address poor standards of work in students' books. 'Proud' stickers in students' books make clear teachers' expectations of presentation, but not all teachers ensure that these are adhered to.
- Teachers do not always challenge boys to explain their ideas fully or write at length. They sometimes accept lower levels of effort from boys, which means that they are not making the progress they are capable of.
- An enthusiastic whole-school approach is creating a 'buzz' about reading around school. Staff and older students read with younger pupils at break and lunchtime. Students are given challenging texts to read

and respond to for homework, and displays around school promote a love of literature. A specific programme aimed at boys is improving their attitudes to reading but it is too soon to judge the impact of this initiative.

- Students who enter the school with lower levels of literacy are helped to catch up, although there is further work to do to improve boys' reading and writing skills. There are too few opportunities for students to apply mathematical skills across different subjects.
- Leaders are taking effective action to improve students' oral communication skills, for example by teaching debating skills in PSHE lessons. A group of students recently took part in a national debating competition, which was won by a student of Whittington Green.
- Teachers sometimes use effective questioning to enable students to explain and develop their answers. For example, in a Year 11 lesson on immigration, the teacher used skilful questioning to probe students' attitudes and perspectives. Students enjoyed the opportunity to engage in meaningful discussion and challenge each other's ideas.
- Relationships between teachers and students are typically warm, supportive and encouraging. As one student told inspectors, 'Our teachers care about us, and it makes us want to do well for them.'

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- In 2014, the attainment of students in Year 11 was below the national average in both English and mathematics. While there were improvements from the previous year, too few of these students achieved the grades they were capable of in both these subjects.
- The progress made by students in English and mathematics in 2014 showed improvement from the previous year, and for many students rose to be in line with that found in other secondary schools. However, there was still some variability in the progress made by different groups of students, particularly in mathematics, and the proportions of students making expected, and more than expected progress, remained below that found nationally.
- Students' rates of progress in a range of subjects, including languages and history, were lower than those expected nationally in 2014 as a result of continued instability in leadership and staffing in these areas. New staff are in place and indications are that students in Year 11 will perform better in these subjects this year. However, there is further work to do to ensure that good teaching in these subjects leads to consistently good achievement for all students.
- The progress made by the more-able students was in line with national averages in 2014. However, too few of them made more than the expected progress, particularly in mathematics, or achieved top grades in a range of subjects. This is because targets set for some of them were too low. Information from the school shows that these students are now doing better, with more of them on track to achieve top grades in English, mathematics and other subjects this year.
- Information from the school indicates that the attainment and progress of current Year 11 students will show further improvement this year. Their attainment is predicted to rise to be in line with national averages, while more of them are likely to make expected, and more than expected progress, particularly in English. A review of their learning and progress in their books confirmed that these students are on track to make better progress this year.
- Disadvantaged students are now making better progress than previously. In 2014, their rate of progress accelerated to be in line with national averages, and the gaps between their attainment and that of their peers in the school and nationally, while still too wide, had narrowed from the previous year. They remained three-quarters of a grade behind their school peers in English and almost one grade behind others nationally. In mathematics, they were over a grade behind others in the school, and almost two grades behind their peers nationally. The school predicts that in 2015, these students will slightly outperform their peers in school in English, and be a half a grade behind others nationally. In

mathematics, the gaps will reduce to half a grade.

- The achievement of disabled students and those with special educational needs, was in line with national averages in 2014, but remains variable across different groups. In some year groups, they are making better progress than their peers in English and mathematics, but this is not consistently the case. This is because there is insufficient oversight and analysis of their progress across different subjects, and leaders do not fully evaluate the impact of interventions aimed at raising their achievement.

- Information about students in the current Year 10, and those in Key Stage 3, shows an improving picture in terms of achievement. This is because teachers and leaders are now intervening more quickly, and more effectively, when they identify students at risk of underachievement. No students are entered early for examinations.

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	112958
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	449081

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	407
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Midgley
Headteacher	Tracey Burnside
Date of previous school inspection	30 January 2013
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