

The Elton High School Specialist Arts College

Walshaw Road, Bury, Lancashire, BL8 1RN

Inspection dates 11–12 February 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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

- From their starting points, too few students make good progress in key subjects, such as English, mathematics and science.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths are not always accurate and do not properly identify where improvements are needed.
- Teaching does not always meet the needs of groups of students and does not ensure that students learn quickly enough, particularly the disadvantaged, least able and middle-ability students.
- When work is not challenging enough, students lose interest and their learning slips.
- Leaders' monitoring of teaching does not take enough consideration of students' outcomes and the progress shown in their books over time.
- Leaders do not ensure training for staff is done in a timely way or that it matches school priorities and all staff's needs closely.
- Around school, not all students consistently conduct themselves well and there are occasions when they are not orderly and respectful.
- Leaders' checks on the documentation to ensure policies and procedures for keeping students safe are not always thorough enough. Some documents are outdated and procedures do not fully comply with the recommended best practice.
- Governors do not have a clear enough understanding of what is happening in school. They do not receive enough accurate information about students' achievement and do not challenge leaders about this.

The school has the following strengths

- Consistently good teaching in languages, humanities, art and physical education enables students to achieve well from their starting points.
- The most able students do well because they are given work that challenges them to achieve their potential.
- Leaders' work to improve students' attendance has been effective. Attendance is above average. Students enjoy coming to school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 28 part lessons, two of which were observed jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors observed, and spoke with students during lessons and at break times. They also met formally with groups of students from Key Stages 3 and 4. Inspectors spoke to a group of students from the Teaching and Learning Leadership group from Years 9 and 10. Inspectors observed three assemblies.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders. Meetings were also held with governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and the School Effectiveness Partner, a service provided by the local authority. Inspectors observed the school's work to monitor teaching and looked at a range of documents, including students' work in their books, the school's arrangements and policies for safeguarding, performance management procedures and the students' attendance data. Inspectors also looked at information about students' progress and attainment.
- There were 94 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) which were used to help inspectors to gauge the views of parents. Inspectors also considered the views of parents who contacted them during the inspection. There were 54 responses made by staff to the inspection questionnaire.

Inspection team

Fiona McNally, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Colin Mason	Additional Inspector
John Leigh	Additional Inspector
Alan Parkinson	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a broadly average-sized secondary school.
- The large majority of students are White British.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students is broadly average and has increased in recent years. These students receive support through the pupil premium funding, which is additional government funding for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or have special educational needs is below the national average.
- The school does not enter students early for GCSE examinations.
- A few Year 11 students attend courses at Bury College.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure teaching is consistently good or better so that the achievement of different groups of students, including those who are disadvantaged, middle-ability and lower-ability students, is at least good by:
 - ensuring students always use feedback given by teachers to make improvements in their work
 - using questioning regularly to elicit information from students and to check students' understanding
 - using the information from checks to plan students' next steps in learning and ensuring that students' work is always challenging.
- Ensure there is no low-level disruption in lessons and that poor behaviour is managed consistently for all groups of pupils, so that the behaviour in school always matches the best seen.
- Improve the effectiveness of the school's leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is clear and accurate to help the leaders plan well for more rapid school improvement
 - ensuring that when monitoring the quality of teaching and its impact on students' achievement, the students' outcomes and their work in books are considered
 - ensuring that the professional development opportunities for staff closely meet their needs, including appropriately timed training about safety-related matters and that all policies and procedures are compliant and up to date
 - ensuring governors are confident to challenge data provided to them on an informed basis and, in turn, can support the school in making necessary improvements.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

