

# Westhoughton High School

Bolton Road, Westhoughton, Bolton, Lancashire, BL5 3BZ

**Inspection dates** 20–21 October 2015

**Overall effectiveness** **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leaders at all levels are passionate about ensuring that every student can achieve his or her best and are diligent in their pursuit of this aim.
- Teaching and outcomes for pupils have rapidly improved since the previous inspection. There is a culture of high expectation among most teachers.
- All pupils receive useful feedback on how to improve their work.
- The attainment of pupils has risen every year for the last four years and is above average. Pupils' rates of progress are increasing.
- Pupils' positive attitudes are a key reason why outcomes are rapidly improving. Behaviour is outstanding.
- Care for pupils' welfare is at the heart of the school's ethos. Leaders strive to ensure that pupils' academic progress, social and emotional well-being are promoted as effectively as possible.
- The interesting curriculum prepares pupils effectively for life in modern Britain.
- The governing body is skilled and rigorous in holding the school to account.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Progress and achievement in mathematics are not as good as in English.
- Progress in Key Stage 3 is less evident than it is in Key Stage 4.
- A gap remains between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of others.

## Full report

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

- Further improve the achievement of all groups of pupils by:
  - ensuring that attainment and progress in mathematics are as high as in English and that rates of progress continue to improve
  - continuing to reduce the gap between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and others nationally
  - making sure the same rigour is applied to tracking pupils' progress in Key Stage 3 as it is in Key Stage 4.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- All staff share the headteacher's determination to make the school the best it can be. Most staff are proud to work here and be part of a rapidly improving school. This was reflected in the very positive outcome of the staff questionnaire.
- The highly effective professional development provided has led to all teachers, heads of subject and senior leaders having an accurate view of the quality of pupils' learning and progress. They are aware of which groups or individuals might be falling behind and so need extra support, which is quickly provided. This was a weakness at the last inspection but is now a strength of the school.
- Leaders have securely improved teaching and developed the leadership capacity of all staff. The school has a strong culture of high aspirations and expectations for success. This is summed up in a notice in one of the classrooms which reads 'if it isn't excellent, it isn't finished'.
- The school is systematically tackling barriers to learning such as lower levels of literacy and numeracy for a number of pupils when they enter the school. The Year 7 catch-up funding is used well to help pupils who need extra support at the start of secondary school so that they can take full advantage of the wider curriculum.
- Over time the school is narrowing the gap in the attainment and progress of disadvantaged pupils and others by strategies such as extra small-group sessions, support with numeracy and literacy, wider opportunities beyond the curriculum, music tuition and other initiatives. A member of staff is designated as pupil premium champion to oversee the work of all such pupils and to intervene if necessary to increase levels of support.
- Pastoral support is excellent. Pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable are very well supported so that they can be as successful as others. High-quality pastoral support has led to excellent outcomes in pupils' behaviour and sense of well-being. The school does not give up on any student.
- The small number of pupils who follow courses with alternative providers are closely monitored and their attendance and progress are rigorously checked.
- The school's broad and balanced curriculum has increased the level of challenge and aims to make sure pupils move on with the best range of qualifications they can. More pupils are taking academic courses and the proportion going on to further advanced study has increased significantly. The school has a higher proportion than found nationally of pupils going on to education, training or employment.
- The school provides good careers guidance so that pupils are well aware of what opportunities are open to them beyond school.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through many subjects and particularly in religious education and citizenship. Pupils support their local and wider communities through charity fund-raising and visits. They are aware of different faiths because of talks by representatives of other faiths and working with the Face to Faith project. The school is working towards achieving the cultural diversity mark. Many sporting, musical and artistic opportunities are available for every year group.
- Thinking and learning about British values has a central place in the curriculum. Pupils have frequent opportunities to discuss the rule of law, the value of democracy, liberty, free speech and respect in society. Matters which they have raised at the youth parliament include homelessness, racism and transport.
- All adults in the school see safeguarding as being everyone's responsibility and act accordingly. Leaders put a strong emphasis on teaching pupils about dangers and hazards, including safe use of the internet and the dangers of extremism in any form. An overwhelming proportion of parents who responded to both Parent View and in-school questionnaires comment that their children are safe in school.
- Leaders tackle discrimination swiftly and effectively. Pupils say that they feel their school is highly inclusive; everyone can take part in any activity.
- The local authority working with the school set up an inspection action group after the previous inspection. This is no longer required and the school is now sometimes used as a model of good practice to support others in the area.
- The headteacher is not complacent and knows that there is more to do to secure further improvement in mathematics across the school and to accelerate the progress of disadvantaged pupils. The tracking of pupils' progress is highly effective in Key Stage 4 but less so in Key Stage 3. The school will consolidate

