

# The Hawthorne's Free School

Fernhill Road, Bootle, Liverpool, L20 6AQ

**Inspection dates** 30 June–1 July 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
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

- Over time, students' attainment and progress at the end of Key Stage 4 has been significantly below average on a number of measures, including the proportion of students attaining five higher grade GCSEs, including English and mathematics.
- The most able students are not achieving as well as they might and progress in mathematics is not high enough.
- The school's work to address weaknesses in students' basic numeracy skills is yet to have sufficient impact.
- Teachers' expectations of what the most able students are capable of are not always high enough. Teachers' questioning can sometimes make little demand on students' thinking and, as a result, has insufficient impact on moving their learning forward.

### The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher's vision for improving the school, shared by staff and governors alike, is leading to rapid improvements in the quality of teaching and improving students' outcomes.
- The school is successfully broadening students' horizons, raising their aspirations and fuelling their ambitions.
- Senior leaders rigorously monitor the work of the school and take action to address any weaknesses. As a result, students' attainment and progress are improving and attainment gaps closing in a number of subjects.
- Students' behaviour is good and relationships between members of the school community are warm and friendly. This contributes to an atmosphere that is conducive to learning.
- Senior leaders' work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- The quality of teaching and students' attainment and progress in modern foreign languages is good.
- Senior leaders are directing pupil premium funding effectively to accelerate the progress of disadvantaged students.
- Teachers' marking of students' work makes a positive contribution to students' progress.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in a range of lessons and across a range of subjects. Seven of those lessons were jointly observed with senior leaders. An inspector also observed one school assembly.
- Inspectors held meetings with the Executive Principal, the headteacher and senior leaders with responsibility for achievement, the quality of teaching, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors met with a group of middle leaders, a group of classroom teachers and two groups of students. Inspectors also took the opportunity to speak with students during lessons, as they moved around the school and in the yard at break time.
- An inspector met with the Chair of the Governing Body and had a discussion with one parent.
- Inspectors scrutinised a number of school documents including senior leaders' evaluation of how well the school is doing, the updated school development plan, the school's most up-to-date attainment and progress data and the review of the school's use of the pupil premium.
- Inspectors also examined the school's records of attendance, behaviour and the checks made on behalf of the governing body, on the suitability of adults to work with children and young people.
- Inspectors scrutinised the work in a sample of students' books to evaluate the quality of teachers' marking and the progress students' are making in a range of subjects.
- One inspector spoke by telephone with the headteacher of one of the school's providing education for a few of Hawthorne's students.
- There were too few responses to Ofsted's on-line questionnaire (Parent View) for inspectors to consider at this inspection.

## Inspection team

Charles Lowry, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Stephen Wall

Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.*

### Information about this school

- The Hawthorne's Free School is an 11 to 16 comprehensive school, independent of the local authority, situated in Bootle, which is about five miles north of Liverpool city centre.
- The school opened in September 2012.
- The school is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school and there are more girls on the school's roll than boys.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding to support the education of students who are eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority) is well above average.
- The proportion of students from ethnic minority backgrounds is below average.
- Most students are of White British heritage and the very large majority speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is above average.
- A few students receive their education elsewhere at either the Harmonize Free School, in Liverpool or at Sefton local authority's Oakfield Pupil Referral Unit.
- In 2014, the school met the government's current floor standard, which are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress for students at the end of Key Stage 4.
- When Hawthorne's Free School was inspected in February 2014, it was judged to require special measures. Subsequently, the school was inspected on four occasions.
- The headteacher, in post at the time of the previous inspection, has left the school and the governing body has been reconstituted.
- It is planned that the school will join the 'Great Schools' multi-academy trust at the start of the autumn term.
- The school is receiving support from staff of the King's Leadership Academy in Warrington.
- The school have recently formed a partnership with Hugh Baird College in Liverpool to help broaden the school's curriculum and offer a greater range of vocational options at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.