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

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders' evaluation of the school's performance is not fully accurate or robust. Areas are identified as strengths when this is not the case based on current and previous students' outcomes. In turn, there is not enough emphasis put on areas which need to improve. Equally, areas identified for improvement have yet to show that they have been improved consistently in all subjects and for different groups of students.
- The monitoring of teaching is done regularly. Leaders who observed with inspectors were able to accurately identify strengths and areas for improvements. However, leaders' monitoring does not take enough account of students' learning and progress over time or of their attainment. As a result, their evaluation of the quality of teaching, overall, is too generous.
- Performance management arrangements are well organised and leaders set challenging targets for staff, including targets which relate to students' progress. Through these arrangements there is clear identification of where teachers have and have not met their targets and decisions about teachers' pay progression are based on these appropriately. Even so, the overall quality of teaching, while improving, is not yet good.
- Middle leaders are not fully effective in their roles because they do not always have high enough expectations of students. They do not always set targets that encourage students to make better than expected progress. Middle leaders do not have a clear understanding of the school's key priorities for improvement.
- The school uses an alternative programme of study for a few students in Year 11, who access courses at Bury College. Students' attendance is good and they make good progress in the courses they undertake.
- The work to improve the outcomes for disadvantaged students is not yet having a consistently positive impact in all year groups and in different subject areas. As a result, the gap between the progress these students make compared to others in school is widening in certain subjects.
- The leadership of the provision for students who are disabled or who have special educational needs has improved. The training for teaching assistants who support these students is having a good impact on their skills and the quality of support they provide. Consequently, achievement is starting to improve.
- The quality of training for staff requires improvements. A significant number of staff who responded to the inspection questionnaire did not feel that training matched their needs well. In addition, the timing and level of safeguarding training for some staff requires improvement; there is not a strong training programme in place. However, other staff reported to inspectors that the training for improving teaching practice has been better in recent months. Students achieve well in languages, physical education, humanities and art, where effective training is having a strong impact and where teaching is already or is becoming increasingly strong. However, the impact of training has not yet been replicated in all subjects.
- School leaders have responded to the need for the curriculum to offer more students the chance to gain certain qualifications, as well as reaching the English Baccalaureate benchmark. This has meant a change to the way younger students are now guided to choose subjects. More students are now opting for languages at GCSE. Leaders are also mindful of ensuring that the courses students can take prepare them well for their next stage of learning and, as a result, the courses now on offer ensure there are more choices for students as they move into post-16 provision.
- The promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Students have regular assemblies which offer them the chance to reflect on a variety of appropriate issues. However, there is no system to check which topics are covered during assemblies and so leaders cannot be certain that all students get equal access to the themes covered. On a wider level, opportunities for students to go on trips linked to their learning in class are consistent for all groups of students. There are regular trips by art students to a local home for elderly people where they work on art projects and talk to residents about their inspiration. As a result of these types of events, and the range of subjects, qualifications and advice now offered at school, students are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders have worked hard to ensure attendance has improved overall and for different groups of students. The rise in attendance has been a result of effective work with families and other agencies, in particular to support students at risk from very high levels of absence. As a result, the number of students who are persistently absent has also reduced significantly.
- Leaders have worked effectively to reduce the number of serious behaviour incidents and there are now far fewer exclusions than in previous years. However, some low-level disruption remains and it has not been tackled robustly.
- Different groups of students, including those who have different levels of ability, as well as those who are disadvantaged or come from different ethnic backgrounds do not achieve equally well. This demonstrates

that the school does not ensure that all groups of students have an equal chance to achieve well. However, the school does ensure that there are good relationships between different groups of students and it tackles discrimination robustly.

