

# Longdendale High School

Spring Street, Hollingworth, Hyde SK14 8LW

## Inspection dates

3–4 November 2015

## Overall effectiveness

**Good**

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Since the previous inspection there have been marked improvements in teaching, behaviour and the overall quality of education that pupils receive. This is because leadership, including governance, is outstanding.
- The headteacher has been successful in uniting most members of the school community behind him and there is a shared aspiration for continued improvement.
- Swift action taken by school leaders since the previous inspection has resulted in the gap between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of others in the school narrowing quickly.
- Pupils make good progress in most subjects and do outstandingly well in English.
- Pupils with special educational needs and disabled pupils receive effective support and are well taught. As a result, they make good progress.
- School leaders are self-critical and open to new ideas. They have a very accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Consequently, plans for further improvement are sharply focused on the correct priorities.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning. They feel that improvements in teaching have led to much better standards of behaviour.
- Pupils speak proudly of the school's core values: achievement, success, professionalism, integrity, respect and endeavour. The integration of such values into the life of the school has been a defining feature in driving improvement.
- School leaders have successfully created a learning culture among staff and systems for sharing good practice are well developed.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and high expectations of what pupils can achieve.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The gap between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school remains too wide in mathematics.
- Pupils do not achieve as well in French and history as they do in other subjects.
- There is still some teaching that requires further improvement.
- A very small minority of older pupils have not 'bought into' the prevailing culture of the school and the rate of permanent exclusion has been too high.

## **Full report**

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

- Improve the overall quality of teaching by reducing variability in the following ways:
  - ensuring that the best practice is shared even more effectively so that all teaching is consistently good
  - always deploying teaching assistants effectively
  - making sure all teachers follow school policies, for example in marking.
- Improve behaviour by reducing the rates of permanent exclusion.
- Eliminate the gap between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils in the school in mathematics.
- Improve pupils' attainment and progress in history and French.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- Outstanding leadership has propelled this school forward since the previous inspection, resulting in rapid improvement to standards, teaching and pupils' behaviour. There has been a concerted and unrelenting focus on improving outcomes for pupils. As a result, leaders at all levels have created a good and rapidly improving school where there is a discernible drive for still further improvement.
- The ethos of the school is exemplified by its motto, 'ASPIRE'. Pupils spoke proudly and freely to inspectors of their core values: achievement, success, professionalism, integrity, respect and endeavour. The integration of such values into the life of the school has been a defining feature in securing improvement.
- The headteacher has been successful in uniting the vast majority of staff, who share his vision. The overwhelmingly positive responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire are testament to teachers' desire to challenge complacency in all quarters and their ambition for the school to be outstanding in the near future.
- The wholesale restructuring of the leadership team has provided a powerful impetus to improvement. There is a strong culture of accountability which has really helped the school to move forward.
- Actions taken by school leaders since the previous inspection have secured rapid yet sustainable improvement in progress made by all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs or disabilities. Consequently, the gaps in achievement between different groups of pupils that were formerly in evidence are closing apace.
- School leaders, including governors, take a self-critical and frank approach to their appraisal of the school's overall effectiveness. As a result, they have a very accurate perception of the school's strengths and remaining weaknesses.
- Plans for further development are sharply focused and aspirational; lines of accountability are clear, success criteria are measurable where appropriate and timescales are realistic. The school's progress in achieving its own targets for improvement is checked rigorously, reviewed and refined; these plans have proved immensely constructive.
- The headteacher has demonstrated unswerving commitment to tackling underperformance; some staff have stepped up to the mark but others, including some who held leadership positions, have not done so and have been replaced. As a consequence, the school now has a strong track record of change for the better and good capacity to improve further.
- School leaders take an active interest in current educational research, which has helped them to adopt a creative approach to sorting out some of the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection. This willingness to learn and experiment has led to the successful implementation of a number of initiatives that have had a profound impact on improving the school.
- The school's curriculum is indicative of its aspirational culture; for example, a far higher proportion of pupils than is seen nationally study a wide range of rigorous academic subjects. The curriculum is well suited to pupils' needs and abilities and sets them up well for the next stages in their lives. It allows them to consider a host of possibilities for further education or job opportunities.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported well. School leaders try their best to ensure that pupils are introduced to a wide variety of experiences to broaden their horizons, which in some instances are quite limited. Pupils learn about other faiths in lessons and have an awareness of what it means to be a citizen of modern Britain. For example, during the inspection, pupils listened attentively to their classmates as they led an assembly which had democracy as its theme.
- Visits to the theatre and trips abroad provide ample opportunity for pupils to see the world beyond their immediate environment. School leaders ensure that funds are made available to ensure that disadvantaged pupils can have access to such experiences; in this way they demonstrate their commitment to promoting equality and tackling discrimination.
- School leaders, including governors, have ensured that funds available through the pupil premium have been spent effectively. As a result, gaps between pupils eligible for this support and others in the school are closing swiftly.
- The local authority continues to provide effective support to the school. The school is seen locally as a centre of strong practice, for example in the teaching of English. The school's collaboration with other schools in the 'A+ Trust' has been immensely beneficial across the board; as a result, Longdendale High School is helping to have a positive impact on improving education in the wider local community.

