

Wellfield High School

Yewlands Drive, Leyland, Lancashire PR25 2TP

Inspection dates

13–14 January 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Overall, this is an improving school. However, some improvements have not been fast enough.
- As a result of weak leadership and teaching within science, pupils have not achieved well. The progress of current pupils is also slow.
- In some subjects, including English, the progress of boys is too slow because their teachers and leaders do not have high enough expectations of what they can achieve.
- Disabled pupils and pupils who have special educational needs have not progressed well in the recent past. In particular, the legacy of this slow progress means that these pupils in Key Stage 4 are not achieving as well as they could because they have a lot of catching up to do.
- Teachers expectations of pupils' behaviour are variable. This results in a small proportion of boys causing low-level disruption in some classes. Some pupils' written work can be disorganised, cluttered and consequently inaccurate.
- Too few teachers purposefully develop pupils' skills in expressing their ideas, explanations and opinions. This limits their ability to communicate well through writing.
- Governors, leaders and managers have not paid enough attention to the progress of different groups of pupils when making dispassionate evaluations of the quality of the school's work.
- The curriculum does not meet the needs and aspirations well enough of the lowest and the highest attaining pupils.

The school has the following strengths

- Many aspects of the school have improved rapidly. Achievement in mathematics and many other subjects is strong because the quality of teaching and subject leadership has improved significantly.
- The progress of disabled pupils and pupils who have special educational needs in Key Stage 3 is improving. Pupils who benefit from other forms of additional funding are also making better progress.
- Generally, pupils who join this school after the start of Year 7 do well because of the high quality of care and support they receive.
- Currently, high-ability pupils and girls make strong progress in this school.
- All pupils are very well cared for, given good advice and support. They feel safe and systems to ensure their safety are strong.
- The vast majority of pupils behave very well around the school and in lessons. Pupils attend well and almost all are punctual.
- Pupils' personal development is strong.
- Systems are in place to hold teachers to account with more rigour, and lines of accountability are clear.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to increase rates of progress and levels of attainment by ensuring that all:
 - pupils achieve better in science
 - teachers have higher expectations of what boys can achieve
 - teachers expect all boys to behave as well as most do
 - teachers encourage pupils to explain their ideas more fully and justify their opinions
 - teachers insist pupils' handwriting and diagrammatical work are well presented and accurate.

- Further develop the curriculum so that it enables a greater proportion of pupils to achieve a wider range of high-quality qualifications.