and build on the good progress it has made in the previous two years.

■ **The governance of the school**

is of good quality and challenges leaders rigorously to continually improve. Governors have achieved the 'governor mark' in a short space of time in order to develop their skills in holding leaders to account. Five governors have become 'data champions' by undertaking specific training to enable them to fully understand the progress of pupils and see for themselves where standards are not high enough or progress not good enough. They oversee the budget and make sure the school receives value for money and that salary progression is linked to better outcomes for pupils. Governors fulfil their statutory duties to the letter. They set the tone for the ethos of the school and support its values and ambition. They listen to parents, pupils and staff and know what is working in school, how good teaching is and what remains to be done to make the school even better.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

**Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good**

- Senior and middle leaders have been notably successful in bringing good consistency to the quality of teaching across nearly all subjects and within departments.
- Teachers usually have high expectations of pupils. These inform the way they plan lessons so that pupils are encouraged to think, concentrate and work hard. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to question pupils to deepen their knowledge and fully explain their thinking. Because teaching has improved, pupils have very positive attitudes and come ready and prepared to learn.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well supported in class. Learning support assistants have a very clear role and manage effectively the ways in which they support pupils in their care. As a result these pupils make good progress.
- Marking is consistently good across most subjects. Staff rigorously follow the school's agreed marking policy. Pupils say that they are well informed about how to improve their work and how to reach their targets. Marking focuses effectively on helping pupils to improve their skills, not just their knowledge. Books scrutinised by the inspection team showed that pupils were taking pride in their work, making sure their work was completed and acting on the advice given by their teachers.
- The school has won an award for the quality of its assessment system, which is proving to be an effective tool in driving up standards.
- Teaching and learning are not outstanding because there remain small variations in the quality of marking in a few subject areas. Pupils are not always challenged to think or learn from their mistakes because teachers sometimes give answers too quickly and some lower-ability pupils have less confidence and resilience when they find work difficult.

**Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding**

**Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are confident that bullying is rare and that the school deals with it instantly and effectively. There is a confidential online system which allows pupils to report any concerns they might have if they do not want to talk to adults face to face.
- Pupils demonstrated a mature and thorough understanding of the misery of bullying and the problems teenagers face in worrying about their appearance. This was seen in a performance, during the inspection, for Year 5 pupils from local primary schools. They clearly brought out a powerful message about being unique, not influenced by others and not changing to fit in with fickle friends.
- Pupils understand why attitudes such as homophobia, racism and extremism are abhorrent and say that such attitudes are not tolerated in school.
- Younger pupils confirmed that they had settled quickly into school and felt comfortable. Pupils know that there is a nurture room for those who like to be quiet at breaks and lunchtimes. Older pupils indicated that they felt well informed about the future and well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Promoting pupils' personal development and well-being has a high priority on the school's agenda. Much is in place to support pupils' mental health and emotional well-being as well as their physical development.

- Pupils are keen to take on leadership roles and many are involved in mentoring younger pupils and organising charity fund-raising.

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- It is outstanding because of the very positive attitude pupils have to their work and the respect they show towards teachers and others. Pupils are hardworking, committed to learning and ambitious.
- During the inspection many pupils commented on their pride in their school. This was reflected in their neat uniform, clean, litter-free environment and their appreciation of the work done to improve the buildings and outdoor grounds. Pupils themselves have a very positive view of behaviour and say that it has improved over the last two years.
- Very few pupils are excluded from school and this number has dropped to well below average.
- Attendance is high and rose even further in 2015. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is low for all groups of pupils.
- The school rigorously checks on the behaviour, welfare and progress of the small number of pupils who attend alternative provision.

