

Harper Green School

Harper Green Road, Farnworth, Bolton BL4 0DH

Inspection dates

6–7 October 2015

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

- Students do not make enough progress in English.
- Disadvantaged students do not make enough progress in English and mathematics.
- Teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are not consistently high enough. They do not always challenge students, especially the most able, to do their best.
- Until recently, leaders and governors have not had an accurate view of the quality of teaching and students' outcomes. However, as a result of leaders' actions to improve teaching, standards for students currently in the school are now improving.
- Leaders do not use information about what students already know and can do consistently to set ambitious targets.
- Leaders do not ensure that the school's assessment and feedback policy is used consistently in all subjects. As a result, teachers do not always use questions to check what students have learnt.
- Teachers do not always give students clear guidance on how to improve their work, or the time to improve it.

The school has the following strengths

- The exceptional leadership of the executive headteacher and newly appointed senior leaders has strengthened the school's capacity to raise achievement for all students. Standards are now rising after a period of decline.
- Students achieve well in science and religious education.
- The school provides good care and support to students. It works effectively with other services to keep vulnerable students safe.
- The school promotes outstanding relationships between students and promotes opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of learning, particularly in English, to increase students' rate of progress by ensuring all teachers:
 - provide students, especially the most able, with work which challenges them to do their best
 - follow the school's assessment and feedback policy to plan the next steps for learning and make it clear to students what they need to do to improve their knowledge and understanding
 - develop their use of questions to check students understand what they are learning
 - give students more opportunities and enough time to improve their work.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - setting more ambitious targets for students, taking account of the expectations of the new national curriculum in Key Stage 3 and new qualifications at GCSE
 - ensuring that all teachers follow the school's assessment and marking policy
 - make better use of pupil premium funds to improve the progress of disadvantaged students in English and mathematics.
- 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

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Senior leaders have not ensured that policies, most notably for assessment, are implemented consistently. Consequently, teachers do not always provide students with the guidance they need to make good progress.
- Senior leaders now have an accurate understanding of the quality of education in the school. However, this is not yet the case for all subject leaders. This means that improvement in standards is not yet secure across the school.
- New leaders are in the process of raising standards in their subjects. However, some leaders do not take sufficient account of information from assessments when setting targets for improvement, some of which are not demanding enough. They are now checking the quality of teaching and learning more accurately. These checks are recent and have not resulted in improvement for all subjects.
- Leaders have not ensured that the extra funds to support disadvantaged students have been used to raise the standards of such students in English and mathematics.
- The executive headteacher is a national leader in education, seconded to the school in January 2015. Working closely with a joint executive board, the governing body and newly appointed leaders, he has acted swiftly to address the decline in standards.
- The executive headteacher has articulated a vision and created a culture for promoting outstanding provision for all students. He has been successful in ensuring all teachers are now working towards this. As a result, the progress for most students is beginning to improve. This includes disabled students and those who have special educational needs, and disadvantaged students.
- Stronger systems to improve behaviour, attendance, lesson planning, performance management and governance have refocused the school on prioritising the achievement of all students. Many students, staff and parents say that higher expectations and improved behaviour are beginning to raise standards.
- Leaders have drawn on expertise from the local authority, a national support school and external expertise. As a result, school leaders are now in a position to drive improvements and many staff said that their practice was improving as a result of the additional challenge.
- Teachers are now expected to take part in regular training sessions to reflect on and improve their practice. They appreciate these opportunities to develop their work, for example in planning lessons. The impact of this work is not yet evident in all lessons.
- The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum, with a wide range of different subjects at Key Stage 4. As a result, there are very few students who leave Year 11 who are not in education, employment or training. All students take part in the numerous extra-curricular opportunities. Students particularly enjoy extra sessions in dance and PE. Leaders do not provide parents with accurate information relating to the new national curriculum and GCSE course expectations.
- Leaders promote opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development exceptionally well. Students explain enthusiastically how British values relate both to their own lives and to the school's ethos. Students are very positive about living in harmony with people of different beliefs from their own. They have opportunities to explore these aspects in religious education, history and in assemblies and tutor groups. They learn about democratic processes and contribute to the life of the school through the school council.
- Leaders protect students from radicalisation and extremism and are confident and competent to encourage open discussion with students.
- The school's work to create a safe culture means all students, including those who are vulnerable, are kept safe. The school works well with parents and carers to ensure their children are supported and safe. The majority of parents and staff agreed that their children feel safe at the school and are well looked after.
- The monitoring of students who follow alternative provision is good, and leaders are now keeping a closer track of the progress and behaviour for these students. Students said they appreciated the opportunity to learn new skills when attending these courses.