- Improve the quality of leadership and management at all levels by:
 - raising aspirations as to what different groups of pupils can achieve
 - ensuring better use is made of information, so that teachers are more rigorously held to account for the progress different groups of pupils make
 - ensuring governors provide more robust challenge to the headteacher for the progress of different groups of pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- There is no doubt that leaders at all levels, teachers and other adults are passionate about improving the school and they work very hard to achieve this. This has led to significant improvement in many areas of the school. However, key aspects of the school have not improved as quickly as others. These difficult-to-shift weaknesses are limiting the progress of some pupils and holding back progress across the board in science.
- Governors and school leaders are rightly proud of their achievements. However, their evaluations of different aspects of the school are too often based on limited evidence. Insufficient regard is given to objective analysis of examination results and the school's own information about progress of current pupils. This, combined with some staff not believing with sufficient conviction that boys can do better, has led to boys not achieving as well as they could. As a consequence, school leaders have had an overly generous view as to how well their pupils achieve and on the quality of teaching.
- School leaders constantly review the curriculum. They have taken positive steps to enable a greater proportion of pupils to follow both English literature and language GCSEs at Key Stage 4, thereby raising the aspirations of many pupils. However, their decision to prevent pupils from taking GCSEs in biology, physics and chemistry leads to a failure to meet the needs of their most-able pupils who would wish to extend their studies in these subjects in the future. Currently, there is a lack of a coherent curriculum for some low-ability pupils who, having started to learn French in Year 7, stop in order to spend more time developing their literacy skills, and then, in Year 9, start to study German. Middle-ability pupils are well served by the current curriculum.
- Owing to the inequalities in curricular provision and the relatively weaker progress of boys, the school does not provide equality of opportunity.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is improving. The processes for appraisal have strengthened and now have a clear structure. There are clear lines of accountability. Teachers are set appropriate targets annually, most of which are measurable. However, these targets do not focus sufficiently on the progress of different groups of pupils. Staff speak highly of both the quality of professional support and of training. These are well balanced between focusing on the specific needs of individual staff and whole-school themes.
- The impact subject leaders have on the progress of pupils is also improving. Senior leaders have been creative and successful in reassigning the responsibilities of effective subject leaders to areas of weakness. As an example, the quality of teaching has improved quickly in history. The responsibility for rapid and significant improvements in mathematics lies substantially with the subject leader. At the start of this term, a faculty was created to include mathematics and science, led by the previous subject leader of mathematics. This is already bringing a more accurate assessment of the quality of science teaching and more rigour to the accountability of science teachers.
- The school has a good system to monitor the progress of pupils throughout the year. The skill with which teachers and leaders use this information is variable. This can result in teachers being slow to become aware that different groups of pupils are progressing at different rates, leaving gaps in understanding and a lot of catching up to be done.
- Every adult has particularly high personal expectations for the care and safeguarding of pupils. High-quality leadership of these aspects ensures that systems are secure and communication with external agencies, such as the police, is very effective. Staff are frequently and well trained on all aspects of child protection and preventing extremism. Staff know how to respond to a concern and systems are in place to ensure that the safeguarding of pupils is highly effective. Pupils themselves know how to stay safe because they are well taught how to be safe. For example, pupils know how to use social media carefully. Pupils say they feel very safe because there are many adults they can turn to if they have any worries about themselves or another pupil.
- The leadership and management of behaviour are also highly effective. Standards of behaviour of the large majority of pupils are high. The school has introduced clear expectations for behaviour, supported through a good range of rewards and sanctions. Patterns of pupil behaviour are closely and frequently monitored, enabling the school leadership to respond quickly to challenge poor behaviour or support where necessary. High-quality leadership in this area has ensured exclusion is used rarely and the practice of isolating poorly behaving pupils is seldom used.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strongly promoted through aspects of the curriculum and a rich range of extra-curricular opportunities. Many pupils take part in activities that enhance their personal development and their education. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme is popular and many pupils benefit from the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programme. The school works well with local primary schools to develop financial and enterprise skills. Pupils support many charities and have a strong commitment to developing life-saving skills. Recently, the school was recognised for this when it received the Cardiac Smart Award. Sport is an important aspect for many pupils and many are successful at sport beyond the curriculum. Rugby is particularly popular and successful.
 - Information parents receive about their children's education is improving and is now of a good quality.
 - Disadvantaged pupils benefit from additional funding the school receives for them. Gaps in the performance of disadvantaged pupils and others were wide. However, for current pupils, these gaps are significantly narrower in both mathematics and English.
 - The local authority has worked well with the school over recent years to support its improvement.
 - Staff are very supportive of the school's leadership team. In general, staff, pupils and parents are positive about all aspects of the school.
- **The governance of the school**
- Since they reconstituted, governors have ensured that this is an improving school. However, their successes have not been consistent over all aspects of the school's work.
 - The governors have not challenged the views of the headteacher rigorously and with sufficient regard to examination results or the progress of current pupils. This has in turn contributed to the view that all pupils have made and are making good progress when they are not, particularly in science and for a large group of boys.
 - The governing body has a wide range of skills. It has both challenged and supported senior school leaders on many aspects including safeguarding, financial management and, more recently, on provision for disabled pupils and pupils who have a special educational need. However, the governing body does not demonstrate the same levels of skill and challenge when analysing educational data or evaluating the quality of teaching or the curriculum.
 - The governing body has been very effective in contributing to the improving personal development of pupils, their attitudes to learning and their spiritual, moral, cultural and social development.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is improving. However, teaching is still not strong enough to ensure different groups of pupils achieve well across a wide range of subjects, including English and science.
- Where teaching is weak, teachers do not assess with any accuracy how well their pupils are learning. So, these teachers do not adapt their teaching to meet the needs of their pupils and the work can be too difficult or too easy. As a consequence, pupils do not enjoy learning and so can lose interest. In a few circumstances, pupils, mainly boys, find other things that interest them, causing some low-level disruption, distracting others from learning.
- In contrast, some teaching is both inspiring and engaging. These teachers plan their lessons very well, building on what pupils already know and using topics that are interesting. They will constantly test the understanding of their pupils and have the skills and confidence to alter the course of lessons, ensuring that pupils learn things well and at a brisk pace.
- Many teachers, in a wide range of subjects, plan to ensure pupils develop their reading skills. Strategies to improve pupils' literacy skills are used by many teachers to good effect. However, a large proportion of low- and middle-ability pupils do not have good enough skills in sharing their ideas, and explaining and justifying their opinions. This limits their abilities to express themselves clearly through writing.
- The best teachers use additional support well, and guidance to all teachers on how best to support disabled pupils and pupils who have special educational needs is improving.