### **Outcomes for pupils**

### **are good**

- Attainment at the end of Year 11 has risen every year for the last four years and is now above average. The school's results for five or more GCSE passes at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics were above average in 2014 and rose further in 2015.
- The rates of progress in English and mathematics from different starting points, including the less-able and high-ability pupils, have also risen each year but there was a small decline in 2015. This was caused by inexperience in a new GCSE course in English and grade-boundary changes in mathematics. Progress data for pupils currently in Year 11 predict a further rise based on what pupils have already achieved, and this was confirmed by observing pupils at work and checking the quality of work in their books.
- Progress has increased significantly in many subjects including those identified as weak at the previous inspection. Outcomes are strong in biology, chemistry, physics, history, media, art, religious education and citizenship. There has been good improvement in the results for music, modern foreign languages and design technology but these subjects remain a focus for improvement. The weakest performance was in business studies. Overall the best progress is made in the sciences and the humanities subjects.
- The gap in the achievement between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally has continued to narrow in both English and mathematics. Nevertheless, disadvantaged pupils do not currently attain as highly and make slower progress than others in school. The gap is wider in mathematics than in English. This is a continual focus for all teachers and leaders.
- The attainment of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs fell slightly in 2015 but their rates of progress increased. Pupils were seen working well in small groups and said that they felt happy with the level of support that they receive.
- High-ability pupils are being given more opportunities to reach their potential. There is an increase in the proportion of A\* and A grades across many subjects and particularly in mathematics, English, sciences, history and drama. Many more pupils are following academic courses than previously so that the number going on to advanced study courses has increased significantly over time.
- Pupils were observed developing knowledge, understanding and skills across all subject areas. For example, Year 8 art pupils were able to critically assess their own and each other's work; Year 10 English pupils were deepening their knowledge of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* and working out which methods of revision worked best for them. In science lessons across both key stages, pupils are comfortable and confident in using scientific language. Pupils concentrate well in practical lessons and enjoy developing their skills in using computers, design technology and sport.
- Outcomes for pupils are good because of the rapid improvement which has been made across all subject areas in the last two years. Inspection evidence from observing learning and looking at pupils' books confirms that in nearly all subjects pupils are making good progress. However, tracking information for pupils in Years 7 and 8 is less informative and does not show as clearly as that for Years 9, 10 and 11 how much progress pupils are making.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	105252
<b>Local authority</b>	Bolton
<b>Inspection number</b>	10002281

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	851
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Heyes
<b>Headteacher</b>	Philip Hart
<b>Telephone number</b>	01942 814122
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.westhoughton-high.org">www.westhoughton-high.org</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:WHSOffice@westhoughton-high.bolton.sch.uk">WHSOffice@westhoughton-high.bolton.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	12–13 September 2013

## Information about this school

- This is an average-sized secondary school.
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is low.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the current government current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A very small number of pupils attend off-site alternative provision at Bolton College, Training for Today and the Education Training Partnership.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in most subjects and across all age groups. Some learning was observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors held formal meetings with groups of pupils from each year group. They spoke informally to many other pupils at breaks, lunchtimes and in lessons.
- Inspectors attended registration times and observed a performance by Year 11 drama pupils for local primary pupils.
- Inspectors sampled work in pupils' books in all year groups across a range of subjects including English, mathematics, sport studies, religious education and art folders.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders and representatives from the governing body. A meeting was held with the school improvement professional from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of school documents. These included information relating to safeguarding and child protection, attendance and behaviour, development planning, subject planning, tracking information on pupils' progress, performance management systems and procedures for checking on the quality of teaching and learning.
- The views of staff were gained from the 58 responses to the Ofsted questionnaire.
- Inspectors gained the views of parents from 132 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, and responses to the school's recent consultations with parents.

## Inspection team

Judith Straw, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Doris Bell	Ofsted Inspector
Steven Caldecott	Ofsted Inspector
Lenford White	Ofsted Inspector

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