- The local authority brokers support from an independent source for four days per year. However, recently the support has not provided the school with an accurate evaluation of its provision and has not, therefore, been fully effective in supporting the school in identifying areas for future improvements.
- Safeguarding procedures meet the statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors do not have a clear view of the school’s performance. In particular, governors have not challenged leaders about the analysis of data provided. Governors do not insist on seeing data first hand and the analysis of data offered by school leaders is not always fully accurate. As a result, governors have an overly optimistic view of where improvements have been made.
 - Governors understand the school receives funding specifically to support the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. However, due to a lack of first-hand data, they are not fully aware of the impact of the spending, and that the spending is not yet having a positive impact on improving the achievement of eligible students.
 - Minutes of governing body meetings show that governors are aware of the performance management procedures in the school and have useful information to ensure they are able to make decisions accurately in response to pay progression for teachers. The information governors received through these procedures also means they are aware of where teaching is stronger and weaker in the school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. Many students behave well and are keen to work. However, where teaching does not challenge all groups of students and does not capture their interest, some lose interest and the motivation to learn. At times, this can result in some low-level disruption and learning slows.
- Around school, most students are very polite and courteous, demonstrating very good conduct and respect for one another. However, this is not always the case and some students do not demonstrate positive behaviour. For example, while students in Years 7, 10 and 11 enter assembly in an orderly and respectful manner, the entry to assembly by students in Years 8 and 9 is not good. Some students are noisy, disorganised and do not respond to adults’ instructions to quieten down. Equally, some adults do not try to challenge students in this situation and do not demonstrate high expectations of their behaviour.
- Students spoken to by inspectors did not feel behaviour was bad or intimidating. Parents also report that they are satisfied that students behave well and that behaviour is well managed. This is a view shared by staff. However, students did feel there was room for improvement in the behaviour of some students and that at times there is inequality in the way students are dealt with when they do not follow instructions. Students in Key Stage 3 reported that they felt girls received sanctions less often than boys for poor behaviour.
- Some students are not always willing to immediately follow teachers’ instructions. This is also seen in books where some students’ presentation over time deteriorates; they do not complete work set or consistently respond to teachers’ feedback, as they are required to do. Teachers do not consistently challenge students when they do not do as they are told.
- Many students are very keen to be involved in leadership opportunities. When in these roles, students display high levels of pride in the work they do and in the school as a whole. They feel valued by staff and believe that the roles are well respected by other students. School leaders encourage students’ views in order to improve provision. For example, a student teaching and learning group work with staff to develop classroom practices which will engage more students. These students have been well trained by school leaders to ensure they are highly skilled in their work. They talk very authoritatively and in detail about the way in which they feel classroom practices have already improved.

Safety

- The school’s work to keep students safe and secure requires improvement. Students are safe in the school and understand how to keep themselves safe. Students understand the different forms of bullying, including prejudiced-based bullying and cyber-bullying. However, the policies and procedures for keeping students safe are not always compliant. At times, outdated documentation is presented as up-to-date

information, denoting a lack of organisation in this area of the provision.

- Inspectors highlighted concerns over students' safety when they leave the premises at the end of the school day. This is due to the nature of the road immediately outside the school. The school has lobbied the local authority and other agencies to provide a safer exit for students. For example, governors and leaders have asked for a reduced speed limit to be enforced, a crossing for students, as well as some patrolling of the area at the start and end of the school day. All requests have previously been denied. However, the headteacher and governors are adamant more is needed and even during the inspection, they renewed their requests for these to be considered again by the local authority, who in turn agreed to take another look at how the students' exit from school could be made safer.
- The school's records regarding bullying and serious behaviour incidents, including racist and homophobic incidents, are thorough and robust. In addition, the number of incidents is reducing, which is due to leaders' work to respond swiftly and effectively to any concerns around behaviour or bullying that arise. Parents and students agree that bullying is dealt with well and occurs rarely. The training of staff is not always timely. New staff sometimes have to wait too long to receive all their necessary training about safety-related matters. In addition, the training of some more senior staff is not appropriate for their level of responsibility. In this way, the safety training of staff currently requires improvement.
- Attendance has improved in recent years and is above average. This is due to the hard work of leaders to ensure students and their parents understand the importance of regular attendance. It is also a sign that students enjoy coming to school. Punctuality has also improved. Students are always punctual to school and to their lessons
- Students who attend Bury College attend well and are kept safe. This supports their achievement in the courses they undertake.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Strategies to further improve teaching are in place but have not yet had time to show impact across all areas of the school.
- Teaching over time is consistently strong in humanities, languages, art and physical education but remain inconsistent in English, mathematics and science, where outcomes for some groups, especially disadvantaged, lower- and middle-ability students, require improvement.
- Students from all year groups are confident that the quality of teaching has improved in recent months. Effective training has increased teachers' skills in subjects such as humanities, languages and physical education. Inspection findings from observations and a review of students' workbooks show that, while there has been some improvement, teaching and learning are still too variable across year groups and subjects.
- Effective training has also meant teachers are marking students' books more frequently and offering them valuable feedback on how to make improvements. However, in some subjects, the response to the feedback by the lower-ability and some middle-ability students is not good enough. When these students do not respond, teachers do not challenge them or set high enough expectations. As a result, these students do not benefit from the teachers' advice. Some students require more support to enable them to respond to the feedback usefully. On the other hand, the most able students and the younger students in school consistently make good use of the feedback. They say they greatly value teachers' advice.
- The teaching of the most able students is strong and often very strong. As a result, these students make good progress and, at times, achieve very well.
- The impact of teaching on students' literacy skills is improving but is not consistently good for all groups of students. The impact of teaching on students' numeracy skills is not yet good for all groups of students.
- Where learning is not yet consistently good, the questioning and checking on students' understanding is not used well. Teachers do not always give students a chance to explore answers for themselves or challenge them to extend their knowledge. As a result, students become disengaged and, at times, there is some low-level disruption by students. The variation in outcomes, particularly in the outcomes of disadvantaged and lower- and middle-ability students reinforces this. At times, however, teachers are skilful in using questioning to elicit information from students and to gauge their understanding. Where progress is good or better, this information is then used to move the learning forward, with teachers able to adjust lesson plans and resources to ensure all students learned quickly.
- Teaching assistants are used well and this is starting to have better impact on the achievement of disabled students and those with special educational needs. Teachers guide teaching assistants well and provide them with lesson plans in advance, to give teaching assistants time to adapt the learning for their students. Teaching assistants are skilful in questioning students and in pushing students to work