- The school's developing home-based learning programme, an internet-based system, is working well. Pupils say it is easier to manage the work they do at home. It is also developing important modern communication skills. Both teachers and leaders can analyse more easily patterns of home tasks, establishing whether they are completed to a high standard, or not at all. Home-based learning tasks are set more frequently and in line with school policy. The school has chosen to retain the use of pupil planners as they consider them to be an effective method of enabling parents to check on work set and to communicate easily with teachers.
- The quality of pupils' presentation of work is very variable because teachers have different expectations of the standards of writing and diagrams that they find acceptable. When these expectations are low, accuracy is reduced and pupils take less pride in their work. They are therefore not well enough prepared for their next steps in education or training.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' safety and their physical and emotional well-being are promoted strongly through excellent care systems. Staff know their pupils well and keep a close eye on them. Pupils learn about potential dangers in their current and future lives and how to cope with these safely. They have many opportunities to talk about their concerns to a wide range of adults who are well equipped to support them.
- There is a wide range of opportunities for pupils to develop their leadership skills and enhance their personal development, including peer support programmes. Strategies are in place to promote British values and how to be a positive citizen. This underpins many aspects of both the formal and extra curriculum.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- All groups of pupils attend well. Most enjoy coming to school. They socialise very well and many take part in additional enriching activities with enthusiasm. The school works well to maintain this good standard of attendance and addresses rigorously any persistent absenteeism. School leaders set very high expectations for punctuality and pupils respond positively.
- In lessons, behaviour is almost always good. Pupils stay focused and work hard. Occasionally, and when teaching is not good enough, a minority of pupils will distract others with low-level disruptive behaviour.
- Around school there is a culture of harmony and happiness. Pupils move around the narrow corridors of the school calmly and responsibly. Despite the many corners and blind spots around the buildings, pupils say they feel safe. They also say there is no prejudice-based bullying and it is 'Okay to be different' in this school. However, some pupils comment on a small minority of older boys who can unsettle others through their boisterous behaviour. When older pupils are asked about changes they have noticed, invariably they say that behaviour has improved significantly, because 'the school is stricter' and they prefer it like this. They say they 'learn better'. Parents share the view that there are good standards of behaviour in school.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- The inferior quality of teaching and subject leadership within science has resulted in pupils having not achieved well. This trend is continuing for pupils currently in the school.
- Different groups in some years are not achieving as well as their peers. In recent years, the gap between the progress of boys in the school and boys nationally has been wide. Currently there is a large progress gap in English between Year 10 boys and girls. These boys are also falling significantly short of their targets. There is a much narrower gender gap in Year 11. In mathematics, however, any gender gaps are negligible and Year 11 boys are currently on course to exceed their targets.