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

- Continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning so that all teaching in the school is brought up to the standard of the best by:
  - ensuring that activities students are given to do are suitably challenging, especially for the most able
  - making sure that teachers use questioning effectively to make students think hard about the subject in order to deepen their understanding
  - ensuring that students' numeracy skills are developed effectively across the curriculum so that they can carry out basic computations quickly, efficiently and accurately.
- Improve achievement so that all students and particularly the most able, make at least the progress expected of them with a higher proportion doing better than this, particularly in mathematics.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- In the relatively short time that the headteacher has been in post, he has united the staff behind his vision for the school, which is rooted in raising staff's expectations of what students' can do and students' aspirations of what they can achieve. Wall displays communicate his and the staff's high expectations, showing the range of careers and professions open to Hawthorne's students and celebrating past students' successes. This is further reinforced with a small sign, posted outside each teacher's classroom door, with information about the university they had attended and the subject they studied. This gives a clear message to the students that one of the realistic choices open to them is a university education.
- The curriculum offered by the school is broad and balanced, with all students following the National Curriculum. Nevertheless, senior leaders have undertaken a review of the academic programme and, in partnership with a local further education college, are beginning to provide all students with the chance of studying a vocational subject chosen from a suite of courses. In conjunction with the school's careers' education programme, the intention is that this will widen the range of opportunities open to students once they leave the school, meet perceived local employment needs, and increase students' chances of success and consequently, preparing them well for the next stage. Further, senior leaders recognise that students arrive at the school with skills in literacy and numeracy below those expected for their age. To address this they will increase the tuition time for these two subjects from September.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well served by a range of opportunities both in lessons and beyond the school. For example, a celebration of non-western European art in the school's art gallery, residential trips, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and visits to universities raise students' horizons, give them opportunities to reflect on their place in the world and the contribution they can make. These opportunities, alongside students' involvement in having a voice in decisions that affect them through the school council, prepares them well for life in modern Britain and gives them an understanding of the common values that unite members of the community.
- Senior leaders have introduced much greater rigour to monitoring students' performance across the school. Data on students' attainment and progress are collected regularly and thoroughly analysed. This enables middle leaders to identify quickly those students whose progress is below expectations and put in place extra help to get them back on track. These data are also used to hold teachers robustly to account for students' outcomes.
- Students attending off-site provision have their progress, attendance and behaviour closely monitored by school staff and any issues followed up as and when they occur; as a result, students behave well. However, some students' attendance issues are so entrenched that improvements in their rates of attendance have been difficult to achieve.
- To assure the quality and reliability of the data at Key Stage 4, senior leaders have enlisted the help of subject specialists and GCSE examiners. These professionals have scrutinised teachers' marking and provided appropriate training to ensure that Hawthorne's staff have a good grasp of examination standards and can apply them, accurately, to students' work. However, the data at Key Stage 3 have yet to be subject to the same rigorous checks. Consequently, the data for students in Years 7, 8 and 9 needs to be treated with caution.
- Senior leaders' knowledge of how well the school is doing is secure. They use a range of evidence to make judgements on all aspects of provision and use this to inform the priorities in the school development plan. The latter is regularly reviewed by senior leaders, and with the Executive Principal who keeps a close eye on the progress being made against each of the priorities for improvement, they are able to maintain a brisk pace of change.
- Middle leaders have greater responsibility for the quality of teaching, learning and students' outcomes in their subject areas than was the case in the past. They regularly visit classrooms to observe their colleagues' professional practice, scrutinise the work in books and talk to students to gain an insight into their school experience. This is giving middle leaders evidence to inform their evaluation of how well their subject areas are performing, affirm good practice and identify areas for improvement.
- Opportunities for staff to share their good practice about what works well in the classroom are provided through weekly 'teach meet' meetings. These are enabling staff to learn from each other and incorporate new ideas into their lessons. This is contributing to the improving profile of teaching across the school.
- Senior leaders have reviewed the way the additional funding the school receives through the pupil premium is spent. They have carefully audited the provision for this group of students and a member of the senior leadership team has responsibility for how this additional government funding is spent and the

impact it is having on outcomes. Although this is a recent development, the school reports that the outcomes for disadvantaged students are improving and attainment gaps are closing. This contributes well to the school's work to ensure equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination.

- Teachers report that there is much greater rigour to the management of their performance with targets reflecting their contribution to improving the school. This new approach to managing performance will be used to make decisions about teachers' pay, for the first time, in the autumn term.
- The school's links with the King's Leadership Academy are well established. Visits by Hawthorne's staff to the partner school have enabled them learn about effective classroom practice and implement these ideas in their own teaching. This has had a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching across the school.