## ■ The governance of the school

- Governors are exceptionally astute and knowledgeable; they bring their wider experience of life and education very fruitfully to bear in the exercise of their duties. They have contributed highly effectively to the strong culture of accountability that has helped the school to move forward.
  - Governors set high expectations for staff and they are ambitious for the further development of the school.
  - Governors have supported the headteacher in using performance management effectively. They have a comprehensive understanding of the quality of teaching and have held staff back from pay increases when they have failed to meet their targets.
  - Governors challenge school leaders when they feel that improvement is required, for example in ensuring that all groups of pupils, including those that are disadvantaged or those with special educational needs, make better progress than was seen at the previous inspection.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Pupils spoken to by inspectors said that they feel safe in school and that they know who to turn to if they encounter problems in their lives.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The vast majority of teachers have responded well to direction from senior leaders and the quality of teaching has improved markedly since the previous inspection. Nevertheless, a small proportion of teaching is still not consistently good.
- Strong subject knowledge and high expectations are, for the most part, the norm. Most teachers use questioning skilfully to probe pupils' understanding and they create a climate where pupils feel free to ask for help when they do not understand.
- Teachers, in general, skilfully adapt their teaching to suit the varying abilities of pupils. For example, in one English lesson observed during the inspection, the teacher knew the pupils well and had planned the lesson expertly to accommodate their needs. In this way, the teacher managed to achieve an excellent balance between supporting yet challenging pupils so that they could all do their best.
- Target-setting is used highly effectively and encourages pupils to be ambitious. Pupils are keen to meet their targets and respond positively when teachers then set them higher targets. Pupils spoken to during the inspection were unanimous in their belief that teaching had improved substantially, leading to them achieving higher standards; as one pupil commented: 'My sister is in Year 8 and she's doing work that I was doing in Year 10!'
- Staff receive useful training and advice on how to improve their teaching through a comprehensive programme that is well adapted to individual needs. School leaders have successfully created a learning culture among staff and systems for sharing good practice are well developed. For example, leaders at all levels are encouraged to spot talented teachers, identified as 'professional advocates', who then work with other teachers to help them improve their skills.
- Most teachers follow the school's policy on marking and identify clearly ways in which pupils can improve their work. Pupils generally follow their teachers' advice and this contributes well to them making gains in their learning. However, this is not universally the case and some marking seen during the inspection was not of a good standard.
- Homework is set regularly and pupils spoken to during the inspection welcomed the recent introduction of homework booklets in which they have a variety of activities, some of which are more challenging. Pupils said they enjoyed trying to do the more difficult work, which is indicative of how the school has successfully created a culture of diligence and aspiration.
- The quality of teaching in English is outstanding, leading to pupils' excellent achievement in this subject. Teaching in mathematics has been more mixed but is improving rapidly; the same is true of science.
- There are pockets of outstanding teaching across the curriculum, leading to pupils' scholastic excellence, for example in German, Spanish, music and performing arts. However, teaching has been weaker over time in history and French.
- There is too much variability in the use of teaching assistants. Some examples were seen of excellent practice, but equally inspectors observed some poor deployment, leading to pupils not always making good progress in their lessons.
- Literacy and a love of reading are promoted highly effectively, not only by the English department but also through other subjects. For example, pupils learn about parts of speech in modern foreign language lessons and their speaking skills are developed well through drama.