- Pupils make good progress in mathematics from all of their different starting points. The picture is more variable in English where, although in Year 11 progress is strong, in Year 10 only high-ability pupils are progressing well.
- There have been some individual examples of pupils who have special educational needs, or have a disability, progressing quickly in the school. However, on the whole, this group of pupils has not achieved well. Although care for these pupils was of the highest quality, expectations of what they could have achieved were not high enough. More rigorous scrutiny of the progress of disabled pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and improved guidance for teachers have improved rates of progress. Achievement for this group of pupils in Key Stage 3 is stronger than in Key Stage 4. This is because older pupils have fallen behind and have a lot of catching up to do.
- Pupils have attained well and are continuing to do so in a range of subjects. Attainment has been particularly strong in the visual arts and Spanish. Humanities has been strong because pupils have done well in religious education and geography. History is improving quickly.
- Although the proportion of high-ability pupils is smaller in this school than nationally, these pupils thrive in Wellfield High School because a lot is expected of them and they are well supported.
- A large proportion of pupils transfer into this school after Year 7. The positive attitudes of Wellfield pupils and strong care and support from staff ensure that the majority of these pupils do well.
- Gaps in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and others are narrowing. Last year, disadvantaged pupils in this school made better progress in mathematics than their counterparts nationally. The school's monitoring information suggests that this positive trend of improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in both mathematics and English is set to continue.
- Pupils who attract additional funding because they need to catch up in Year 7 benefit from a good specialist support programme. Their reading improves quickly and their enhanced confidence helps them improve in their other subjects.
- Pupils are well prepared for their future lives in modern Britain. They are literate, numerate and use modern technologies skilfully. They are financially literate. They understand how to be safe and they behave well. The vast majority of pupils hold good attitudes to learning. They understand the value of regular attendance at school and being punctual. Pupils wear their uniform well and take pride in their school. All know right from wrong and most live to a high moral code. Pupils at key stages of transition receive high-quality information, advice and guidance. The school is a cohesive community. A higher than average number of pupils leave this school to take up good-quality courses and employment.

School details

Unique reference number	119723
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10002230

This inspection 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	367
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Maria Neale
Headteacher	Piers Tolson
Telephone number	01772 421303
Website	www.whs.lancs.sch.uk
Email address	head@whs.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19–20 November 2013

Information about this school

- Wellfield High School is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Since the last inspection, both the deputy headteacher and the assistant headteacher have left and been replaced with two assistant headteachers.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- A significantly higher than average number of pupils join this school after Year 7.
- About a fifth of pupils in Year 7 are eligible for the pupil premium. This is additional funding the school is given to help improve the reading or mathematical skills of those pupils who did not attain Level 4, in either subject, at the end of Year 6.
- Currently, two Year 11 pupils attend a neighbouring school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. Few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or who have special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a wide range of evidence during the inspection, including through observations of teaching, some of which were undertaken jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work during lessons and at a further sample of pupils' written work including English, science and mathematics.
- An inspector visited an assembly and registration time.
- Meetings were held with school staff, including the headteacher, other senior leaders and staff in charge of aspects of the school's work. Inspectors met with members of the governing body. They also spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils in formal interviews, during lessons and informally at lunchtimes and breaktimes. Inspectors analysed 71 responses to the Ofsted online pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors considered a large variety of documentation related to the school's work: improvement plans, the school's view of its performance, and information concerning pupils' attainment, progress and attendance.
- Inspectors scrutinised records concerning safeguarding, pupils' behaviour and the quality of teaching and learning.
- Inspectors analysed 44 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also took into account 18 written responses from parents.
- Inspectors analysed 46 responses to the Ofsted online staff questionnaire. Inspectors also took into account eight written responses from staff.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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