#### ■ The governance of the school:

- After a period of turbulence following the departure of the previous governing body, the situation is now more settled. A new Chair of the Governing Body has been appointed, who presides over a group of 12 committed individuals who make up the new governing body. Governors have attended appropriate training to clarify their roles and responsibilities and individual governors have responsibility for key aspects of the school's work for example, the quality of teaching and learning, financial probity, the impact of the pupil premium and behaviour and safety. Consequently, the governing body's knowledge of the quality of teaching, senior leaders' actions to tackle underperformance including the impact of training to improve teachers' professional practice, data on students' attainment and progress and the arrangements for the management of teachers' performance is secure. As a result, they are able to offer increasing challenge to senior leaders and hold them to account. However, the Chair of the Governing Body is acutely aware of the need to clarify the governing body's structure to maximise governors' use of time and share responsibility more equitably. Accordingly, plans are in place to achieve this by the start of the autumn term.
- Governors' systems for safeguarding students both in school and at off-site provision are effective and meet statutory requirements. The school site is secure and the only entrance to the school building is through main reception, which has a staff controlled entry system.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good.
- Around the school, students behave well. They are smartly dressed and talk to each other and adults respectfully. Students are welcoming of visitors and when asked are keen to share their thoughts and opinions. As a result, the atmosphere around the school is calm and purposeful.
- Students arrive at lessons promptly, invariably have the necessary equipment and are ready to learn.
- Those students who spoke with inspectors said that behaviour is improving as a result of staff's consistent application of the consequences system. This emphasises students' responsibility for their own behaviour and the impact it has on others. When this policy was first implemented, the number of students who received fixed-term exclusions increased as a result of the school's higher expectations. As the policy has become established, the proportion of students subject to this sanction has declined. Further, few lessons are now disturbed by low-level disruption. However, on those occasions when students interrupt learning in this way teachers are quick to respond, minimising the loss of learning time.
- Students' knowledge of the different forms that bullying can take is secure. They have been made aware of the impact that name-calling, physical intimidation, homophobia and racist behaviour can have on others. For example, in response to a racist incident, senior leaders invited the 'Anthony Walker Trust' to raise students' awareness of how racially motivated and prejudiced behaviour including homophobic behaviour, divides communities, breeds resentment and foments violence. Further, a student has led an assembly on transgender issues. Students who spoke with inspectors said that bullying in the school is now rare but when it does occur they are confident that members of staff will sort it out.
- Senior leaders are taking effective steps to improve attendance, which has been below average since the school opened. First day contact with parents when their son or daughter fails to register, the rigorous monitoring of attendance by pastoral staff, the introduction of the weekly attendance lottery and the school's raised expectations, have seen rates of attendance improve this year. This is particularly the case for boys, students supported by the pupil premium and students in Year 11.

## Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Those students spoken to by inspectors said that they feel safe and secure in school. This is reinforced by the numbers of staff on duty at breaks and lunchtime.
- Students have been taught how to keep themselves safe when using computer-based technologies including the internet and mobile phones.
- Assemblies giving students opportunities to reflect on contemporary issues such as terrorism, raises their awareness of the impact of radicalisation and extremist behaviour which are anathema to Britain's core values.
- The school has recognised that a small number of students are particularly vulnerable and in need of additional support to help them cope with the challenges they face in their daily lives. Accordingly, senior leaders have plans in place to address this issue at the start of the next academic year.