- The relatively new leaders of mathematics and science are working together to establish more effective ways to promote numeracy across the curriculum. There is some evidence to suggest that this is helping pupils to apply their mathematical skills to other subjects.

## 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 say they feel safe in school and parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, echoed this point of view. Pupils are taught how to assess risks they may encounter in the outside world, such as substance abuse and road safety. They are less clear about wider social issues that can undermine a person's safety, such as radicalisation and child sexual exploitation.
- School leaders work highly effectively with pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. They liaise well with other agencies and take active steps to ensure that these pupils have every chance to get the best out of life. Pupils who spend part of the week at alternative provision attend their placements regularly; some pupils have done so well that they have managed to find employment when they leave school.
- Pupils, particularly in Key Stage 4, receive comprehensive guidance on careers and the next steps in their lives. The school encourages more-able pupils to be ambitious by providing opportunities to visit some of the best universities in the country. Pupils are also given objective advice on where to continue their studies after leaving Longdendale through visiting a number of post-16 providers.
- The school works highly effectively with pupils to encourage good attendance. As a result, the attendance of all groups of pupils has improved since the previous inspection and is now above average. The rate of persistent absenteeism has reduced considerably and is now below average. Half the pupils in Longdendale have never been absent from school, which is a notable achievement.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The rate of fixed-term exclusion has reduced considerably since the previous inspection because systems to manage poor behaviour are applied more consistently by staff than they used to be. Pupils that we spoke to were able to give inspectors a very clear account of what happens now when pupils misbehave.
- The legacy of less good behaviour in the past is still evident because the rate of permanent exclusion remains higher than average. The school uses such a sanction very much as a last resort when other avenues have been exhausted.
- Pupils wear their uniform with pride and the vast majority arrive punctually to school with their equipment, ready to learn. Pupils are, for the most part, friendly to one another and mix well at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Staff in the school commented how helpful and polite most pupils are, for example by ensuring that they return their plates to the serving hatch when they have finished their lunch. During the inspection, there was little evidence of litter in social spaces used by pupils, nor was there any graffiti.
- Bullying, although rare, does happen. Nevertheless, practically all of the pupils we spoke to during the inspection said teachers quickly step in and sort it out. As one parent, who completed the online survey, commented: 'When our elder child experienced bullying he was well supported by the school. The staff dealt with the situation quickly and he has not experienced bullying since.' Not all parents are quite as positive. However, judging from responses to Parent View, the majority of parents are happy with the way that the school deals with this issue.
- Pupils that we spoke to during the inspection were adamant that incidents of racism and homophobic bullying were almost non-existent. The school has appropriate systems to deal with such issues should they occur.
- Pupils are starting to take the lead in stopping bullying themselves and are becoming less dependent on teachers to sort it out. Pupils selected as 'anti-bullying ambassadors' have a high profile in the school and can give many examples of how they have helped fellow pupils when they have had difficulties.
- Pupils appreciate the improvements in teaching that they feel have had an impact on behaviour. Their attitudes to learning are mostly positive, particularly when the teaching is of high quality. For example, in one science lesson observed during the inspection, pupils eagerly discussed with each other the process of fermentation. They sustained concentration and worked well together, producing mature and expansive answers to the task set.

- Some low-level disruption was observed when teaching was less engaging. Furthermore, a very small minority of older pupils do not seem to have 'bought into' the prevailing ethos of the school. As a result, they do not always demonstrate the exemplary attitudes and behaviour shown by the majority of pupils.