■ The governance of the school

- the governance of the school has improved significantly in the last year. Governors' expertise has developed with the support of the joint executive board and they are now providing an appropriate level of challenge and support to the school
 - governors now have more accurate information about how well students are achieving. They recognise that more work needs to be done to improve the achievement of disadvantaged students
 - governors now have a good understanding of the quality of teaching in the school. They ensure that performance management arrangements are effective and that increases in salary are linked to effective teaching.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teaching in English requires improvement because expectations for what students can achieve are not high enough.
- The quality of teaching for disadvantaged students in mathematics has not been good enough because these students have not made the same progress as their peers.
- Teachers do not always use information about what students are capable of achieving when they plan lessons. Furthermore, they do not use questions during lessons to check how well students have understood what they are learning. This means that expectations for what students should know and understand at the end of each lesson are not high enough.
- Teachers do not always move the most-able students on to more demanding work quickly enough. In these lessons all students are working on the same task at the same pace and do not have the chance to work to their highest levels.
- The quality of teachers' feedback and marking is variable. In many cases it does not help students to improve because it is too general and does not make clear what they need to do to improve. In some books seen, teachers did not expect students to respond to the suggestions for improvement.
- Some teachers provide high-quality marking and feedback. In these cases, feedback is precise and tells students what they need to do to get to the next level. This was evident in some mathematics, design and technology, music and PE lessons where students were expected to reflect on and improve their work.
- Where teachers address misconceptions and check regularly that students understand what they are learning, there are higher levels of achievement. In these lessons students are encouraged to discuss and debate and as a result their learning is deeper. For example, in a mathematics lesson, the teacher used questions which encouraged students to give clear reasons for their answers and, in a textiles lesson, the teacher skilfully questioned students so that they could expand and explain their answers using technical vocabulary.
- Students in some lessons engage eagerly and are keen to talk about their learning. They respond thoughtfully to challenging questions posed by the teacher. This was seen when students were working on problem-solving in mathematics lessons in Year 10 and in a Year 7 Spanish lesson where the teacher had expectations that all students spoke in full sentences. As a result, all students were making good progress.
- In science and religious education, expectations for what students can achieve are high and, as a result, they achieve well. In these lessons, students use technical terms accurately and are eager to contribute their ideas.
- Students are set homework on a regular basis but it is not always used to consolidate the learning in the classroom. This means that students do not always have the chance to deepen their learning.
- There is now better-quality teaching for students who arrive at the school with low prior levels of attainment. The school is providing these students with additional support and they are now making better progress.
- The impact of teaching assistants and other adults in lessons is variable. Some provide excellent

support to students through skilful questioning, for example in an art lesson, and as a result these students make good progress. In other lessons, support is more focused on helping students to complete the task without always developing their understanding.

- Students have the opportunity to read widely. In a catch-up intervention group, students read to the inspector with confidence and shared their love of reading. One student said that the library was their favourite place in the school.
- Teachers challenge stereotypes and the use of derogatory language in lessons and around the school. They are quick to tackle inappropriate language and promote equality of opportunity and diversity in teaching and learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote students' personal development, behaviour and welfare, including those who are in alternative provision, is good. There are new systems in place which have improved behaviour. Students and staff said that higher expectations have resulted in improvements in this aspect of the school's work.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and are effective. The school works well with external agencies to ensure that support for vulnerable students meets their needs.
- Attendance has been below national figures and this term was affected by a religious festival. There is strong pastoral support for those whose attendance needs improvement and this is now improving. Attendance was approaching national figures at the time of the inspection.
- Students spoke highly of their experiences at school. One student said 'This is a bully-free zone.' Teachers promote clear messages about the impact of bullying and prejudiced behaviour on students' well-being.
- Students have opportunities to learn how to keep themselves safe in all aspects of their lives. They enjoy learning about how to stay healthy.
- The school's work to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Assemblies, tutorials and wider curriculum opportunities give students the chance to be highly reflective about and responsible for their actions.
- The school provides impartial careers guidance so that students make appropriate choices about the next stage of their education, employment and training. Students are helped to follow healthy lifestyles.