## The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- With the exception of modern foreign languages, teaching over time has been of insufficient quality to ensure that students attain well and make good progress. However, senior leaders are taking effective steps to address weaknesses in teachers' classroom practice and as a result the profile of teaching across the school is improving.
- Teachers' expectations of their most able students are not always high enough. In some subjects, they are set work which is not sufficiently challenging. Consequently, this does not move their learning on quickly enough and their progress slows.
- Students' mastery of basic mathematical skills, for example, mental methods for computation is underdeveloped in a significant number of students. This is putting a brake on their progress not only in mathematics, but in their application of numeracy across the curriculum.
- Teachers' use of questioning to make students think about their learning and so deepen their understanding is inconsistent. Where teachers use questioning skilfully, students are given opportunities to reflect upon their learning, link ideas and, as a result, develop a secure grasp of the key concepts. However, there are examples where teachers use questions that demand only superficial responses from their students. Such undemanding questioning slows students' progress, particularly that of the most able students, and does not capitalise on their ability.
- Senior leaders have introduced a framework for lesson planning, which all teachers in the school are using. This is ensuring that all lessons follow a consistent format and students know what to expect as soon as they walk into the classroom. As a consequence, little learning time is lost at the start of lessons and students settle quickly to their work.
- Where teaching is of the highest quality and students make the most rapid progress, teachers plan activities that capture students' interest and challenge them. Teachers ensure that new learning builds upon firm foundations, and where students are not keeping up, readjust their plans so that the pace of teaching matches students' pace of learning. Teachers take risks and give students opportunities to demonstrate their emerging understanding in new contexts. Where teaching is of this quality, all groups of students benefit. However, although the quality of teaching is improving inconsistencies remain and some teachers' professional practice has yet to reach this standard.
- Teachers have access to data on students' performance and are using it with increasing effectiveness to track and promote students' progress.
- Overall, marking is of good quality. Teachers mark their students' work regularly and comments are helpful in focusing students on what they need to do to improve their work. As a result, marking is having a positive impact on students' progress.
- There is a consistent approach to developing students' literacy skills across the curriculum. Subjects develop students' knowledge of key words and emphasise these in every lesson. Reading programmes are used across Key Stage 3 to improve students' reading ability. Taken together, these approaches are having a positive impact on students' progress and their ability to access the curriculum.

**The achievement of pupils****requires improvement**

- Since the school opened, students' attainment at Key Stage 4 has been significantly below average. This includes the proportion of students leaving the school with five higher grade GCSEs including English and mathematics.
- In 2014, the proportions of students making expected progress and more than expected progress in English and mathematics were significantly below average. This was particularly the case for students of middle and lower ability. Although the most able students made progress broadly in line with national averages in both subjects, senior leaders are aware that this group of students are capable of better than this.
- The school no longer enters students early for mathematics as senior leaders recognise that this strategy was having a negative impact on students' progress in this subject and hampering their ability to reach the higher grades.
- Boys' progress was weaker than that of the girls' and the performance gap between the two genders was wider than that found nationally, last year.
- As a result of consistently good quality teaching in modern foreign languages, students' progress in this subject at GCSE moved from broadly in line with the national average in 2013 to significantly above average last year. Given students' starting points this represents exceptional progress.
- Improvements in the quality of classroom practice and rigorous monitoring of students' performance is leading to improving outcomes. The school reports that the proportion of students expected to leave the school with five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, is expected to rise by eight percentage points this year. Further, the proportion of students making the progress expected of them in English is set to rise by 15 percentage points and in mathematics by 16 percentage points. Although this will put the progress measure in English in line with the 2014 national average, progress in mathematics will remain below it.
- The school's data also show that the gap in attainment and progress between the boys and the girls, evident in 2014, is set to close this year due to the improved performance of the boys.
- In English and mathematics disadvantaged students left the Hawthorne's, in 2014, about 1.5 GCSE grades behind their peers both in the school and nationally. However, disadvantaged students are now making similar progress to their peers in the school. As a result, the school's data indicate that attainment gaps have narrowed substantially and in 2015 disadvantaged students are expected to leave the school less than 0.25 grades behind their peers in the school, in both subjects.
- Although the progress of middle and lower ability students has accelerated this year and their attainment at GCSE is set to increase, there has been a slight decline in the outcomes for the most able when compared to their performance in 2014.
- Students with special educational needs make good progress against their challenging targets as a result of the high-quality support they receive.
- Hawthorne's students, who receive their education at other institutions and where the curriculum is carefully tailored to meet their needs, achieve well.

## 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>	138260
<b>Local authority</b>	Sefton
<b>Inspection number</b>	456483

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy free school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	361
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Hilary Wilcock
<b>Headteacher</b>	Michael Taylor
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 February 2014
<b>Telephone number</b>	0151 922 3798
<b>Fax number</b>	0151 933 9123
<b>Email address</b>	admin@hawthornes.org.uk

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