## Outcomes for pupils

## are good

- In 2014, the proportion of pupils who gained five A\* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, was broadly in line with the national average. Given that pupils taking examinations in that year entered the school with average prior attainment, this represents reasonable progress overall.
- However, also in 2014, some groups, including the most able and disadvantaged pupils, did not make good progress, particularly in mathematics, science, French and history. This is because changes set in motion in response to the previous inspection had not had time to take effect and there was some legacy of weaker teaching in the past.
- New leadership and better teaching in mathematics and science, coupled with better teaching across many other subjects and sustained excellent performance in English, have had a transformational impact on outcomes for pupils. As a result, in 2015, the proportion of pupils who gained five A\* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, rose substantially to well above the national average. However, achievement in both French and history remained weaker than in other subjects.
- In 2015, the most-able pupils, including those that are disadvantaged, performed much better than the national average across many subjects including English, chemistry, physics, Spanish and design and technology.
- A much higher proportion of most-able pupils than in previous years achieved the top grades of A\* and A in a wide range of subjects. Furthermore, in a number of subjects, including English, mathematics, physics, biology and German, the proportion of pupils achieving these top grades is above the national average.
- The gap between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school in English is negligible. The in-school gap in other subjects is narrowing quickly but remains too wide in mathematics. These pupils make better progress than other pupils nationally in English but their progress in mathematics, although improving, is not as good as their peers nationally.
- The progress of pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities has improved markedly since the previous inspection and these pupils now make good progress.
- Pupils who attend work-related training away from school are following appropriate courses and are making good progress. They are engaged in productive activities that have helped them to improve their employment prospects when they leave school.
- Pupils who are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up funding because they entered the school behind their peers in English and mathematics, receive extra tuition in both subjects. These pupils are catching up rapidly in English and the majority have made some improvement in mathematics.
- According to the school's tracking information, pupils are making good progress across all year groups. This was corroborated during the inspection by what inspectors observed in lessons, what pupils told us about their progress and by looking at the work they have completed in their books.
- The school has robust systems in place to check up on pupils' progress, and predictions for results in examinations have in the past been very accurate. According to the information provided by the school during the inspection, pupils in the current Year 11 are on track to do well in their examinations and the remaining gaps between groups of pupils are set to continue to close.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	106267
<b>Local authority</b>	Tameside
<b>Inspection number</b>	10002194

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>	736
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Carol Thomas
<b>Headteacher</b>	Matthew Bowler
<b>Telephone number</b>	01457 764006
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.longdendale.tameside.sch.uk">www.longdendale.tameside.sch.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:admin@longdendale.tameside.sch.uk">admin@longdendale.tameside.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	18–19 September 2013

## Information about this school

- Longdendale High School is smaller than the average-sized secondary school with a greater than average proportion of girls.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is about the same as the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those that are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those that speak English as an additional language are well below that seen nationally.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or those with special educational needs is above the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A very small number of pupils attend work-related training through Age UK and Tameside College.
- The school works collaboratively with other local schools as part of the A+ Trust.



## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils learning in lessons, visited classrooms at form time and watched how pupils behaved at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work across a range of subjects and talked to a large number of pupils, both formally in meetings and informally around the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, members of the governing body, staff, pupils and representatives of the local authority. A telephone conversation was also held with the Principal of a local college who is also the Chief Executive Officer of the A+ Trust. A further telephone call was made to Age UK to discuss the progress and behaviour of pupils who attend alternative provision.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documentation provided by the school, including: analyses of examination results; records relating to pupils' behaviour, attendance and exclusions; responses by the school to complaints received from parents; information on the progress of pupils currently in the school; the school's self-evaluation of its work and plans for further development; risk assessments and a selection of policies, for example those relating to safeguarding. Inspectors also considered information available on the school's website.
- Inspectors took into account the 62 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the 40 responses to the Parent View free text response. Inspectors also considered the 48 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- The inspection was brought forward in response to a complaint made to Ofsted which raised serious concerns. The complaint was deemed to be a qualifying complaint and was considered alongside other evidence during the inspection.

## Inspection team

Joan Bonenfant, Lead Inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Linda Foley	Ofsted inspector
Linda Griffiths	Ofsted inspector
Kathleen Harris	Ofsted inspector



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