Behaviour

- Relationships between students are outstanding. They treat one another with courtesy and respect both during lessons and at lunchtime.
- The behaviour of students is good. Students take pride in the school and their new uniform. They conduct themselves well and show exemplary respect towards one another, to teachers and to the school environment.
- New structures to ensure good behaviour have made a significant difference and students spoke favourably about the consistency and fairness of the new expectations.
- The school environment is orderly; students respond quickly to requests from staff. Low-level disruption is rare.
- The majority of parents and staff say that behaviour in the school is good.

Outcomes for pupils require improvement

- Students start the school with attainment which is below average. When they join the school they do not read or write as well as typical students of their age. The 2014 and 2015 GCSE results reflected underachievement for many groups of students. Lower-ability students underachieved in English and mathematics.
- In 2014 and 2015, there was a large gap between the English and mathematics GCSE

performance of disadvantaged and other students. In English and mathematics the gap between disadvantaged students and other students in the school was just over a GCSE grade; between these students and other students nationally, the gap was a grade and a half. From their starting points in Year 7, disadvantaged students of all abilities made less progress than other students in the school and nationally.

- In English, students currently in the school are not making progress in line with other students nationally with similar starting points. This is because leaders have not had an accurate view of the prior attainment and potential for students in this subject.
- Disadvantaged students have not made the same progress in mathematics as other students with the same starting points both in the school and nationally.
- The achievement of students with low starting points has been below that of other students with similar starting points nationally. These students are now making better progress.
- The school's use of assessment to set appropriate targets for students has not been accurate in the past and this is having an impact on what is expected of some students currently in Year 11. However the school is addressing this as a matter of urgency by drawing on expertise from the support school.
- The most-able students make very good progress in mathematics; however, their progress in English is below that of other students with the same starting points.
- The progress of disabled students and those with special educational needs currently on roll is improving in most years towards that of other students with the same starting points.
- Students read widely and often and those students who need additional support for their literacy skills are supported well so that they read with fluency and comprehension.
- Most students are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training and employment. The proportion of students progressing to education establishments, apprenticeships, employment or training is close to average.

School details

Unique reference number	105257
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	10002278

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	1318
Appropriate authority	Joint executive board
Chair	Rosemary Demaine
Headteacher	Paul Roach
Telephone number	01204 572941
Website	www.harper-green.bolton.sch.uk
Email address	head@harper-green.bolton.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 October 2013

Information about this school

- The executive headteacher is a national leader in education and was seconded from Mount St Joseph, a national support school, in January 2015.
- The school meets the current floor standards.
- A joint executive board was appointed in September 2014. The board comprises the chair of governors, two colleague governors, the assistant director of education (Chair) and two local authority heads of school improvement. It is working to hand over responsibility to the governing body.
- A small proportion of students follow courses away from the school site at Bolton College and Rathbone.
- Inspectors were aware during this inspection of a serious incident concerning a student that had occurred since the previous inspection. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind, actions taken by the setting in response to the incident were considered (where appropriate) alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' judgements.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 45 teaching sessions of which eight were with senior staff. They held discussions with the headteacher and senior leaders about teaching, attendance, behaviour and safeguarding and about assessment and students' attainment and progress.
- They also talked to students in lessons informally, to several groups of students, members of the joint executive board, the chair of governors and three governors.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of students' written work, data from assessments and school records to measure improvement in students' progress, behaviour, teaching, the curriculum and safeguarding documents. They also looked closely at the school's evaluation of its work and the school's plans for further improvement.
- The responses of 59 staff to the questionnaire were considered and the inspectors took into account the school's records of parent, staff and students' views and 34 parents' responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View).

Inspection team

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