increasingly independently.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students enter the school with levels of attainment that are broadly average. The proportion of students achieving five good GCSE grades is also broadly in line with the national average. From their starting points, the progress of different groups of students varies. In English, mathematics and science, the progress made by students in different year groups is also inconsistent. Consequently, achievement requires improvement.
- The achievement of the most able students is at least good and at times outstanding. Those students who attend Bury College make good progress in the courses they undertake. The school undertakes some support for students who arrive in Year 7 with standards below what is expected for their age. This is starting to have a good impact on these students' achievement in English and mathematics.
- In 2014, students' progress in English and mathematics was not as good as it should have been. Inspection evidence shows that the overall progress of students in the current Year 11 has improved. However, this is not the case for all groups of students, specifically, for disadvantaged students and some of the lower- and middle-ability students. These students are still not doing well enough.
- The school's data for Year 10 students show that improvements in English and mathematics are continuing. However, the work in students' books shows the achievement of different groups of students currently is not yet consistently good. In Key Stage 3, school data and the work in students' books show that there is more consistency between groups of students and progress is improving.
- The achievement of students in science is not yet consistently good. While inspection evidence shows that there is some improvement in the current Year 11, progress is variable between the different groups of students and that the outcomes for disadvantaged students is not yet good. This is particularly the case for lower- and middle-ability students.
- The achievement of disadvantaged students requires improvement. In Year 11 in 2014, in mathematics, disadvantaged students were about two-thirds of a grade behind other students in the school and other students nationally. In English, they were around a third of a grade behind other students in the school and two-thirds of a grade behind others nationally. School data and inspection evidence show that gaps between disadvantaged students currently in the school remain too wide in some year groups and are not closing quickly because disadvantaged students do not make good progress.
- Due to the improved support and guidance provided by teaching assistants, the progress of students who are disabled or who have special educational needs is getting better but is not yet good.
- The improvements made in teaching quality, especially the marking and feedback of work by teachers, are starting to have a more positive impact on students' achievement. This is particularly the case for the most able students, who make very good use of teachers' advice and for younger students for whom this practice is well established.
- Achievement in modern foreign languages is consistently strong. This is seen in the 2014 results for Year 11. Students' good progress in their books reflects this. Students in humanities, physical education and art also achieve well. In geography, achievement is outstanding and this is due to consistently good and outstanding teaching in the department.

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	105354
Local authority	Bury
Inspection number	448305

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	1,016
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr N Rosindale
Headteacher	Mr A Calvert
Date of previous school inspection	21 September 2009
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